Dear friends,

It is with great pleasure that I write to you as the new French Ambassador to the United States. Having just completed five years as the French Representative to the United Nations in New York, I am honored to have the privilege of serving France in Washington, D.C. This is not my first time at the Embassy, as I was an advisor on Middle East issues from 1987-1991. While the challenges we face nearly 25 years later are certainly different, I am thrilled to return to the American capital for what is sure to be a rewarding experience.

While there is much to be accomplished between France and the United States, our mission extends well beyond our two countries. The international community faces security threats that concern a large number of countries throughout the world: notably the barbaric acts against civilians by the Islamic State [IS], or Daesh, in Iraq and Syria, a crisis for which Presidents Barack Obama and François Hollande came together to fight following their meeting at the NATO summit on September 4, and for which a conference for peace and security was held in Paris on September 15, attended by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. As we continue to watch the worsening Ebola epidemic in West Africa, and the disputes of territorial integrity of Ukraine, it is imperative that we look beyond our own borders and work together to ameliorate these situations.

Beyond these growing security threats, I count high among my priorities the growth of Franco-American partnerships in several fields, including education, innovation, and technology, as well as cultural and economic diplomacy. French consulates and organizations throughout the country consistently seek new ways in which to strengthen the historically positive relationship between our two countries. Just in the month of September, we saw a successful trial run of an exact replica of l’Hermione, the ship that brought Marquis de Lafayette to America, the awarding of the prestigious Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award to French neuroscientist Alim-Louis Benabid, and the commencement of a year-long partnership among contemporary artists and curators in France and in Chicago. These efforts seek to engage French and American students, educators, innovators, and thinkers in cross-cultural dialogue.

Finally, it is no secret that I am extremely interested in digital diplomacy and the ways in which technology and social media are changing traditional communication in the international community. I hope you will have the occasion to follow me on Twitter @GerardAraud for frequent updates on the French perspective from Washington, D.C.
Three new Consul Generals begin their mission in the U.S.

Early September marked the arrival of three new Consul Generals of France in the United States.

Pauline Carmona is the first female Consul General of France in San Francisco, and the only female Consul General currently serving in the United States. Her previous positions include Deputy Consul General in Hong Kong and political advisor at the French Embassy in Tokyo. Ms. Carmona officially replaced former Consul General Romain Serman on September 2. She aims to reinforce Franco-American relations in a dynamic region, focusing on the strengths that France can bring to the United States, including entrepreneurship and the development of partnerships in culture, education and economy, with a particular focus on innovation.

Formerly Deputy Spokesperson at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development in Paris, Vincent Floreani started as the new Consul General of France in Chicago in late August. Mr. Floreani brings a wealth of diplomatic experience, as he was previously Deputy Chief of Mission at the French Embassy in the United Arab Emirates, Spokesperson at the French Embassy in London, and Advisor at the French Mission to the UN. At the Consulate of France in Chicago, which covers 13 states in the Midwest, he plans to further strengthen France’s relationship with its American partners. He counts high among his priorities the economy, investment in France, tourism, expansion of cultural and scientific opportunities, the promotion of Francophone studies and cooperation among universities in the two countries.

Gregor Trumel, new Consul General of France in New Orleans, officially began his role in August. He was previously Deputy Chief of Mission at the French Embassy in Denmark. During his time in New Orleans, he will devote himself to supporting a dynamic French community, which grew by 17% over the past year. He will look to a long history of Franco-American relations in the region to strengthen the presence of Francophonie, and reinforce cooperation among secondary and university-level schools in France and Louisiana. He aims to promote French business in a state that is economically promising and proud of its French heritage.

France and America take action in response to growing security threats

Over the past month, the international community has called upon both the United States and France to respond to growing security threats abroad. Both countries have risen to the occasion, taking action to provide support to the populations affected by these threats, most notably in Iraq and Syria.

On September 4 and 5, Presidents Barack Obama and François Hollande participated in the 2014 NATO summit in Wales. The situation in Iraq and Syria was a pressing topic of interest at the conference, and both Presidents had the opportunity to discuss their respective decisions to provide support to the Kurdish people of Iraq and all parties at risk of attack by the terrorist group Daesh (ISIS). Following the executions of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, as well as British aid worker David Haines, it became clear that these acts of senseless violence were a threat to the entire international community. President Hollande affirmed that France was allied with the United States in the coalition to fight Daesh, noting that, “a global threat calls for a global response.” Since the conference, the countries have continued to provide humanitarian and financial assistance to the affected populations.

French and American leaders convened again for an international conference on peace and security in Iraq, held in Paris on September 15. At the conference, hosted by President Hollande and President Fuad Masum of Iraq, representatives from nearly 30 nations pledged their support for a new Iraqi government and condemned the barbaric acts committed against civilians by Daesh. International partners said they would provide resources to Iraq in order to combat Daesh in the region. Secretary of State John Kerry was among the international leaders in attendance, as well as Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Laurent Fabius. The conversation about Daesh continued at the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York the following week.

Ambassador Gérard Araud presents his credentials to President Obama

Over the past month, the international community has called upon both the United States and France to respond to growing security threats abroad. Both countries have risen to the occasion, taking action to provide support to the populations affected by these threats, most notably in Iraq and Syria.

On September 4 and 5, Presidents Barack Obama and François Hollande participated in the 2014 NATO summit in Wales. The situation in Iraq and Syria was a pressing topic of interest at the conference, and both Presidents had the opportunity to discuss their respective decisions to provide support to the Kurdish people of Iraq and all parties at risk of attack by the terrorist group Daesh (ISIS). Following the executions of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, as well as British aid worker David Haines, it became clear that these acts of senseless violence were a threat to the entire international community. President Hollande affirmed that France was allied with the United States in the coalition to fight Daesh, noting that, “a global threat calls for a global response.” Since the conference, the countries have continued to provide humanitarian and financial assistance to the affected populations.

French and American leaders convened again for an international conference on peace and security in Iraq, held in Paris on September 15. At the conference, hosted by President Hollande and President Fuad Masum of Iraq, representatives from nearly 30 nations pledged their support for a new Iraqi government and condemned the barbaric acts committed against civilians by Daesh. International partners said they would provide resources to Iraq in order to combat Daesh in the region. Secretary of State John Kerry was among the international leaders in attendance, as well as Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Laurent Fabius. The conversation about Daesh continued at the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York the following week.

Ambassador Gérard Araud presents his credentials to President Obama

On Thursday, September 18, new Ambassador of France to the United States Mr. Gérard Araud presented his credentials to President Barack Obama at the White House. In the diplomatic world, credentials, or letters of credence, are presented to the host country’s Head of State in order to confirm that an ambassador is authorized to represent his or her country in this position.

This ceremony marked the formal acceptance of Mr. Araud’s appointment by President Obama. The ceremony took place at a critical time for the two countries, when a partnership between France and the United States is vital both domestically and internationally.

A native of Marseille, Mr. Araud worked at the same Embassy in Washington, D.C. 25 years ago as an advisor on Middle East Affairs, and spent the past five years as France’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York City. He said that he was proud and moved by the event.
With the 2014-2015 school year underway in both France and the United States, students are getting back into a routine of class, after-school activities, and in some cases, the mastery of multiple languages. Head of French Schools Department Mark Sherringham oversees the vast network of French accredited schools in the United States and Canada that are accredited by the French Ministry of Education. In Canada, I work under the authority of two Cultural Counselors respectively based in Ottawa and in Quebec City. A French accredited school is a school which teaches the French curriculum, conforms to the pedagogical organization required by the French national education system and recruits a majority of teachers coming from the French Ministry of Education. In North America, there are 53 accredited schools, 46 in the United States and 7 in Canada, enrolling almost 25,000 students, and employing approximately a thousand teachers.

The two main missions of the French Schools Department are organizing the continuing education for the teachers and staff of the French accredited schools, and managing the administrative careers of more than 750 teachers coming from the French Ministry of Education. Another major responsibility is to make sure that the French schools in North America keep in touch with the most recent evolutions and priorities of the French Ministry of Education. My role is really to help these schools maintain their French identity in North America while at the same time adapting to a very competitive environment. One of our priorities in North America is to help promote the French baccalauréate as an efficient means of gaining admission into the best universities in France, North America and the rest of the world.

What differences and similarities do you find between the French education system and that of the United States?
The main difference is that the French education system is a centralized system directly managed by the French Ministry of Education with a national curriculum, national recruitment procedures for the teachers and national administrative rules and pedagogical principles. By contrast, the American system is completely decentralized with direct authority being held by the school districts and the States. Having said that, both systems are now moving away from their original positions: the French system towards more autonomy for the districts and the schools, and the American system towards a national common core curriculum and financial incentives for the schools from the Federal Government. It is fascinating to see that these contrasting changes are thus making the two systems more and more similar! I think that both the French and the Americans have a lot to learn from each other in the field of education, all the more because they are now facing the same kinds of issues related to the democratization of education and the management of teachers. A visit of the French Minister of Education to the United States or of the Secretary of Education to France could be very productive for both sides, especially in the domains of curriculum construction, student grading, teacher evaluation and ways to cope with social and ethnic discrimination.

Why do you believe that there continues to be an interest in French education for young students in the United States?
The French accredited schools in the United States welcome approximately 45% of French or bi-national students, 45% of American students and 10% of international students. The 46 French schools in the United States are located mostly on the East Coast, from Maine to Florida, on the West Coast, from Seattle to San Diego, around the Great Lakes, in Louisiana and in Texas. There are almost no French schools in the central parts of the United States. It is clear from this geography of the French schools in the United States that the interest for French curriculum education is closely linked to the needs of the French or international communities, living in the United States, who want their children to remain in the French school system because they might not stay permanently in the United States. But there are also more and more American parents who want to give to their children an international education and who are impressed by the rigorous and coherent curriculum offered by the French schools, especially at the primary and middle school levels. Our main objective is to convince the American parents to keep their children in the French schools at the high school level by showing them that the French baccalauréate is fully recognized by the best universities in the United States and the rest of the world.

What value does a French-American education hold in today’s society?
A French-American education is today one of the best opportunities students can get to become true “citizens of the world” through the mastery of two universal cultures and languages. The French curriculum is a global and coherent curriculum which values general knowledge in the sciences and the humanities, exactness in reasoning, critical thinking and a spirit of responsibility. The American side brings to the French schools a special interest in experimental sciences, a greater emphasis in sports and the arts, the promotion of creativity, the sense of community service and a confidence-building attitude towards the students. A French-American education offers the best of two worlds and is highly valued today by parents who are looking for a truly international education for their children.
in depth: World Equestrian Games

2014 World Equestrian Games showcase remarkable talent in Normandy

Normandy: a region renowned for its natural beauty, unique gastronomical traditions, and as of this past month, its status as one of the most significant equestrian areas of France. From August 23 to September 7, the World Equestrian Games took place in Caen, Normandy, bringing together top competitors from 76 nations to compete in equestrian events including Jumping, Dressage, and Eventing, all of which are featured in the Olympic Games. The events showcased strong French and American participation in a region with a rich history of equestrian sports.

The choice of Normandy

Since 1990, the World Equestrian Games have been held every four years in accordance with the cycle of the Olympic Games. When it came time to select a city for this year’s Equestrian Games, Normandy emerged as a strong choice—not only is the region a top destination for tourists, but it is also one that is historically significant, both from an equestrian and international perspective.

With commemoration ceremonies taking place in June honoring the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, Caen was the ideal city in which to celebrate international cooperation among nations in a variety of areas extending well beyond sports.

A historically important sport

The tradition of equestrian sport is one that dates back to Ancient Greece. The sport’s predecessor, chariot racing, was featured in the 680 B.C. Ancient Olympic Games, but modern equestrian events as we know them today didn’t appear in the Olympics until the early 20th century, with Jumping and Dressage events first included in the 1900 Paris Olympic Games. Dressage, described by the Olympic Games as “the groundwork for all other disciplines” is an event in which the horse and rider perform predetermined movements from memory. Jumping developed well after Dressage as a means to train foxhunters in England, while Eventing formed through the integration of these two disciplines.

While the formerly mentioned three disciplines are featured in the Olympic Games, the World Equestrian Games include a wider breadth of equine activities, featuring eight of the official disciplines of the Fédération Equestre Internationale, an international governing organization of equestrian sports. The games have evolved over the centuries, as some of the disciplines featured in this year’s Equestrian Games would be hardly recognizable to pioneers of the sport. Vaulting, for example, incorporates gymnastic and dance disciplines on horseback, with competitors performing acrobatic routines all the while dressed in colorful garb of the sort one would see Olympic ice dancers wear.

Medals for France and the U.S.

Dubbed “the most important equestrian area of France” by the World Equestrian Games, Normandy is a region in which the breeding and training of competition horses and highly ranked riders allows for the sport to thrive. This year, France excelled in Vaulting, as Jacques Ferrari earned the highest score in the competition and claimed his place as the new World Champion of the freestyle equestrian discipline. Both humbled and proud in his victory, Ferrari said, “This is the crowning of a long process of many years, not just for myself but my family, friends and teammates, and the culmination of the development of a style I have tried to design.” Fellow Frenchman Nicolas Andreani took home the silver medal for the same discipline, as his freestyle performance helped him earn the sec-
ond highest spot in the competition. Following these individual medals, the French Vaulting team La Cigogne Stables secured the World Team Championship bronze medal, marking the first year that a French team received a medal at the Games. Another French victory included that of the Horseball team in their match against Spain, which took place in Saint-Lô, west of Caen. In the finals, the French women’s team beat Spain 7-0, and the mixed team also secured a victory against Spain, with a final score of 8-7 following a sudden-death round.

While France boasted particularly strong performances in Vaulting and Horseball, the United States excelled in both Reigning and Dressage. In the Individual Reigning Final Competition, the United States thrilled. The discipline is one that is rooted in the traditions of the American West, as the showmanship of ranch horses is tested in front of a large audience. Shawn Flarida and Andrea Fappani took home gold and silver, respectively. Fellow American Mandy McCutcheon took home the bronze medal, becoming the first female individual to receive this honor. McCutcheon spoke with enthusiasm of her place among superb athletes, saying, “I couldn’t be happier, my horse stepped up for me tonight and when they do that, they are great horses. To be behind two such great athletes as Shawn and Andrea is just an amazing feeling.” American Chester Weber was a standout competitor as well, earning 1st place overall in the Individual Driving competition, in which drivers lead horses pulling a carriage through a number of trials which include Dressage, marathon, and Obstacle driving.

Alltech music festival

Held in conjunction with the World Equestrian Games, natural health and science company Alltech sponsored a music festival which drew thousands of spectators seeking entertainment from international and regional talent. Throughout the duration of the Games, there were eight concerts, or 30 hours of live music. The Music Festival was free to all visitors of the World Equestrian Games Village.

With genres including electronic, rock, rap, and even bluegrass, the concert series featured something for every attendee. Themes touched upon musical traditions of a multitude of styles and regions, such as Irish, Québécois, and country. The program featured several popular French and American artists, including names like Kool and the Gang, Aloe Blacc, Misteur Valaire, and Joyce Jonathon.

A bond among sportsmen

The World Equestrian Games is meant to give visitors a unique look into the world of equine sports. The Normandy 2014 Organizing Committee sought to make both Norman culture and the events of the Games accessible to all who attended by utilizing four core values: achievement, openness, respect, and transmission.

The legacy of the Games was perhaps best illustrated by writer Jean-Louis Gouraud’s project, “Around the world with 80 horses,” commissioned specifically for the event. The project featured eighty stories on topics which traced the history of “the incredible bond that has always linked Man and Horse.” Covering topics ranging from notable horses in film to female cavaliers in the Amazon, the stories celebrated a universal appreciation of equestrian sports, which have entertained and challenged adventure-seekers for centuries. A commitment to the rich history and tradition of this pastime with an eye on progress brought Normandy deserved recognition and prestige as the latest host of this exciting event.
Artur Ávila receives the Fields Medal for mathematics

French-Brazilian Artur Ávila, director of Research at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), was recently awarded the Fields Medal. He became the twelfth French recipient out of 55 total winners. Officially known as the International Medal for Outstanding Discoveries in Mathematics, the award is considered to be the highest recognition a mathematician under 40 years old can receive—its prestige is matched with that of the Nobel Prize.

Ávila received the medal for his work on dynamical systems theory—that is, systems which evolve over time, such as the movement of planets, climate models or population dynamics. Along with fellow mathematician Marcelo Viana, he proved a theory that predicts the behavior of billiard balls; specifically, which side of the table a ball will hit even after one million bounces.

At just 35, Ávila is the recipient of many other honors, including both the CNRS Bronze Medal and the Salem Prize in 2006. Both awards are given to young outstanding researchers. Born in Brazil, Ávila studied at the Brazilian National Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IMPA) in Rio de Janeiro while finishing secondary school at the same time.

Ávila came to the Collège de France in 2001 for postdoctoral work, and was recruited two years later by CNRS, eventually becoming a dual citizen. In 2006 he won a three-year fellowship from the Clay Mathematics Institute, allowing him to work at any laboratory in the world. He chose to work part-time at the CNRS-IMPA international joint laboratory in Brazil and at the Institute of Mathematics, a CNRS-Université Pierre et Marie Curie mixed laboratory. Ávila’s achievements, both in France and Brazil, showcase the cooperation between the two countries as well as France’s success in attracting the brightest minds in the fields of science and math. Following Ávila’s achievement, France is second behind the United States as the countries with the highest number of Fields Medal winners.

Lasker-DeBakey award goes to accomplished French scientist

Professor Benabid has received the Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award from the North American Neuromodulation Society CLINATEC in Grenoble, France, was announced as the 2014 Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award recipient for his work with a surgical technique that will help people with advanced Parkinson’s disease.

On September 8, 2014, Professor Alim-Louis Benabid, Chairman of the Board of French bio-medical research center CLINATEC in Grenoble, France, was announced as the 2014 Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award recipient for his work with a surgical technique that will help people with advanced Parkinson’s disease.

The Lasker Foundation has recognized major scientific work in the field of basic and clinical medical research since 1946. A major accomplishment, the Lasker award is considered to be a step towards the Nobel Prize in Medicine. The last French recipient of this award was Alain Carpentier in 2007.

Professor Benabid has received this prestigious award for his contributions towards the treatment of Parkinson’s disease. He developed a deep brain stimulation technique that may reduce tremors and restore motor function in patients with advanced Parkinson’s disease. This surgical technique offers an effective option for a non-drug treatment of this disease.

Benabid’s work on improving treatment for Parkinson’s disease began in 1987, when he found that increasing the frequency of deep brain stimulation was a more effective method of alleviating patients’ tremors. He has since devoted his career to this particular field of study, making significant progress for his patients.

Following the announcement of the prize winners, President François Hollande offered his sincerest congratulations to Professor Benabid. “In developing brain stimulation techniques,” Hollande stated, “Professor Benabid has transformed the treatment of neurological diseases. This prize recognizes the exceptional quality of work performed by Professor Benabid and honors French medical research.”

Benabid serves as Professor Emeritus of biophysics at Université Joseph Fourier in Grenoble, and is a member of the French Academy of Sciences. Benabid helped found CLINATEC in 2009, a multidisciplinary biomedical research center which is located at the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) in Grenoble. This year has proved particularly rewarding for Benabid, as he will be honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the North American Neuromodulation Society at their annual conference in December.
Charles Aznavour tours North America

Charles Aznavour, one of France’s most celebrated entertainers, played three major shows in North America this past September. Best known for his love songs, as well as his appearances in films such as Shoot the Piano Player and Candy, Aznavour is one of the most celebrated music hall entertainers to emerge from France. He performed at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles on September 13, Montreal’s Bell Centre on September 17, and New York’s the Theatre at Madison Square Garden on September 20.

While Aznavour may be best known for music that made him immensely popular in France, he has always remained close to his Armenian roots. His father was a singer who greatly influenced Aznavour’s childhood singing style, and who immigrated to France from Turkey along with Aznavour’s mother. By age 9, Aznavour had made both his stage and screen debut, helping him develop a signature style of performing and acting at a young age. This expressive style, along with the universal themes of his music, has given him fans from all over the world.

MoMA celebrates work of Toulouse-Lautrec

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City is currently displaying over one hundred works of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec in an exhibition titled “The Paris of Toulouse-Lautrec.” Toulouse-Lautrec is known for his avant-garde depictions of Parisian life in posters, illustrations and lithographs during the Belle Époque period. The collection marks the first time in 30 years that the MoMA has curated an exhibition devoted entirely to Toulouse-Lautrec.

Organized into five themes, the exhibition explores different facets of Parisian life during the Belle Époque. Toulouse-Lautrec took a keen interest in female subjects, and his muses included actresses, singers, and dancers whose vitality he captured in a new kind of portraiture. The exhibit also explores Toulouse-Lautrec’s presence in the Parisian artistic community, showcasing his contributions to magazines and reviews as well as his popular designs for song sheets and programs for theatre productions.

The exhibition was curated by Sarah Suzuki, Assistant Curator for the Department of Drawings and Prints, and supported by the MoMA Annual Exhibition Fund. The display began on July 22, 2014, and will run through March 22, 2015.
L’Hermione will set sail for America in 2015

An exact replica of L’Hermione, the ship that carried Marquis de Lafayette to America in 1780, has captivated historians and marine enthusiasts alike over the past few months. Taking 16 years to complete, L’Hermione will set sail to America from France in April 2015. Travelling first to Yorktown, VA, the ship will move up the coast before sailing to Nova Scotia and then home to France.

The idea for the Hermione Project began in 1993 among a small cohort of L’Hermione enthusiasts. The construction of the ship has been fully financed through charitable donations. The remarkable ship was originally built in 1778 on the Charente River. On March 19, 1780, Marquis de Lafayette boarded L’Hermione and travelled to Yorktown to aid American insurgents in the fight for independence. Strong French support contributed to an eventual U.S. victory in the Revolutionary War, and for this reason Lafayette is recognized as “the French Founding Father.” The journey of the 21st century-era L’Hermione is a modern day gesture of this solid friendship that France and the United States proudly share.

On September 22, Ségolène Royal, head of the Poitou-Charentes region in which L’Hermione was constructed, met with supporters of the project at the French Consulate in New York City. An Inaugural Gala to celebrate the reconstruction of L’Hermione will be held in New York City on October 14, attended by former U.S. Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger and IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde.