

My lords, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome the members of the Franco-British Lawyers Society and their distinguished friends to my Residence today for the launch of the Champagne Louis Roederer Prize and the presentation of the UK Academic Prize.

I would particularly like to welcome those of you who have made the journey from Scotland, Northern Ireland and France. From France, I would like to welcome the President of the Society, Bâtonnier Bernard Vatier, and the President of the French section, Katherine Lisfranc, and I thank Bâtonnier Sicard for joining us today.

I welcome the President of the Society's Northern Ireland section, Fionnuala Connolly, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in Belfast last year. From Scotland, I am very happy that a former president of the Society, Lady Leona Dorrian, has been able to join us today. I also take this opportunity to congratulate Lady Dorrian on her appointment last month to the position of Lord Justice Clerk. Lady Dorrian is the first woman to hold this position and is indeed now the most senior woman in Scottish legal history.

Thank you to the English section for making today's event possible. In London, the FBLS plays a key role in strengthening legal understanding between the different jurisdictions - France, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Since my arrival in London a couple of years ago, I have been impressed by the high standard and intellectual breadth of your conferences, covering such diverse subjects as family law, competition law, fashion law and art law, to name but a few.

Your help was also key to the success of the conference on Magna Carta and the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme* which we organized last year at Lancaster House with the Franco-British Council, followed by a "return match" at the *Conseil d'Etat* in the autumn.

I am delighted to celebrate with you today the success of the FBLS in London, and I hope this will become an annual event in the Society's calendar.

May I also warmly thank Champagne Louis Roederer for their generosity.

I now hand you over to the President of the Society for England and Wales, Catherine Palmer. Catherine will tell you more about the Champagne Louis Roederer Prize.