



# Ambassador's Activities

2014

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Speech by HE Bernard Emié,  
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom

at the gala dinner of the  
French Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain

London, 28 May 2014

*Cher* Arnaud Bamberger,  
*Cher* Arnaud Vaissié,  
Dear friends, members of the CCFGB,  
*Cher* Lionel Barber,

It's a pleasure for me to be taking part, for the third year, in the gala dinner of the French Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain.

I'm especially happy because we have the honour of being joined this evening by someone with global influence in the financial world and beyond.

*Cher* Lionel, admittedly you don't have as many Twitter followers as Lady Gaga or Pope Francis, but you're still a major opinion-maker. You head The Financial Times, the FT, one of the most – if not the most – highly-respected and consulted press outlets among the world's economic and political elites.

You're also a friend of France, a lover of our country and its landscapes – so much so that, a while back, you covered a section of the Tour de France, and not one of the easiest: crossing mountain passes in the Pyrenees.

This year, you won't have to go so far, because the Tour will be setting off from Yorkshire on 5 July. On 7 July, it will be following the Thames, passing just a few pedal strokes from your media group's head office. You'll even be able to watch it from your meeting room, before applauding the riders when they arrive in The Mall.

*Cher* Lionel, as I was saying, you're a friend of our country – to the extent of giving free publicity to one of our most fashionable economists! The discussions between The Financial Times and Thomas Piketty – no doubt given more prominence because he's French? – are not only delightful but also invaluable, because they fuel intellectual debate.

You're a Francophile and also speak excellent French. Indeed, you were the paper's correspondent in Brussels, where you were able to cultivate your taste for the language of... Simenon. So I hope this evening you'll do us the honour of delivering your speech at least partly in French!

This evening – thanks to that experience in Brussels and your intimate knowledge of the European institutions’ machinery – you’ll no doubt be offering us your interpretation of Sunday’s vote.

So allow me first to give my own view of this serious issue.

The European election results are a real shock. Our new prime minister, Manuel Valls, didn’t hesitate to talk of an “earthquake” which we must face up to.

So we’re going to build quake-proof policies: President François Hollande repeated on Monday that France is going to continue and deepen its reforms.

The government has three goals: growth, employment and attractiveness.

In order to achieve them, it’s set out two priority areas: measures to support companies, and the reduction of the public deficits that limit our ability to act.

These unprecedented reforms involve, first of all, a €30-billion reduction in labour costs by 2016, through the implementation of the Responsibility Pact announced by the President on 14 January.

They also involve €50 billion in savings on public expenditure between 2015 and 2017, announced by the Prime Minister on 8 April, and this plan has been endorsed by the French Parliament.

So, following the elections, the President confirmed that these essential reforms will remain on track so that they can bear fruit.

But an EU today perceived as too distant and abstract will also have to be reformed, to steer it back towards its citizens’ main expectations: results in terms of employment, growth and investment.

This road map for the coming years will have to restore the subsidiarity principle to its former glory, without, however, unravelling the political project in which we've invested everything and which has brought us so much over the past 60 years.

But these great manoeuvres at European level – starting with choosing the best people to run the Community institutions – mustn't make us lose sight of our excellent bilateral relationship.

Dear friends,

After a fairly tough period of “French bashing”, our relations have now calmed and are still just as substantive and productive.

On 31 January this year, we held an excellent bilateral summit at Brize Norton air station – a mutual choice – with three priority areas for cooperation: defence, energy and space. At the summit, David Cameron was keen to pay a glowing tribute to François Hollande for the competitiveness pact measures.

On 5, 6 and 7 June, we shall be welcoming Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for a historic state visit to France. This fifth state visit, coinciding with the 70th anniversary of D-Day and the centenary year of the outbreak of the Great War, will potently symbolize the Franco-British brotherhood in arms. It's now 100 years old, but still remarkable. It is just as apparent during crises as it is in the daily task of building close defence cooperation both bilaterally and at European level.

Dear friends,

As you know and must be all too aware, priority is resolutely being given to economic diplomacy in France's action abroad today. The Foreign Affairs and International Development Minister, Laurent Fabius, has now also taken on responsibility for foreign trade and tourism. Consequently, in my mission in London, the Chamber of Commerce is a first-rate means of contact with French and British companies and of increasing the number of partnerships. So I congratulate you on the 40 or so excellent events you organize every year and in which I am glad to take part. Last year, in partnership with the Embassy, you

organized a high-level event focusing on the energy sector. In the autumn we'll be working on the theme of transport, a sector where French companies are excelling just as much [as witnessed, for example, by the large rail market share won by Keolis a few days ago]. Finally, President Arnaud Bamberger and I led an excellent trade mission to Scotland earlier this year.

So the CCFGB is playing its full role alongside the Embassy thanks to you, all its members, whom I want to thank for your continued commitment.

You can count on me to work with you even more and better to serve France's economic interests in the UK, and the Embassy – together with the Service économique régional, UBIFRANCE and the Invest in France Agency, which have now been grouped together – is at your disposal for exploring all possible initiatives.

Thank you./.