The month of October brought news and diverse examples in French-American cooperation. When the French Embassy in Washington hosted Press Freedom Night on October 2, we honored the right to free speech and information, a value we share with the U.S. I was happy to share the podium with representatives from Reporters Without Borders. Leaders from the Peter Mackler Award, which recognizes journalists working in repressive conditions, also presented their great work.

Several French leaders traveled to Washington on October 10 through 12 for the Annual Meetings at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Pierre Moscovici, France’s Minister of Economy and Finance, spoke at these institutions and the Council on Foreign Relations. Pascal Canfin, Minister for Development, appeared at the IMF and the World Bank, as well as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Brookings Institution, where he discussed France’s development and climate policies.

Nicolas Hulot, Special Envoy of the French President for the Protection of the Planet, likewise visited a number of U.S. leaders in environmental policy. His trip extended through Colorado and California, where he met with green-energy innovators and entrepreneurs.

On the subject of international conflict, the French Embassy has responded to the need for greater awareness of the crisis in Central African Republic. The country has been in disarray since rebels overthrew the government this past March. Together with its African, American, and other partners, France is taking steps to stabilize the country.

In line with France’s priorities in economic diplomacy, I traveled to Detroit on October 15 to help inaugurate a new factory, built by Plastic Omnium. As one of the 150 French businesses active around Detroit, the group has had great success in the region and employs some 4,000 people there. I then traveled to Chicago, where I had the privilege on October 25 to bestow the Legion of Honor on Richard Sandor. Known as a pioneer of financial futures, Mr. Sandor has also worked tirelessly to promote environmental finance.

Finally, I was happy to attend an event on global governance hosted by the Brookings Institution on October 28. The following day, I attended the annual gala in Washington for the Institut Curie, a Paris-based cancer research organization, also attended by U.S. Senators Edward Markey (Massachusetts) and Barbara Mikulski (Maryland).

From press freedom to ministerial visits, from African security to celebrating French-U.S. trade, environmental policy, and medicine, France is proud to be partnered with its American colleagues and friends.
France Shines in World Aerobatic Championships

On October 20, France was judged the world’s best at the 100th annual World Aerobatic Championships at the North Texas Regional Airport. The competition occurred over a 12-day period from October 9 to 20, when some of the best stunt-flying pilots in the world competed. France took home gold medals in the individual, team, men’s, and women’s categories. Captain François Le Vot won the men’s title and Aude Lemordan was awarded the women’s title of championne du monde. Each pilot presented three different flight sequences: “known,” “unknown,” and “freestyle.” These different programs allowed the competitors to show the diversity and breadth of their aeric fly expertise. The results of all three sequences were then combined and tabulated to determine the winner.

In addition to the success of first-place winners Mr. Le Vot and Ms. Lemordan, the men’s and women’s teams exhibited other honorable performances. Olivier Masurel, Captain François Rallet, Nicolas Ivanoff, and Alexandre Leboulanguer all placed in the top 10 for the men’s division, with Kathel Boulanger winning the bronze for France in the women’s division.

Ambassador Attends Opening of Detroit Auto Plant

On October 15, Ambassador François Delattre visited Detroit to help cut the ribbon at a new major plant built by Inergy Automotive Systems. Significant investments made by the French company Plastic Omnium made the opening of the plant possible. Plastic Omnium is a large supplier of the American automobile industry and operates six plants employing nearly 4,000 people in the U.S. The new facility will create many new jobs in the area.

In addition to funding the new automotive plant, Plastic Omnium’s chairman and CEO, Laurent Burelle, also announced a long-term commitment to Detroit’s “Focus: HOPE” program. The nonprofit program is designed to develop and empower Michigan’s workforce by providing education, job training, and food to the community. The new plant will also provide opportunities to hire employees and recruit interns from the “Focus: HOPE” program’s engineering and information technology services.

Some 150 French companies are active in the Detroit area.

Embassy of France Honors Press Freedom in Washington

On October 2, the Embassy of France, in partnership with Reporters Without Borders USA, gathered diplomatic officials, journalists, and press freedom activists to honor press freedom.

The evening also highlighted the fifth anniversary of the Peter Mackler Award, given to journalists working in environments where information is often limited or suppressed.

The prize is administered by the Global Media Forum and bears the name of the late reporter and Washington bureau chief for the Agence France-Presse, Peter Mackler.

As part of the special evening, a photo exhibit, titled Revolutions: Photographs of the Arab Spring, was inaugurated. It showcased 55 photographs by the late Rémi Ochlik, a French war photographer who was killed on assignment.

Over repeated trips that began in 2011, Mr. Ochlik traveled to North Africa to document the Arab Spring events in Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Tunisia.

In February 2012, he died at the age of 28 during the bombardment of a media center in Homs, Syria. His photographs have been published in the Wall Street Journal, Le Monde, Time Magazine, Paris Match, and VSD.

More than 200 people came to see Mr. Ochlik’s photographs at the Embassy’s cultural center, La Maison Française. Ambassador François Delattre, who spoke at the event, described hosting the program “an immense honor” for the Embassy of France.

In D.C., Embassy Shares “Lessons” in Global Recovery

On October 14, the French-American Global Forum (FAGF), in partnership with the newspaper Le Monde Diplomatique, presented its second installment of the “Le Monde Diplomatique Debates.” Hosted by American University’s School of International Service, (SIS) the topic of the session was “Five Years Later: Lessons from the 2008 Financial Crisis.”

The debate featured experts from both France and the United States. Frédéric Doré, Minister-Counselor of the Embassy of France to the U.S., introduced the conference by discussing the lessons learned since the start of the global economic downturn. Mr. Doré emphasized the need to “strike a smart balance between fiscal consolidation and support for demand” in today’s post-crisis phase.

James Goldgeier, Dean of the SIS, also participated.

Romuald Sciora, Founder and Director of the FAGF, also spoke at this year’s event. The series aims to foster discussion and familiarize American decision-makers to the foreign policy outlook of Le Monde Diplomatique.
Protecting the Planet: Special Envoy Nicolas Hulot

As Special Envoy of the French President for the Protection of the Planet, Nicolas Hulot is a renowned advocate for climate issues, resulting from his longtime presence as a TV journalist and documentary filmmaker on the environment. Mr. Hulot recently visited Washington to talk with U.S. and international experts. News From France sat down to learn more about his work and activity in the nation’s capital.

What was the purpose of your visit to Washington?

The idea is to strengthen French environmental diplomacy on behalf of the president. You obviously have two senior ministers, Laurent Fabius and Pascal Canfin, both of whom I was with recently and who are also in Washington at the moment. The purpose of my work in the United States is, in light of the “COP 21” climate conference that France will host in 2015, to try and understand the positions of different political and economic actors in the multilateral process of climate change negotiation. My goal is to build consensus as well, as the United States will play a decisive role in 2015.

It is important to consider the many viewpoints on this topic. France has perceived a split within U.S. politics regarding climate change. The Democrats are pursuing climate change initiatives while the Republicans are generally not. France understands that it is important to consider opposing arguments in order to fully grasp the issue’s complexity. We must look to the U.S. for new arguments to generate the most effective negotiation process. In France, we often put environmental arguments first, while the U.S. focuses more on economic issues. Now, an increasing number of American officials realize that the cost of inaction on environmental issues may be greater than the cost of action.

Furthermore, there exists a link between climate change and internal security for the United States. This is the reason I met with officials at the Pentagon and Vice-Admiral David Titley, U.S. Navy, who has worked extensively on these issues.

Whom else did you meet with during your stay?

I met with several U.S. Representatives, both Democratic and Republican, the Pentagon, and Congress. But my time in Washington was not spent only in meetings with political representatives. I also met with NGOs, as it is important to hear counter-arguments from private actors who play a powerful role in finding a solution. Yesterday evening I met the heads of multinational organizations that focus on the subject of energy.

We met with think tanks that work on future solutions as well, not only on technological initiatives, but also legal and economic. France’s enthusiasm to host the 2015 climate conference points to our spirit of positivity. This is a very complicated crisis to resolve—but we are trying to turn this into an opportunity. We wish to share in these efforts as well.

What could be the role of the France and the United States together?

Ideally, for us, it would be a real blessing to foster French-American collaboration before the conference in Paris. During this trip, we had several good discussions concerning the oceans. It’s important to remember that the United States is the largest stakeholder of territorial ocean rights in the world. And even if it is rather far behind the U.S., France comes second in territorial ocean rights. We could undertake a common initiative to develop the protected areas. We also discussed the implementation of the Montego Bay convention on the Right of the Sea, on which our policies do not match completely, but about which we had much to discuss.

I am confident about my visit in Washington. We have a good partnership with the United States. The simple fact that President Obama is aiming to reduce gas emissions by 17 percent is already a positive sign. Afterwards, we will see: could this go further? One must hope to find the key to further environmental protections.

How is France engaged outside of Washington in its efforts to address climate change?

I recently went to Colorado to see green technology initiatives. In Washington I met with think tanks that work on new economic models. In France, we, too have our own proposals and perspectives.

I met recently with the Ambassador of Haiti to the Organization of American States, and we spoke about deforestation. Prior to my trip to Washington, I traveled to Costa Rica to study the economic model they were using to reverse deforestation in their country. It is also that approach that consists of looking at current problems and striving for solutions in the future.

D.C. Exhibit Shows Early Photos of 19th-Century Paris

The National Gallery of Art in Washington opened a new exhibition on September 29, entitled Charles Marville: Photographer of Paris. The exhibition features the work the legendary early Paris photographer, Charles Marville. His celebrated shots capture the city during its modernization period in the mid-1850s.

During the 19th century, Paris underwent a process of complete transformation. Under the direction of Emperor Napoléon III and his chief urban planner, Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, Old Paris was essentially demolished. Narrow, winding streets were overhauled to make way for the new Grands Boulevards that are characteristic of the city today.

Mr. Marville’s photographs display different stages of this sweeping change, from the destruction of the old city to the emergence of the modern, present-day Paris.

Visitors have the opportunity to explore the bygone Paris depicted in Mr. Marville’s photographs until January 5.

Chicago, Paris Sign High School Education Agreement

The first week of October, Chicago Public Schools and the Académie de Paris signed an agreement that established a new educational partnership between seven French and U.S. schools.

Under the partnership, students from Chicago and Paris schools, including two elementary schools, two middle schools, and three high schools, will benefit from the use of technologies such as Skype, online conversations via social media, and video conferences as tools for linguistic exchange. In addition, French and American students will take part in more foreign exchanges between France and the United States. These visits allow students to see first-hand the historical, cultural, and linguistic attributes of the two countries.

A group of Chicago high school students will explore France in the fall of 2014, while students from French high schools will have the opportunity to experience American culture by spending time in Chicago high schools.

Teachers also benefit from the Chicago-Paris school partnership through virtual and in-person teacher cooperation. The program allows for the use of new methods and tools for teaching foreign languages, whether the language is French or English.

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France conducted some very active diplomacy in the United States this month. From October 10 through 12, three leaders convened in Washington, D.C., for dialogue with their American and international partners. Focusing on global economics, development, and the environment, each figure drew from his expertise in order to advance common solutions to shared problems. The result was greater consensus, with further action slated for the immediate and longer-term future.

Transatlantic Economics

Pierre Moscovici, Minister of the Economy and Finance, began his U.S. visit with a speech on October 10 at Harvard University in Cambridge, Ma. Titled “New Challenges for Europe—An Economic and Political Outlook of its Future,” the event addressed France’s response at national, EU, and international levels to the global financial crisis that has impacted both sides of the Atlantic.

The following day, Mr. Moscovici spoke during a morning conference at the Council on Foreign Relations. Moderated by former U.S. Ambassador Robert Kimmitt, the event gathered policymakers, journalists, and non-profit professionals from across the spectrum of financial and global finance stakeholders.

Mr. Moscovici presented a markedly more positive outlook than some critics had been forecasting. “What a difference a year makes,” he said, pointing to the fact that previously, while some were predicting the disintegration of the Euro currency, the question has since been abandoned in favor of a more positive discussion of future growth. He added that decisive measures have been taken in Paris and other European capitals to emerge from the crisis stronger than before.

The Minister likewise shed light on France’s current fiscal reforms. Having presented to the National Assembly, France’s lower chamber, the draft budget for 2014 just before coming to Washington, he cited tax credits for business and research which will enable a six-percent reduction in labor costs.

“The 2014 budget embodies this historic ambition” to re-energize France’s economy, he said. Other measures include a greater flexibility structure on savings regulations for companies hoping to access greater equity financing, as well as the establishment of the Public Investment Bank to work alongside private banks.

Mr. Moscovici also described France’s role in supporting a broad global recovery. He shared France’s continuing goal to maintain “evolving international consensus [through] the right balance between austerity and growth... The U.S. and France hold positions that are quite similar” on budgetary issues, Mr. Moscovici said.

In addition to his appearance at the Council on Foreign Relations, Mr. Moscovici attended the IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings that week-end. Among the many events taking place, the Minister joined Jim Kim, President of the World Bank, on October 12 for a public signing of the Trust Fund for African Sustainable Extractive Industries. Each of Mr. Moscovici’s public appearances reflected France’s continuing leadership as global powers try to steer a mutually agreeable path toward stronger growth and broader stability for all.
Endeavors in Development

The World Bank partnership was just one of several instances of French involvement in Washington on the subject of global development. Pascal Canfin, Minister Delegate for Development, led France’s aid efforts during the IMF and World Bank meetings, namely through the struggle to eradicate extreme poverty, as well as seeking solutions to climate change and in sustainable development models.

Mr. Canfin also addressed French efforts on climate change. During a conference at the Brookings Institution on October 11, and speaking alongside Rachel Kyte, World Bank Vice President for Sustainable Development, the French and American leaders proposed common goals and strategies in preparing for a more prosperous social and environmental future.

While at Brookings Mr. Canfin emphasized the correlation between rising global temperatures and the risk of higher infant mortality, which would affect developing nations disproportionately more than advanced economies. A warmer world “is a world where more children below five years old do not reach five years old,” he said, adding that France will remain engaged in the global climate change debate leading up to the “COP 21,” or 21st Conference of the Parties meeting devoted to the same subject, set for 2015 in Paris.

The Minister then took his message to the Washington-based Organization of American States (OAS), where France is examining avenues for developmental progress with its partners in Central and South America.

Environmental Action

Working in tandem with Messrs. Moscovici and Canfin was a longtime presence among France’s environmental champions. Nicolas Hulot, a broadcast journalist, was named Special Envoy for the Protection of the Planet by French President François Hollande in December of 2012. Since then he has fostered numerous interactions among French and international policymakers on environmental protection, and his journey to Washington was in the same vein.

Joining Mr. Canfin during the press conference at the OAS on October 11, Mr. Hulot shared his view that climate change constitutes “a deep political crisis that affects all the men and women of the world.” He cited the natural disasters in the United States as an example of how “climate change is here and is especially affecting fishermen and farmers,” whose livelihoods depend on the conditions of their local environment.

In a separate press conference at the French Embassy later that day, Mr. Canfin indicated that international climate efforts remain complicated, yet he expressed optimism for future possibilities with the U.S. and other partner nations. “One must hope to find the key” to further progress, he said, and shared his upcoming travel plans to Colorado and California, where he would visit entrepreneurs in alternative energy production.

In short, each French leader contributed to what proved a very dynamic, and certainly busy, several days in the U.S. capital. On subjects as diverse as the global economy, aid and development, and the environment, Messrs. Moscovici, Canfin, and Hulot expressed France’s strong desire to work in Washington—indeed, with partners around the globe—in efforts to improve living conditions for the world’s current and future inhabitants.
World’s Largest Cruise Ship Being Built in France

The Miami-based cruise ship company Royal Caribbean has commissioned French construction giant STX France to build what will one day be the world’s largest ocean liner.

When completed, the ship will measure 1,180 feet long, weigh 225,282 tons, carry up to 8,000 passengers and crew, and cost the company approximately $1.35 billion. STX’s shipyard in the port city of Saint-Nazaire is one of a handful in the world capable of accommodating such a massive project.

The company is well known for having constructed some of the world’s most famous ships, including the RMS Queen Mary II and the SS Normandie.

This will be the 12th cruise liner that STX has built for Royal Caribbean. At the September steel-cutting ceremony, STX CEO Laurent Castaing described the current project as “one of the biggest challenges ever undertaken in the history of our company.”

Work on the ship that has not yet been named began in September of this year. The vessel is expected to sail in 2016.

PUF Laureate Wins 2013 Nobel Prize for Medicine

James Rothman, a biologist at Yale University, was awarded the 2013 Nobel Prize for his discoveries of machinery regulating vesicle traffic, a major transport system in our cells. He shares the Nobel Prize in Medicine with Randy Schekman (University of California-Berkeley) and Thomas Südhof (Stanford University).

Professor Rothman and his team have developed a close collaboration on this specific topic with a French research team from the Ecole Normale Supérieure, led by Professor Eric Perez. Their joint work has been supported by the Partner University Fund (PUF) since 2011. The goal of their project is to decipher fusion in intracellular trafficking. PUF is the French Embassy’s flagship program for transatlantic research.

The Fund has yielded extraordinary intellectual progress and is breaking new ground to foster innovative academic exchanges. It promotes and supports innovative and interdisciplinary projects, with the aim to establish or reinforce long-lasting transatlantic partnerships. The PUF offers a single tool to support multifaceted projects, including joint research, shared curricula, dual degree and mobility. Since 2007, the PUF has supported more than 70 transatlantic research partnerships.

Annual Young Leaders Meeting Held in Atlanta This Year

On October 16, a group of 40 up-and-coming French and American individuals were welcomed to Atlanta for the annual Young Leaders Meeting.

Over the course of their visit, the group met with prominent leaders who shared their experiences and discussed issues on local, regional, and global levels. Kasim Reed, the Mayor of Atlanta, Denis Barbet, the Consul General of France, and Dr. Alan Abramovitz, a political science professor at Emory University were among the presenters at the meeting.

The group also had the chance to interact with leaders at the Coca-Cola Company, the CNN Center, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, and The Carter Center, among others. They also found time to explore some of the city’s famous hotspots, including Stone Mountain Park and the Atlanta BeltLine.

Held annually by the French-American Foundation since 1981, the program provides the opportunity for the group to network and discuss issues of common concern. It has succeeded in deepening understanding between France and the United States.

The meeting’s location alternates between France and the United States. In 2012, it was held in Le Havre, a port city in Northern France. Scott Holcomb, a second-year Young Leader and State Representative of Georgia, introduced this year’s group to Atlanta. Participants had the opportunity to spend five days in the American Southeast to network, meet important community leaders, and explore the thriving city.

Atlanta has grown to become a city with a strong global presence. It is home to the third largest concentration of Fortune 500 companies in the United States, several prominent research universities such as Emory and Georgia Tech, as well as the Hartsfield-Jackson International airport, the world’s busiest air travel hub by passenger volume.

The city also has a growing French community: 120 French companies have offices in Georgia, and the number of French citizens living in Atlanta’s city limits is now over 1,000, a 20-percent increase over last year.

Winners of the NETVA Program Network in San Francisco

The fourth annual New Technology Venture Accelerator program, or NETVA, concluded in October with week-long immersion programs in San Francisco, Boston, and Washington, D.C. An initiative of the Consulate General of France in Boston and San Francisco, NETVA is an award-winning program of preparation for and exposure to high-tech US markets for young French companies.

After a competitive selection process, 12 high-technology startups were selected in June of this year to participate in the NETVA program. The winners were paired with American companies for three months of mentorship, which culminated in an intensive immersion program in a city which best suited their company’s needs.

On October 6, five of the 12 laureates arrived in San Francisco to participate in a week of mentoring, training, and networking in the Silicon Valley. The week’s schedule was designed to help the winners assess their business opportunities in the US and to facilitate their expansion into America’s high-tech markets. Workshops were run by several prominent business leaders in the Silicon Valley, including Steve Blank, who was part of or founded eight start-ups and is a recipient of several teaching awards. The workshops were designed to help the businesses improve their strategies, presentations, and development plans.

Private meetings were another opportunity for the entrepreneurs to meet with either experts in their industry, potential partners, consultants, lawyers, or accountants. Throughout the week, every laureate had the opportunity to pitch their projects in front of coaches and other professionals.
During the month of October, Paris held its largest exhibition of street art ever at La Tour 13. In addition to being the most extensive street art exhibition, it was also one of the most unique. The project consisted of the complete transformation of an abandoned apartment building into a dynamic creative space. The Parisian Gallery Itinerrance developed and organized the endeavor by inviting 100 street artists from around the world to work their magic in decorating the interior of La Tour.

The nine-story apartment building, which was located in the thirteenth arrondissement of Paris, was set to be demolished in November. With the support of the property owner and mayor of the thirteenth district, art gallery owner Mehdi Ben Cheikh embarked on the ambitious project of giving new life to the abandoned building.

Working for more than seven months, the guest artists created a masterpiece of ephemeral art using the building’s walls, ceilings, and floors as their canvases. Each artist chose and decorated one of 36 rooms, a total of nearly 15,000 square feet of creative space.

Three American artists participated in the project: Cope2, JonOne, and Indie 18. All three artists are native New Yorkers, but have travelled the world thanks to international recognition of their art work. JonOne, who moved to Paris in the 1980s, has since become a leading figure in Parisian street art, drawing from an eclectic set of American and French influences such as Jackson Pollock, Jean Dubuffet, and even Henri Matisse.

Some artists, like Rodolphe Cintorino of France and A1one of Iran, used the opportunity to express political messages through their art. Themes displaying war, suffering, and oppression moved visitors. Other artists, such as the Chilean-born Inti Castro, took a more light-hearted approach to the project. Inti used the project as a way to celebrate the diversity of his heritage by displaying the colorful figures, symbols, and designs of his native country.

Moreover, the artists did not limit themselves to just spray paint. Doors, chairs, pipes, bath tubs, sinks, and window frames were used to change the structure of the rooms, allowing visitors to enter into labyrinth-like spaces. For example, French artist Sambre filled a living room with old doors and window frames to create the impression of walking through a maze.

For the artists, the knowledge that their creations would be destroyed after the end of the exhibition only added to the beauty of the project. One French artist explained that the demolition of the building epitomized the essence of street art: an art that is in a constant state of transformation and evolution. The destruction of the building itself was yet another artistic element of the project.

Visitors could explore the free exhibition for thirty days only, from October 1 to 31. On November 1, the exhibition closed to the public.

However, on the interactive website of the project, www.tourparis13.fr, visitors had a chance to “save” the work of art in digital form. For ten days after the closing of the exhibition, visitors could go to the website and click on their favorite pieces, pixel by pixel. While the works of art could be preserved in digital form, the building was eventually destroyed, as was planned from the start of the project.

La Tour 13 exhibition allowed the public to discover the beauty and diversity of street art by combining the work of many talented artists of different backgrounds into a cohesive and interactive work of art.
After Chicago, Lascaux Cave Exhibition Opens in Houston

On October 18, the Houston Museum of Natural Science opened an exhibition featuring the paintings of the Lascaux Caves of southwest France. The exhibition, Stone Age: The Cave Paintings of Lascaux, presents the 20,000-year-old Paleolithic cave art in five life-size replications. Created by the General Council of Dordogne with support from the European Union and French Ministry of Culture and Communication, the exhibition has travelled from France to Chicago and now to Houston. Visitors can view exact replicas of the famous Lascaux caves.

The exhibition uses state-of-the-art digital technologies to create an interactive exploration. The famous frescoes depicting animals such as horses, bulls, deer, cats, a rhinoceros, and even a unicorn are reproduced using a combination of digital technology and hand-painted brushstrokes. Alongside the animal paintings are representations of prehistoric humans engaged in various activities. Even the lighting of the caves has been matched and replicated to create an experience as close to the original as possible. As visitors explore the exhibit, they examine the paintings under the same flickering candlelight that early man would have used.

In addition to touring the virtual cave, visitors can also observe life-size models of the Cro-Magnon figures that would have lived during the time the artwork was created. Interactive terminals and multimedia enhance the exhibition by providing a hands-on learning experience.

The Lascaux cave site, located in the Dordogne region of southwest France, was accidently stumbled upon in 1940 and attracted over one million of visitors from 1948 to 1963. In order to preserve the site, the caves have been closed to the public since then, making the chance to see their likenesses even more appealing. Some of the paintings on display in the exhibition have never been reproduced until now.

The exhibition in Houston runs through March 23, 2014.