France Takes the Helm of the G20 Presidency

France formally assumed the G20 presidency in mid-November. Created in 1999 at France’s initiative, the G20 is an organization of leaders and finance ministers from 19 countries plus the European Union, representing nearly 80 percent of the planet’s wealth.

To foster an international framework of strong, sustainable, and balanced economic growth, France proposes three major priorities for its presidency.

The first relates to reform of the international monetary system: prevent excessive currency volatility, the accumulation of imbalances, and a lack of foreign exchange reserves for emerging countries. France advocates the strengthening of crisis management mechanisms, the fight against protectionism, the creation of an internationally administrated reserve asset, and better coordination of monetary policies between major economies.

The second priority is to address volatility in the prices of raw materials, including agricultural products, oil, and gas, by limiting speculation, promoting market transparency, and regulating storage policies.

The third objective for the French G20 presidency concerns global governance reform. Particularly, France supports the launch of a G20 secretariat to monitor the implementation of decisions, integrate new pertinent subjects — currency volatility, the accumulation of imbalances, and a lack of foreign exchange reserves for emerging countries. France advocates the strengthening of crisis management mechanisms, the fight against protectionism, the creation of an internationally administrated reserve asset, and better coordination of monetary policies between major economies.

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France's priorities for its G20 presidency include:

1. Reform of the international monetary system: Prevent excessive currency volatility, accumulation of imbalances, and lack of foreign exchange reserves for emerging countries. France advocates strengthening crisis management mechanisms, fighting protectionism, creating an internationally administrated reserve asset, and better coordination of monetary policies between major economies.

2. Addressing volatility in the prices of raw materials, including agricultural products, oil, and gas, by limiting speculation, promoting market transparency, and regulating storage policies.

3. Global governance reform: Launch a G20 secretariat to monitor the implementation of decisions, integrate new pertinent subjects such as currency volatility, the accumulation of imbalances, and lack of foreign exchange reserves for emerging countries.

France's approach is characterized by a focus on strong, sustainable, and balanced economic growth, emphasizing the need for international cooperation and the reform of existing frameworks to address global challenges.

President Sarkozy laid out France's priorities for its presidency of the G20 at the Summit in Seoul on November 12.

such as development and climate change — into the G20 agenda, and pursue broader reform of the World Bank, the IMF, and the UN.

President Sarkozy is expected to hold a press conference in January 2011 during which he will elaborate on France’s agenda for the G20 presidency.

French City of Nantes named Euro "Green Capital" for 2013

The western French city of Nantes has been named laureate of the European Green Capital Award for 2013. The annual award is a new European Commission initiative to recognize the European city that is “leading the way in environmentally friendly urban living.”

Nantes, France’s sixth largest city, won the award as a result of its commitment to an environmentally conscious transportation network. Over the past ten years, Nantes has developed a number of sustainable policies that aim to improve citywide public transportation while decreasing harmful CO2 emissions. These programs include investments in new electric tramways, high-quality bus service, and bicycle-friendly infrastructure. Urban planners have also redesigned the city center to minimize commuter dependence on automobiles and to provide pedestrians with safer walking conditions. These changes were made with the goal of reducing carbon emissions by 25 percent before 2020.

Nantes was among six finalists for the award, which included Barcelona, Malmo, Nuremberg, Reykjavik, and Vitoria-Gasteiz. Cities were judged on their past environmental records as well as their ongoing commitment to sustainable and eco-friendly urban development. The European Commission hopes that past and future award winners will “act as role models to promote the best [green] practices in other European cities.”

President Sarkozy Appoints New Government

At the proposal of Prime Minister François Fillon, French President Nicolas Sarkozy appointed a new government on November 14, consisting of a combination of both incumbents and new appointees. Twelve out of the 30 ministers are women.

Among several notable shifts, Michèle Alliot-Marie replaced Bernard Kouchner as foreign minister, while Xavier Bertrand assumed the post of labor minister, previously held by Eric Woerth. Christine Lagarde remains the finance minister, a particularly important post as France assumes the G20 presidency.

Heading France’s Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs, Ms. Alliot-Marie assumed her new role during a handover ceremony on November 16. “France is part of the global dynamic, where the challenges are commensurate with globalization and we must be capable of meeting these challenges,” she stated, adding that “our diplomacy must not be an abstract or immutable concept, it must be dynamic, open, and imaginative, and this is clearly what [Bernard Kouchner has] set in motion and I am intent on pursuing.”

Led by re-appointed Prime Minister François Fillon, the new government assembled for the first time on November 17. Mr. Fillon stated that after more than three years of “courageous reform, carried out despite a severe global economic and financial crisis, [he] begin[s] with determination, under the authority of the head of state, this new stage.”

For a list of the new government, please visit: www.ambafrance-us.org.
Interview with Jack Lang, Special Advisor on Piracy to the UNSG

A total of 406 incidents of piracy and armed robbery have been reported in the 2009 annual piracy report issued by the International Chamber of Commerce’s International Maritime Bureau. The total number of incidents attributed to Somali pirates stands at 217, with 47 vessels hijacked and 867 crew members taken hostage, according to the report.

Mr. Lang has met with over 100 experts and visited countries in the region affected by piracy, including Kenya, Mauritius, and Somalia. “The efforts of the international community are considerable and above all, are unprecedented in their originality,” the French minister stated in an interview with News From France. Highlighting a few examples of international cooperation on the seas, Mr. Lang lauded the efforts of numerous countries and peacekeeping forces, including China, Russia, the United States, NATO, and Operation Atalanta — “a multinational force and the first maritime expression of European defense.”

“We are executing exceptional solutions [to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia],” Minister Lang stated. In addition to the naval prevention and deterrence forces, Mr. Lang extolled advances in international legal cooperation: “What else is exceptional is that states have recognized the laws of other countries to judge pirates in the name of the international community and exercised ‘universal competence.’”

Despite progress resulting from financial and legal efforts to prosecute pirates, challenges in these arenas continue to exist: “When naval forces seize pirates who are arrested in accordance with international law, in 70 percent of cases, [naval forces] are obligated to set [the pirates] free. Because, despite the efforts of some States, [some countries will not prosecute the pirates]. So, they are set free, and it thus creates a sentiment of impunity.”

When asked about the international community’s ability to find a solution to piracy, Minister Lang responded, “The meetings I had with the American administration made me even more optimistic. Along those lines, the new doctrine of the U.S. — the two-track strategy relating to Somalia — appears to me to be excellent. It is important to think about a political plan between the north and the south.”

Although the French expert will continue to evaluate the situation for a few more months before presenting his findings to the international community, he stressed the importance of reaching tangible solutions. “In one sense, it is necessary to reinforce what already exists: encourage, support, and assist the countries that have already agreed to pursue pirates,” he stated, citing in particular the on-going discussions between Kenya and the E.U.

Applauding the efforts of the former, the French minister referenced the courts and prison system of Mombasa, and characterized the country as “a model that dared to engage itself much more so than others,” adding, “hats off to Kenya. It is doing a truly remarkable job. […] Perhaps we should also hope that other countries [in Europe and Africa] agree to combat piracy.” Additionally, he underscored “[the] need to find a system in which naval forces that arrest pirates are able to try them in court. It is also important to find an economic system with the Somalis that is an alternative to piracy: an economic solution.”

Francophone Countries Address Common Goals at Summit

L’Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) celebrated its 40th anniversary with the 13th Sommet de la Francophonie (Francophony Summit) from October 22 to 24. Consisting of 56 participating members and 19 observing states, the organization promotes democratic, humanitarian, and linguistic cooperation among French-speaking nations. This year, approximately 3,000 representatives gathered in Montreux, Switzerland, to discuss the mutual goals and interests of Francophone countries.

During the summit, the OIF adopted the Montreux Declaration, defining common objectives for Francophone countries in three major categories: world governance and international relations, sustainable development, and French language and education amid globalization. The delegates also passed several resolutions, pledging cooperation in the reconstruction of Haiti and the fights against terrorism, organized crime, and piracy. Additionally, the organization admitted five new observing states: Estonia, Bosnia, the United Arab Emirates, Montenegro, and the Dominican Republic.

The Summit also welcomed the general public to roundtable discussions, as well as the “Village de la Francophonie,” an outdoor cultural exhibit in Montreux that included food, drink, and music from Francophone countries throughout the world.

The next Sommet de la Francophonie will take place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2012.
Transatlantic Program Cultivates an Eye for Photography

The Eye for an Eye (Oeil pour œil) photo exhibition, the result of a yearlong Franco-American collaboration to foster youth understanding and transnational cooperation, ran from November 1 - 6 at the Daley Civic Center in Chicago, IL.

The initiative brought together 20 youths between the ages of 10 and 16 from the disadvantaged neighborhoods of Altgeld Gardens in Chicago and La Courneuve in Paris. Oeil pour œil exposed the students to the field of visual media, offering training in photography and video that culminated in the collaborative showcase of their work earlier this month. Since May 2009, introductory photography workshops have been organized on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean by the Fête le Mur association in La Courneuve and by People for Community Recovery in Chicago. Students learned the basics in composition, lighting, and perspective, enabling them to capture images of their everyday surroundings for the exhibit.

The event welcomed the French participants, who flew to Chicago for the occasion. While stateside, the youths visited several Chicago museums, embarked on a photo excursion to Millennium Park, and even got a chance to tour the United Center basketball arena in the company of Joakim Noah, the French-American center for the Chicago Bulls and son of famous French tennis player, recording artist, and president of Fête le Mur, Yannick Noah. Eye for an Eye’s American participants will travel to Paris next spring for the exhibition’s French debut.

For more information, as well as trip updates and photos, please visit www.caneye-for-aneve.com.

"Beloved" American Author Receives French Legion of Honor

French Minister of Culture Frédéric Mitterrand named American novelist Toni Morrison an officer of the French Legion of Honor on November 3 at a ceremony in the Ministry of Culture’s gilded hall. The Legion of Honor, created by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, recognizes military, cultural, scientific, or social contributions to France.

Morrison, a Nobel laureate and winner of the Pulitzer Prize, chronicles the struggles of the female African American in many of her novels, such as Beloved, The Bluest Eye, and Sula.

Calling Morrison “beloved,” in reference to her most popular novel, Mitterrand described how honored he felt to bestow the award, stating: “In our eyes you embody the best part of America, which founds its love of liberty on the most intense dreams. The one that allowed a black child born into a poor family in Ohio, in the years of segregation, to have the unique destiny of the greatest American woman novelist of her time.”

Morrison expressed her appreciation of the honor, stating, “I’ve always felt welcomed in France and especially in Paris, and it’s important to me, receiving this medal, the Legion of Honor, because now I know in addition to being welcomed, I am prized.”

After School Program Brings Educational Opportunities to Houston

A new after-school program — Education Française Greater Houston (EFGH) — created in April 2010 by volunteer parents to enable children to acquire, maintain and improve their knowledge of French language and culture, recently celebrated its first successful rentrée scolaire (back-to-school season). The non-profit organization offers French language instruction to children ages 5-16 for two to three hours per week over the course of the school year.

EFGH aims to provide a cost-efficient and convenient educational opportunity for Houston residents. For $300 to $725 annually, students attend classes in groups of eight to 15. Currently, about 50 étudiants attend EFGH after-school courses throughout Houston. Students participate in either the Maternal French Language (FLaM) or the Foreign French Language (FLE) program. Additionally, EFGH has recruited native speakers and francophone American teachers with diplomas of National Education or certifications from the State of Texas.

EFGH is currently expanding, with locations at Barbara Bush Elementary School, Kolter Elementary School, The Woodlands, Sugar Land, Bunkerhill, Katy, and Central Houston.

For more information, please visit www.efghouston.org/efgh.
French Inspire New Fitness Movement au Naturel

From the mountain wilderness to the urban jungle, “wild workouts” — fitness routines based on the simple principle of using natural surroundings and low-tech methods to work up a sweat — are sweeping the United States. Many argue that this type of workout, which combines functional fitness with a fun, care-free approach, promotes the development of a body that is balanced, holistically strong, and less prone to injury. Seldom recognized, however, is the major role that France has played — and continues to play — in this fitness movement.

Georges Hébert and la Méthode Naturelle

Long before today’s popular fitness regimens caught on, Frenchman Georges Hébert introduced France to his Méthode Naturelle, a physical fitness program based on the principle of strength for utility.

As a French naval officer at the turn of the 20th century, Hébert drew his fitness inspiration from a terrible tragedy. In 1902, while stationed in the city of St. Pierre on the Caribbean island of Martinique, Hébert witnessed a massive volcanic eruption that claimed the lives of many of the city’s inhabitants. Hébert believed that many lives could have been saved on that day if the population had been in better physical shape. Upon returning to France, he was determined to ensure that a similar fate could never befall future generations, in France or elsewhere.

Hébert decided to adapt a fitness plan that emphasized practical application as a foundation for success, naming his plan la Méthode Naturelle, after a similar system by early 19th-century Franco-Hispanic fitness guru Francisco Amoros. Hébert’s motto, “Etre fort pour être utile” (Be strong to be useful) was a simple philosophy that led him to create an outdoor training facility equipped with climbing towers, vaulting horses, sandpits and ponds. Central to Hébert’s pedagogy were exercises that imitated movements and activities once practiced by pre-agrarian man. Hébert began training French troops in this manner, and before long, his marines were testing on par with world-class decathletes on a system that scored performance according to strength, speed, agility, and endurance. Unfortunately, before Hébert could introduce la Méthode Naturelle to the rest of the world, WWI erupted, killing many of his protégés, and leaving the lieutenant himself disabled.

While la Méthode Naturelle never gained widespread recognition in Hébert’s era, his techniques and philosophies are being adapted today in a variety of contexts. Many of the current fitness trends in the United States and France draw at least some inspiration from Hébert’s philosophy of useful strength.

Erwan Le Corre Helps You Unleash the Beast

Thirty-nine-year-old Frenchman Erwan Le Corre wants to help you embrace your inner animal…

Le Corre is the creator of U.S.-based MovNat (a derivative of the French term mouvement naturel), a dynamic approach to fitness based on the ideal of a healthy human physique. Although his philosophy and techniques vary somewhat, much like Georges Hébert before him, Le Corre encourages people to embrace the natural capabilities of their own bodies. “It’s about rediscovering our biological nature and releasing the wild human animal inside,” he explains.

For this reason, MovNat training methods look more like play than what one typically thinks of as a “gym workout.” Fitness disciples of Le Corre engage in twelve types of natural physical movements meant to mimic the same type of everyday tasks performed by prehistoric man: walking, running (barefoot), jumping, balancing, crawling, climbing, lifting, carrying, throwing, catching, swimming, and self-defense. Le Corre’s gym is not housed in any building, but rather in an outdoor setting, as his method uses obstacles such as trees, fallen logs, rocks, and even other human beings to produce a more holistically “fit” and “natural” individual. In other words, there are no barbells, treadmills, or medicine balls in Le Corre’s regimen.

In a concerted attempt to revive Hébert’s Méthode Naturelle for the modern world, MovNat stresses a departure from the traditional way of “pumping up,” and encourages a more practical kind of strength and fitness. Le Corre laments, “I meet men all the time who can bench 400 pounds but can’t climb up through a window to pull someone from a burning building…” Many others have also begun taking notice of the practical applications of this training. NASA recently approached Le Corre about using MovNat to physically and mentally prepare astronauts for long-duration space flights.

In an attempt to spread the word about his novel approach to fitness, as well as to teach the techniques to eager students, Le Corre hosts a number of retreats around the world that range in duration from one day to one week. At the outdoor workshops, participants train with Le Corre, learning exercises and strategies for “unleashing their wild side.” Currently, he hosts hands- (and feet) on sessions at locations in West Virginia and Thailand. In addition, Le Corre will soon begin a certification program for MovNat instructors, and has already signed an English-language book deal. Written in collaboration with scientists from NASA and Harvard, the book will be released in 2012.

To learn more about MovNat, please visit Le Corre’s website: at www.movnat.com.

Hardcore Parkour!

Parkour, a French sport with a growing following in the U.S., embraces many of the aforementioned fitness principles and applies them to the urban sprawl.

Parkour, which derives its name from the parcours du combattant (the combattant’s obstacle course) developed by Georges Hébert in the early 1900s, involves participants moving through a series of natural and man-made obstacles as quickly and efficiently as possible. These traceurs require a combination of strength, speed, agility, and balance to move nimbly from obstacle to obstacle, in sometimes thrilling aerial displays that seem to defy gravity.

David Belle, the Frenchman widely considered to be the creator of the modern-day parkour movement, explains that parkour is all about engaging in motions that feel natural to the human body at an instinctual level. “We have two hands; it’s to grab things … We can lift ourselves up. We can jump and run with our legs. We can swim. Instinctively we know we can do these things.” Although Parkour does not embody the holistic physical education premise inherited from La Méthode Naturelle, it embraces the same “Etre fort pour être utile” motto advocated by Hébert.

Since the mid-2000s, Parkour groups have begun springing up all over the United States. The largest communities of traceurs can be found in Los Angeles, Colorado, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and New York City.

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From the Beatles to Bass-tones: Euro-hop Sweeps the U.S.

One of France’s most popular daily publications, 20 Minutes, recently announced that it will partner with Silicon Valley-based company Ooyala to host video content for its new media initiatives. The move marks 20 Minutes’ foray into new media and expanding distribution channels, accentuated by the recent release of the publication’s successful news application for iPhone and iPad. Along with video hosting, Ooyala will also provide 20 Minutes with over 500 analytic tools for measuring viewer response, designed "to help … extend viewer engagement and increase revenue." These measures will help 20 Minutes respond to evolving consumer preferences.

Representatives from Ooyala emphasized the importance of this collaboration. "For media companies, Internet video is strategic… Video allows publishers to retain users and develop a source of significant revenue," stated Philippe Bornstein, Ooyala’s Director for France.

20 Minutes is published in 10 French cities, as well as Spain and Switzerland, and has a readership in France of over 2.7 million daily, making it the country’s most read daily news publication.
Le Beaujolais Nouveau has arrived!

The third Thursday of November has great meaning in the hearts of wine aficionados around the world for the past 25 years. This year, November 18 marked the arrival of Beaujolais Nouveau, a young fruity red wine that comes from the Beaujolais region in Southern France.

Beaujolais wine is made from the Gamay grape, which must be harvested by hand, fermented, and bottled just six weeks before its shipment. While its annual arrival is highly anticipated worldwide, it is especially fête (celebrated) in the town of Beajuex, the capital of Beaujolais. The region’s traditional festival, called Les Sarmentelles, lauds the wine’s arrival with a torch-lit parade, a tast- ing competition, and a party following the midnight release of the wine.

Celebrations of Le Beaujolais Nouveau trace back over half a century. In 1951, the Union Internationale des Vins du Beaujolais (UIVB) ruled that no Beaujolais wine could be shipped or sold before November 13. By the 1970s, producers were racing to be the first to deliver their product to the public and the arrival of the wine had become a spectacle not only in France, but around the world. The UIVB changed the opening date of sale to the third Thursday of November in 1985, which still holds today.

This November, festivals and parties were held throughout the world to welcome the first shipment of Beaujolais, including the U.S. La Maison Française at the Embassy of France in Washington, D.C., held a dégustation on November 18 featuring jazz, dancing, pétanque and a raffle for two free tickets to Paris (courtesy of Open Skies Airline), while the French consulate in San Francisco hosted a soirée on November 19 where the wine itself was the guest of honor. In Los Angeles, the European American Enterprise Council hosted Beaujolais Passions, an event featuring live musical acts, comic performances, and of course, Beaujolais tasting.

For more information on Beaujolais wine, please visit: www.beaujolais.com.

Apple Season Highlights Regional Specialties in Normandy

In addition to cooler weather and changing leaves, autumn brings the much-anticipated apple season to the French province of Normandy. Renowned for its apples and apple-based products, particularly cider, Calvados apple brandy, and various baked goods, the opening of the agricultural season is cause for regional celebrations throughout Normandy.

La Fête de la Pomme (Apple Festival) is celebrated on the first Sunday of October in Sainte-Opportune-la-Mare, commemorating the first marché des pommes of the season (apple markets that open every Sunday from October through April). Highlights of the fête include samplings of apple-based baked goods, demonstrations from regional artisans, and a quality competition for the best cider.

During the last weekend of October, the Cidrerie traditionelle du Perche, a cider brewery that doubles as an art gallery in its off-season, organizes La Fête du Cidre, a live public demonstration of cider production with tastings of regional delicacies, including cheeses, honey, and meat products.

Blogs

PARIS VS. NEW YORK: CULTURAL COMPARISON THROUGH GRAPHIC DESIGN

Parisian graphic designer Vahram Muratyan is spending the fall in New York City. One day at the beginning of his stay, he noticed that American designers use a different newspaper format than their French counterparts. Struck by the contrast, he began to take note of the many cultural differences between Paris and New York. Drawing on his experience in graphic design, Muratyan’s observations inspired him to create a blog documenting these comparisons, called “Paris versus New York: a tally of two cities.”

Each daily blog entry contains a visual representation of one cultural difference between Paris and New York, with a simple image and word or phrase accorded to each image. For example, the entry titled le pain (bread), contrasts a baguette and a bagel, while le tennis juxtaposes the red clay courts of Roland Garros with the US Open’s green hard courts. Each entry uses recognizable cultural icons filtered through Muratyan’s signature aesthetic of striking simplicity, creating a memorable, often humorous visual comparison.

In an interview with News From France, Muratyan described his project as comparative rather than competitive. “Both cities,” he claims, “are wonderfully unique in their own right, but share similar cultural significance.” He notices that “New Yorkers fantasize about Paris, while Parisians dream about New York.” Though a Parisian at heart, Muratyan seems enamored with both cities, content to enjoy the different cultural elements that each has to offer.

For more information, please visit: parisvnewyork.blogspot.com.

News from France does not endorse the content, views, and opinions of authors expressed in the aforementioned website.
Michelin Looks to Feed on New Touristic Trend

The world-famous Michelin Guide is teaming up with Roadtrips, Inc. to offer a new experience for tourists interested in discovering French haute cuisine. The new service, Michelin Food and Travel, launched over the summer to "introduce [tourists] to some of the world's most celebrated [chefs and artisans]," those professionals whose establishments have received a coveted Michelin Star rating in the most recent Michelin Guide.

The service features a Michelin travel advisor who customizes an itinerary based on the prospective tourist's tastes, wishes, and budget. Sample itineraries from the website www.michelinfoodandtravel.com include culinary and artisanal tours in Provence, the French Riviera, and Paris. Travelers also have the opportunity to attend private kitchen demonstrations and other culinary activities such as wine tastings and truffle hunts — woodland excursions where participants use trained dogs to locate and dig up the hard-to-find delicacies. Although tours are currently only offered in France, Michelin Food and Travel hopes to eventually offer tours all over Western Europe and parts of Asia.

French Street Artist Wins $100,000 and "One Wish"

Anonymous French street artist JR rejuvenates buildings all over the world by posting immense photographs of locals on them. For his work, which has helped transform the idea of "street art" from graffiti to social polemic, he has been awarded the TED Prize, including $100,000 and "One Wish for Global Change." TED, or Technology, Entertainment, and Design, is a global non-profit organization that connects innovative professionals in these three fields. Since the first TED conference in 1984, however, the organization has expanded its focus to include business, the arts, science, and global issues.

JR's story began when he found a camera in the Paris metro. Since 2001, he has been posting his mural-sized portraits on the oft-overlooked walls in France, Italy, Brazil, China, Africa and the Middle East. His work has gained such recognition that most of his 'exhibits' have been sent to London, New York, Berlin, and Amsterdam for further exposure. Additionally, JR continually works to build a legacy of crafting art among the locals in the cities where he exhibits.

The prestigious distinction counts Bill Clinton and Bono among its past recipients. "The TED Prize is designed to leverage the TED community's exceptional array of talent and resources," explains the organization's website. After preparing a presentation of his or her "One Wish" for several months, the prize-winner gets to share his or her proposal at the TED conference, where the TED community pledges different resources and support to realize the wish. JR's wish will be revealed shortly; for more information, please visit: www.ted.com.