French, German Embassies Celebrate EU Milestone

The French embassy in Washington, D.C., played host on January 10 to over 160 employees from the city's French and German diplomatic offices to celebrate the 50th anniversary of a milestone in the history of modern Europe.

The Elysée Treaty, signed 50 years ago last month by the French and German heads of state, provided a crucial burst of momentum to the nascent political community in Europe that would become today's European Union. The year 2013 has been designated the “Franco-German Year” in light of the anniversary and more than six decades of peace since World War II.

On January 22, 1963, French President Charles de Gaulle and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer signed a history-making agreement of good faith. The treaty’s goal was to render bilateral cooperation among officials of both countries a matter of course.

A second, far more expansive goal sought to change attitudes within broader French and German public opinion. Youth programs took shape to promote cultural exchange, namely the Franco-German Youth Office and the creation of Franco-German high schools on each side of the two nations’ common border. The document would pave the way to the unprecedented era of European peace.

In 2012, the European Union, of which France and Germany play founding and central roles, was recognized with the Nobel Prize for Peace.

The shift toward friendly relations has been a dramatic one, something that Holger Ziegeler, Director of the German Information Center operated by the German embassy, wished to emphasize.

“The mutual appreciation is impressive,” he said. “A recent poll shows that 85 percent of French and 87 percent of Germans hold a positive image of their respective neighbors.”

The extent of Franco-German solidarity is tangible on a personal level, as indicated by staff from each country’s D.C. offices.

“I studied in Germany and lived there for several years,” said Aude Rabault, a French embassy press attaché and a French citizen. She called the occasion “a great sign of Franco-German partnership.”

From the Ambassador’s Desk: A Message From François Delattre

With 2012 at an end and 2013 underway, let me start by wishing all News From France readers the very best in this new year. Here at the embassy, we’re planning a full slate of activities. I’ll be continuing to criss-cross your great country, assuring France’s partnership in business, cultural, education, and research activities.

In politics this month, we watched the inauguration of U.S. President Barack Obama on January 21. With the new administration, we will work to keep French-American relations as strong as ever.

Toward this end, we are happy and proud to welcome U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden to Paris on February 4. His meeting with President Hollande and other senior French officials will be an opportunity to discuss bilateral issues such as common security challenges that France and the U.S. are facing in Syria, Iran, and, of course, Mali, where French and African troops have been deployed since mid-January at the request of the Malian authorities. On this subject, I would like to praise the support provided by the U.S. government.

We’ve been conducting diplomacy with Europe as well. January 22 marked the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Elysée Treaty, an agreement between France and Germany that helped establish what would become the European Union. France will maintain and develop its role as one of the leaders of a peaceful modern Europe.

In all of these goals, France is committed to teamwork and robust engagement with our American partners and friends in 2013.

Bonne et heureuse année à tous!
French Caucus Meets With Ambassador, Elected Official

French and American leaders from government and business met in the U.S. Capitol on January 22, using a session of the Congressional French Caucus to appraise bilateral progress across multiple sectors, with a special focus on the countries’ mutual economic interests.


Joan of Arc Parade Enters Fifth Year in New Orleans

The fifth annual Joan of Arc Parade enlivened the streets of the French Quarter of New Orleans on January 6 to celebrate the 601st birthday of the fifteenth-century French heroine. Organized by the Krewe de Jeanne d’Arc, the parade aims to celebrate a woman whose life mirrors that of the city itself in its “loyalty, faith, courage, and determination,” according to the Krewe’s official website.

Joan’s birthday coincides with the Twelfth Night of Christmas and thus with the opening of the Carnival season, which culminates in February on Mardi Gras. In keeping with the season’s tradition of festivities, the Joan of Arc celebration takes the form of a parade featuring walkers of all ages clothed in historical garb as well as fire dancers, stilt walkers, dance troupes, and handmade goodies commemorating the life of Joan, according to WDSU News. As with past years, a local high school student—this year, Gretchen Neuenhaus of Mount Carmel Academy—was chosen to represent the Maid of Orléans alongside local business leaders portraying King Charles VII and Queen Yolande of Aragon.

The parade began at the statue of Jean-Baptiste le Moyne de Bienville, the founding father of New Orleans, and worked its way through the streets of the French Quarter before ending at a gilded statue of Joan of Arc given to the city in 1958 by the people of France, a replica of the original located at the Place des Pyramides in Paris.

As a final token of the city’s longstanding tradition of French culture, participants and spectators alike were able to share in King’s Cake after hearing speeches by the three guests of honor.

Exhibit Honors War Photographer Killed on Assignment

From the Haiti riots in 2004 to the war in the Congo in 2008, French photojournalist Rémi Ochlik was determined to show the world the reality of global conflicts. Mr. Ochlik was killed while reporting in Syria in February 2012 at age 28, but his legacy lives on.

The Consulate General of France in Boston and The Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University are co-sponsoring “Revolutions: Photographs of the Arab Spring.” The exhibition will feature Mr. Ochlik’s prize-winning collection of Arab Spring photographs from 2011 and 2012.

Mr. Ochlik’s photographs were taken in Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Tunisia, and each shows a different facet of life during the Arab Spring. The rebels, protesters, wounded civilians, and mourners that the photographs portray will deepen viewers’ understanding of the conflict.

In addition to the showcase, a “Photojournalism and The Arab Spring” panel discussion took place on January 30 with a French-American panel of experts. The exhibition runs through February 22.

Killed at 28, Rémi Ochlik’s widely published photos helped put a human face on conflicts in Africa and Syria.
Thierry Buttin, Counselor, Sustainable Development and Transportation

Headed the French embassy's development and transportation policies since 2009, Thierry Buttin is no stranger to leadership. He handled the same dossier at France's diplomatic mission to the European Union, worked for the Aéroports de Paris, and even oversaw Charles de Gaulle airport. News From France caught up with the expert for a few questions.

What are the missions of the Embassy's Department of Sustainable Development and Transportation?
We represent France's Ministry for Ecology, Sustainable Development, and Energy. This ministry oversees transportation, and we also represent the Ministry for Housing. We monitor what happens in each of these fields in the U.S. at the federal and local levels. We also do outreach with think tanks, the Administration, and Congress. Our last main focus is to organize cooperation between France and the U.S.

The National Climatic Data Center calls 2012 the warmest year on record in the U.S. President Obama has reaffirmed the fight against global warming as a priority for his second term. What is your opinion on current U.S. environmental policy?
It's a much-debated question. I would focus on climate change, because that's something we focus on in Europe and we are interested in the U.S.'s position. You can see both sides, the plus and the minus side. The plus is that, in the end, the U.S. will respect its commitments in terms of reduction of greenhouse gas, as they agreed on in Copenhagen, Cancun, and Durban (global environmental summits in 2009, 2010, 2011).

At the same time, everyone knows that the level of ambition that was decided in those conferences was too low, and that we would not be able to limit global warming by two or three degrees in the coming years.

One of the main tools from our perspective is to set a price on carbon, whether with cap-and-trade like in Europe or California, or a carbon tax, or other economic tools. But it's vital to give a price to carbon in order to affect the strategies of companies in the future. For us, it's a key issue.

How are France and the Embassy trying to raise awareness of global warming in the U.S.?
Coming from Europe, it's very surprising how things are seen in black-and-white [there]. In the U.S., the debate is more nuanced. One aspect of our strategy is to work on very practical subjects, like energy efficiency in buildings, for instance. The U.S. has huge potential in this. What we did in France on cars, for instance, is to persuade people to buy cars that produce less CO2 with a system of fiscal incentives and disincentives for buying cars, according to that car's carbon output.

Offshore wind is another area we're developing vigorously in France today, and there are many developments that will emerge here in the U.S. We'll have a team next February that will go to the East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico, where there are projects in offshore wind.

The French town of Versailles is hosting the Solar Decathlon 2014, an international contest for sustainable architecture. What does hosting the event mean for French environmental interests?
The Solar Decathlon is a great idea. We were very happy that we agreed with the [organizers] U.S. Department of Energy that the 2014 edition could be in France.

In 2014, we hope to focus on collective buildings. The tendency here in the U.S. is more for individual housing. In Europe, it is more collective housing, in particular in France. So that will be our first focus. The second focus we want to have is to include mobility. Because when you look at the house, it's important to plan for the transportation aspects of getting home, getting to work, commuting... We want very much to integrate mobility into the overall evaluation of a project. And hosting the competition in Versailles—it's an image of tradition and modernity, of architectural achievement.

The French aircraft company Airbus announced its decision last summer to open an assembly line in Mobile, Alabama. Is this a sign of cooperation between France and the U.S. in the field of industrial aeronautics?
France and the U.S. are really the two main aeronautical states in the world in terms of expertise. From the very beginning of aviation, those were the two countries. Airbus's decision to open an assembly line in Alabama is very positive, because it's a very proactive policy. It will create many jobs in France, and in the U.S., too.

There is a big debate on high-speed trains in the U.S. How do you see modern train capacity developing in the U.S., and what would France have to offer?
We see the priority as more to modernize the network, to get to what we call medium-speed—it's called high-speed here—that is, around 110 miles per hour. It's not high-speed rail as we conceive it in France. Our real expertise is in real high-speed, over 200 miles per hour. That's where one sees a real shift from car or plane to rail. As for the future, I'm confident that something will happen [in the U.S.], for example in the northeast corridor, meaning Boston to Washington. Even Texas, with the triangle between Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston, is a great candidate for high-speed rail. It's got the right distances, lots of potential, and could be an affordable project. I'm optimistic that these projects will happen—but it will take time, and we hope that it won't take too much time.

French Authors Set to Undertake U.S. Tour

This spring marks an opportunity for Americans to enjoy French literature, when authors Bernard Stiegler, Olivier Tallec, Gilles Roussel (who goes by Boulet), and Arno Bertina will tour the United States. The program is supported and organized by the cultural services of the French embassy.

Mr. Tallec specializes in illustrations for children's literature and will be on tour in April and May. He has provided illustrations for a handful of children's books and has even written a wordless book, which is titled Waterloo and Trafalgar.

Like Mr. Tallec, Boulet also focuses on illustrations. Having drawn thousands of pages of comics, he will surely appeal to the younger crowd this April.

Mr. Stiegler, a philosopher, will tour the East Coast in April. His latest non-fiction books join his other works in examining human society and economics.

Among other topics, Mr. Bertina is offering to speak about French contemporary literature, French novelist Claude Simon, and his own works. He will be on tour from February 27 through March 12.

For more information, please visit www.frenchculture.org.

Gilded Treasures on Display in the Golden State

The Palace of Versailles has made its way to the United States, and its decorative vases and jeweled trinkets are as lavish as ever.

In collaboration with France's Musée du Louvre, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco are paying homage to French royalty with its Royal Treasures from the Louvre: Louis XIV to Marie-Antoinette exhibit.

Displaying the extravagant life and luxuries of French monarchs, items in the exhibit show the critical 150 years of French history beginning with Louis XIV's reign and leading up to the French Revolution. Showcased items include Louis XIV's extensive collection of vases, a golden coffee grinder that belonged to Madame de Pompadour (a contemporary of Louis XV), and even a recreation of Marie-Antoinette's bedroom.

The exhibit, which runs through March 17, is hosted by the Legion of Honor Fine Arts Museum in San Francisco. It also marks the beginning of a five-year partnership in which the two museums will exchange artworks and collaborate on exhibits.
Marseille, Provence Kick Off 2013 as Culture Capital

France’s southern metropolis, Marseille, and the surrounding Provence region have jointly begun 2013 as a European Capital of Culture. Along with Košice, Slovakia, the two destinations will roll out a full year of culture and arts programming—and a vast urban re-vamp while they’re at it.

Chosen through an international jury appointed by several national and collective institutions of the European Union, the series, now in its 28th year, serves to highlight regional and urban heritage that lack international renown, or perhaps that deserve the chance to update the world on how dynamic they really are.

This year’s events in Marseille and Provence offer a closer look at the region’s role in history, modern culture, and the future.

A Mediterranean Hub for Millennia

Marseille’s history spans 2,600 years of seafaring, trade, and cultural mixing. Founded by Greek mariners, the trading post, then called Massilia, grew to become a vital commercial meeting point for the Roman Empire, beckoning merchants and hired hands from Europe, Asia Minor, and North Africa.

The region experienced a renaissance beginning in the early 10th century, initiated by the counts of Provence. France annexed Marseille in 1481, though some Provençal cities, like Avignon, remained under control of the Catholic church.

When revolution broke out three centuries later, 500 local militia men marching north to Paris, singing as they traveled, brought with them a song that would become the country’s post-revolutionary national anthem: La Marseillaise. The city and surrounding region boomed during increased trade with France’s colonies. Though it was bombed multiple times during World War II, the city rebuilt and added a modern touch among its historical buildings.

With a population of 860,000 today, Marseille maintains its leading place as one of Europe’s most important seaports, while Provence hosts scores of tourists and sun-seekers each year.

Renewing an Image

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Building the Future

True to the stipulations of the European Capitals of Culture jury, 2013 will provide visitors in the Marseille-Provence region a “high-quality artistic program, which remains accessible to the widest possible audience.” With over 400 related events, the year promises a full menu of activities celebrating both famous and little-known features of local heritage across a broad spectrum of disciplines and fields.

And the festive mood of the Capital of Culture’s opening programs should extend well beyond the next calendar year. The Villa Méditerranée, a boldly designed conference facility for the societies around the Mediterranean rim, will open on March 15 of this year. Its existence is dedicated to the construction of tomorrow’s Mediterranean,” according to its website.

That’s a big job, given issues like immigration and the recent Arab Spring turmoil in several North African states. Whatever the future may bring, the Marseille-Provence region will play an instrumental role in the Mediterranean’s activities. It’s got 2,600 of years of experience doing just that.
French Biotech Company Picks Newark for U.S. Base

After searching throughout the U.S. for a business location in close proximity to medical research and transportation centers, Biotrial Research S.A.S., a French provider of pharmaceutical services centering on contract research, has decided on Newark, N.J., as the headquarters for its North American operations, according to the news organization NJBIZ.

The site that will house the company’s future lab and office space as early as 2014 is located in University Heights Science Park, a research park bordering on the Newark campus of Rutgers University and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Partnership between the new branch of the Rennes-based French company and the surrounding science community is expected to be robust, with Biotrial already having received a Business Employment Incentive Program grant of nearly $700,000 from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority for the purpose of creating some 60 jobs for local Newark residents.

French Jeweler Opens New Boutique in Manhattan

January saw the opening of the first U.S. showroom for French jeweler Marie-Hélène de Taillac. With locations already in Tokyo and Paris, the entrepreneurial bijoutière is now tempting customers from the shop’s upscale spot in Manhattan’s Upper East Side.

The company’s new Manhattan presence is no accident. After strong sales through partnerships with New York luxury department store, Barneys, and other U.S. entities, the brand felt a need to increase visibility in the Big Apple, and hope to satisfy growing American demand from those who live in the same neighborhood as the new store.

“When our biggest fans are at the end of the street, it’s our hope that they come [shop] more often,” explained Thierry Struvey, the location’s manager, in an interview with News From France.

Ms. de Taillac has shown a knack for targeting the right place and the ambassador of a French culinary classic.

Embassy Gathers Elite Group of Space Policy Experts

In a multi-session conference on January 9, François Delattre, Ambassador of France to the United States, hosted “French Space Policy: Providing Insights on European Space Challenges and Opportunities.”

Gathering experts from multiple fields that included government, science, and the aeronautics industry, the event, held at the French embassy, shed light on the current state of Europe-based space activity.

Ambassador Delattre provided introductory remarks, highlighting France’s long dedication to space research and public policy “in the service of Europe” and in conjunction with the EU-administered European Space Agency (ESA).

Among the expert speakers, Thierry Duquesne, Director of Strategy, Programs, and International Relations at France’s National Space Agency (CNES), described France’s unique history and role in European space capacity.

When Charles de Gaulle was President (1959-1969), his conviction that France should possess autonomous access to space, Mr. Duquesne said, is what provided the initial political will, funding, and research to make the goal a reality. In large part because of France’s early leadership role in space activity, Europe now enjoys its own means of launching spacecraft and monitoring weather.

Mr. Duquesne underscored the importance of matching business interests to state-funded research. The next generation of French rockets and satellites “depends on the commercial market,” he said. Sectors related to the space industry include a broad range of scientific and business areas, from climate research and weather surveillance to telecommunications and military intelligence.

The CNES operated a total budget of $2.6 billion in 2012.

Also among the expert speakers was Sean O’Keefe, CEO and Chairman of the Board of EADS North America, a multinational aerospace and defense conglomerate. He served as NASA Administrator, the U.S. space agency’s top position, from 2001 to 2005.

Other presenters included senior representatives from Arianespace, Astrium Americas, CLS America, Safran, and ThalesAalenia-Space.

Truffles With Attitude: French Supplier Thrives in U.S.

When Céline Labaune arrived in the U.S. to complete an MBA, she might not have imagined the success she now enjoys selling French truffles to the American gourmet food market. The founder and owner of Gourmet Attitude, which imports what has been dubbed the “black diamond” of the food world, offers an upscale product to a demanding clientele.

The New York-based brand does not operate without competition, however. While Ms. Labaune trades in the famous black truffle of Périgord, grown in France’s fertile southwest, other producers, based throughout southern Europe and Australia, seek shares of the truffle market as well. Some grow the same species of Périgord black truffle (Tuber melanosporum, for the scientifically minded), or different varieties of the prized fungus altogether.

The businesswoman felt the strain of a French-products surtax, which was eventually lifted in 2011. With the levy’s disappearance came stiffer competition, a reality for which Gourmet Attitude compensates by emphasizing Périgord truffles’ unique qualities and the advantage of offering them following the December-through-March growing season. In Australia, by contrast, truffles grow from June through August.

Ms. Labaune made her start as a business owner when, after several years in the food business following her studies, she launched her own outfit. “I had a Green Card and a network of French and U.S. partners, she explained in an interview with News From France. Gourmet Attitude opened in April 2003 and now services a select group of high-end establishments from New York City to California.

With nine years on the books, the business has established itself as both a purveyor of a fine product and the ambassador of a French culinary classic. The owner describes part of her initial business idea as “wanting to represent a very French product,” according to the website French Morning. She chose well: the black Périgord truffle has “always been well-received in the American market,” she told News From France.

An evolution in knowledge and taste has made for a more sophisticated customer base—"a challenge Ms. Labaune has more than adapted to handle. “I examine every truffle one by one, which we have flown in, before delivering them to restaurants.”

Her combination of passion and commitment would seem to be paying off. In addition to a loyal set of clients, the company has expanded into the online sales market, notably through the luxury product site Gilt.com. And with truffle prices having surged in the past year from $500 to $750 per pound, Gourmet Attitude is reaping the benefits of brisk business with a French touch.

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French Pilot Continues Tradition at U.S. Air Force Academy

Second Lieutenant Nicolas Portrait has just completed a five-month stint at the U.S. Air Force Academy—an exchange, along with seven other French aspirants, or cadets, that forms the latest chapter of a long tradition between the French and American aerial militaries.

Called the Faire Face program, which translates to “Stand Tall,” the bilateral exchange sponsors French and U.S. military pilots for short-term stays in the opposite country. From July through December 2012, 2nd Lt. Portrait shared courses and training with American airmen at the Colorado Springs, Colo., facility. American participants spend time at the Ecole de l’Air de Salon de Provence, in France’s southeast.

An intensive academic and training regimen, punctuated by trips around the U.S., to cities like Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington, provided an experience the young French pilot calls “rich in exchanges and learning.”

The opportunity to train in the U.S. proved “an occasion to create strong friendships with my American classmates; bonds that I’m sure will allow me to better know and understand” future American partners, 2nd Lt. Portrait said.

Faire Face traces its roots back to 1968. Robert Sargent Shriver, then the American ambassador to France, perceived a need for greater cooperation between the countries. The following year, with the support of General Thomas Moorman, Superintendent of the U.S. Air Force, and General Claude Grigaut, the head of the equivalent French Air Force school, the first participants packed their bags for their host country.

Judging by its 400 alumni, the program is a springboard for success. Richard Wolczynski, who took part in the inaugural 1969 exchange, served as Major Chief of the French Air Force, the body’s top post, from 2002 to 2006. Three American participants have gone on to become astronauts. Stéphane Abrial, the former French Air Force chief (2006-2009) and the first non-American to assume leadership of NATO’s Allied Transformation Command (ACT), based in Norfolk, Va. (2009-2012), went through the program in 1974.

Now back in France, 2nd Lt. Portrait will carry with him a tradition of French-American air training now in its sixth decade.

French Partners Add World Flavor to U.S. Music Festival

When the 10th edition of an annual world music festival took to New York City’s Webster Hall in January, few might have grasped the extent to which French organizers played a role—or rather, continued a French tradition in global sounds.

The 2013 globalFEST, a concert that promotes world music in the North American market, rolled out at Webster Hall from January 3 through 13 to a positive response from critics and attendees alike.

The event grew from the collaboration of three New York-based music curators, with whom several French organizers have partnered to bring a diverse palette of music to an equally international city. The Higher Education, Arts & French Language division of the French embassy has assisted since the series first began in 2003.

“GlobalFEST has found new ways to connect people,” says Emmanuel Morlet, who directs the music division of the French embassy’s cultural services. “It has been thrilling to help this event grow and reinforce [...] the cultural exchange between America and the rich musical communities of the Francophone world.”

Mr. Morlet added that his team tries to emphasize the position Paris enjoys as a world music hub. Scores of international artists travel there to perform, record, and conduct business with their France-based stakeholders.

A 501(c)3 organization, globalFEST also innovates with funding through traditional and cutting-edge methods. With support drawn from the Ford Foundation, which is an American philanthropic group, the French Music Export Office, and the crowd-funding web platform, Kickstarter, the group manages the globalFEST Touring Fund. The account is divided among applicant artists and groups, who benefit from a support stream that allows them to launch concert tours, record albums, or finance other necessities of creative production.

This year’s globalFEST featured 12 groups on three stages, and sought, as every year, to “bring global sounds from the margins to center stage.” In continuation of the organization’s support for music makers based in New Orleans who were affected by Hurricane Katrina, the 2013 show included The Stooges Brass Band, christened “Best Contemporary Brass Band” at the 2011 Big Easy Music Awards.

French Baroque Music Featured in Washington Concert

On January 11 and 12, a Washington-based early music ensemble performed some of the era-defining works of the French Baroque period.

Over 300 years ago, Louis XIV fostered a group of musical masters at his royal court, including the composers Jean-Baptiste Lully and Marc-Antoine Charpentier, whose lofty pieces were heard earlier this month at Washington’s National Cathedral. The cathedral’s own chamber vocal ensemble joined an orchestra led by conductor Julien Chauvin to perform stately Baroque motets written by the two composers.

Mr. Chauvin, the 2003 laureate of the Concours international de musique ancienne de Bruges and co-director of the acclaimed Cercle de l’Harmonie ensemble, headed the orchestra composed of period strings and organ.

The ensemble was also joined by Robert Eisenstein and Christopher Kendall, both founding members of the much-admired Folger Consort, the chamber music ensemble of the Folger Shakespeare Library, also in Washington.

Soccer Pro Joins Ranks of French Playing in MLS

When French soccer pro Peter Luccin announced in December 2012 that he would be playing in Dallas, Texas, some were surprised by his decision. But he joins a growing number of French players to make the move to the U.S., where Major League Soccer (MLS) has taken on 20 French pros since 2005.

“He’s going to add value to our team,” said Schellas Hyndman, head coach of FC Dallas, on the French Morning website. “His résumé speaks for itself.”

Mr. Luccin is not the first Frenchman to pull up stakes for U.S. soccer. Thierry Henry, a former captain of the French national team and part of the squad that won the FIFA World Cup in 1998, currently plays for the New York Red Bulls.

Though the sports scene is decidedly different in the U.S., where soccer competes with basketball and football, players sometimes see a chance to develop.

“I accepted a small salary, but I wanted to play and things went very quickly,” said Sébastien Le Toux, of the Philadelphia Union, according to FIFA.com. He has made the U.S. home since 2009.

Didier Domi, who since 2011 has played for the New England Revolution, said he “can feel the enthusiasm among the other French players. When you see that Thierry [Henry] is here... it makes other players want to come and give it a try.”
**French Economist and MIT Professor to Advise Obama**

When she was still a history student at Paris’s *École Normale Supérieure* in the early 1990s, French economist Esther Duflo probably wasn’t expecting to become, 20 years later, an advisor to the President of the United States and a laboratory director at a leading American university.

At 40, Ms. Duflo, who co-founded and directs the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Laboratory (J-PAL) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), was nominated in December 2012 by U.S. President Barack Obama to join the Global Development Council, a group created in 2010 to help define U.S. development policies abroad.

Ms. Duflo can boast a long history of accomplishments. After completing her economics studies in France in 1995, she headed to the United States to begin doctoral research at MIT. She also earned the highly prestigious MacArthur Fellowship, awarded in 2009.

Ms. Duflo’s work has already earned her the ear of some of the world’s most powerful figures. Her nomination at the U.S. Global Development Council will give her a powerful new forum to pursue her fight against world poverty.

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**French-American Teamwork in the Dakar Rally**

French citizen and California resident Eric Vigouroux has one passion in life: professional rally racing. From January 5 through 20, Mr. Vigouroux attempted to add to his many career wins in a three-country trail through South America called the Dakar 2013.

Although run in South America today, the Dakar race draws its name from the first of its kind staged in 1979: a 6,200-mile trek from the Paris’s Place Trocadéro, at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, through northern and western Africa to Dakar, the capital of Senegal. The original “Paris-Dakar” would give rise to an annual race and a vibrant subculture of die-hard fans.

Though Mr. Vigouroux is French, he lives and operates his team in San Diego, Calif. His technical crew for the 2013 race was composed of a French-American mix.

In a remark made famous by the legend that epitomizes the Dakar event, founder and Frenchman Thierry Sabine said the route offered “a challenge for those who go; a dream for those who stay behind.” Through the efforts of drivers like Mr. Vigouroux, followers can enjoy the challenge and passion first set in motion in Paris in 1979.