With heavy hearts, we faced another series of terrorist attacks in Paris this past month. Anyone who has ever been to France's capital city has experienced the sense of life in its streets, theaters, and cafés, where music, chatter and good food are shared all the time. On November 13, we saw this vivacity threatened, as 130 people were killed while enjoying the very things for which the city is loved.

As always, the support we received from the American community in the days following the attacks was beyond our expectations. Not only did we receive personal messages of condolence from U.S. leaders such as President Barack Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, House Speaker Paul Ryan, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, but also from thousands of everyday citizens who wrote to us expressing their solidarity with France. When President Hollande traveled to Washington to meet with President Obama a few days after the attacks, both leaders pledged that France and America would remain committed to working together to fight the continuing threats posed by Daesh (ISIL).

The fight against terrorism, however, is not the only challenge that our two countries are currently facing. The COP21 Paris Climate Conference is taking place as planned this month, with more urgency than ever to achieve a universal accord that will limit the rise in global temperature. In addition to negotiations between representatives from over 190 countries, France is also hosting events organized by local governments, civil society and business leaders so that all may act to create a better future for the planet.

After the attacks in November, it is more important than ever for us to continue pursuing efforts such as limiting climate change. The common values of liberty and democracy shared by France and America may have been threatened by these acts of violence, but in no way should they perish. Living out the ideals for which we stand while looking to the future is our best defense against such threats.

From December 6-12, the Eiffel Tower was lit by Human Energy, an art installation powered purely by human activity such as biking, dancing and running. The installation was created by artist Yann Toma on occasion of the United Nations Climate Conference, COP21, in Paris.

Dear Friends,

With heavy hearts, we faced another series of terrorist attacks in Paris this past month. Anyone who has ever been to France’s capital city has experienced the sense of life in its streets, theaters, and cafés, where music, chatter and good food are shared all the time. On November 13, we saw this vivacity threatened, as 130 people were killed while enjoying the very things for which the city is loved.

As always, the support we received from the American community in the days following the attacks was beyond our expectations. Not only did we receive personal messages of condolence from U.S. leaders such as President Barack Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, House Speaker Paul Ryan, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, but also from thousands of everyday citizens who wrote to us expressing their solidarity with France. When President Hollande traveled to Washington to meet with President Obama a few days after the attacks, both leaders pledged that France and America would remain committed to working together to fight the continuing threats posed by Daesh (ISIL).

The fight against terrorism, however, is not the only challenge that our two countries are currently facing. The COP21 Paris Climate Conference is taking place as planned this month, with more urgency than ever to achieve a universal accord that will limit the rise in global temperature. In addition to negotiations between representatives from over 190 countries, France is also hosting events organized by local governments, civil society and business leaders so that all may act to create a better future for the planet.

After the attacks in November, it is more important than ever for us to continue pursuing efforts such as limiting climate change. The common values of liberty and democracy shared by France and America may have been threatened by these acts of violence, but in no way should they perish. Living out the ideals for which we stand while looking to the future is our best defense against such threats.

A message from Ambassador Gérard Araud
Since the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, countries have sought to take significant steps to preserve the planet under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Adopted during the 1992 Summit, the UNFCCC recognizes that human-induced climate change does indeed exist, and countries are thus responsible for finding ways to fight this phenomenon.

Over the past two decades, a number of conferences have been held around the world in the interest of adopting a new, universal climate agreement that includes commitments from all countries, whether developed or developing. In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol called on industrialized countries to set binding reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions. At the COP15 Conference in Copenhagen, participating states reached a common goal of limiting the rise in global temperature to less than 2 degrees Celsius.

This year, from November 30 to December 11, the efforts of all of these conferences culminated in the COP21 Paris Climate Conference, where 195 states have convened in the hope of adopting a new universal climate agreement. Thousands of participants representing both governmental and non-governmental organizations are present at COP21, which features traditional negotiating sessions as well as civil society events to mobilize the public.

On the opening day of COP21, 150 heads of state convened at Le Bourget, where they spoke about their countries’ individual commitments to COP21. President Barack Obama discussed American investments in clean power sources, and said that achievements made by countries around the world thus far should be turned into “a framework for human progress” at COP21. “Our common purpose in Paris,” he said, should be “a world that is worthy of our children.” President François Hollande also spoke at the first session, where he stressed the high stakes of the conference: “Paris must be the start of an immense change, we can no longer consider nature as an endless resource intended for our own use and self-fulfillment.”

Presidents Hollande and Obama also joined Bill Gates on November 30 to launch Mission Innovation, an initiative by 20 countries to double their clean energy research and development (R&D) over five years. Mission Innovation includes efforts from the private sector headed up by Gates, with 28 investors involved in a Breakthrough Energy Coalition to deploy clean energy technologies worldwide.

Both within and outside of Le Bourget, thousands of people were mobilized in support of the COP21 negotiations. On December 4, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg co-chaired the Climate Summit for Local Leaders, at the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, which welcomed over 1,000 mayors to set ambitious targets to combat climate change. Throughout the French capital, photography and art displays such as Ice Watch Paris—featuring ice caps melting in front of the Place du Panthéon—reminded the public of what was at stake in climate negotiations.

In the days remaining in COP21, states will continue their work to find a universal accord to fight climate change. All these participants are driven by the goal of creating a better tomorrow, and the sense that, as Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius stated, “today’s generations are urging us to act, while tomorrow’s generations will judge our action. We cannot hear them yet, but in a way they are already watching us.”
Brice Lalonde, Special Advisor on Sustainable Development to the UN Global Compact

Having worked on environmental issues for several decades, Special Advisor on Sustainable Development for the UN Global Compact Brice Lalonde has seen firsthand how international negotiations on climate change and grassroots efforts to promote sustainable development have evolved over a number of years. At the COP21 Conference this year, he believes that it is more important than ever to mobilize citizens at all levels of society to take action to mitigate climate change.

You have worked on environmental issues for a long time, including as the French Minister for Environment. How did you first become interested in these issues?

I saw photos of the Earth in 1969 and I told myself, "there is nothing that matters more than this, to protect this planet that we all share." So, I’ve been an ecologist since 1969.

In 2013, you were appointed Special Advisor on Sustainable Development to the UN Global Compact. What is it and what is your role there?

The UN Global Compact is an organization created by Kofi Annan in 2000 that currently has 12,000 participating businesses that are invested in protecting the environment in 100 national sections. Spain and France are the two most important sections. I advise them.

I met with members of the Global Compact while preparing for the Rio+20—the conference 20 years after the original 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. For me, the most interesting and important contributions came from the Global Compact and from businesses, more so than from governments. This is why I decided to work with them.

You helped to plan the RIO+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012. How would you describe the work accomplished by world leaders since then?

I think that the idea of sustainable development has triumphed, and in all cases it is now politically acceptable to talk about climate change. The leader of a country can no longer say, "I want nothing to do with sustainable development."

Despite this, sustainable development is still an ideal, like the horizon: you approach it, but it always stays a bit farther away.

I do find that the idea of sustainable development is beginning to take hold, and I am happy to see a new generation of businessmen, businesswomen and responsible politicians who are taking sustainable development into consideration.

What are you hoping will be accomplished at the COP21 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris?

I expect an agreement, that’s the main goal. The idea is to find a successor to the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol focused only on rich or developed countries, but these rich countries no longer represent the bulk of emissions. They now come from developing countries and emerging countries. Today, every emitting country has agreed to do something, as is evidenced in their national contributions to COP21. These contributions are already being tabled at the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention, which is unprecedented.

I hope there is going to be an agreement, we are very close, and we have lots of positive signals. The fact that the United States and China have published a common declaration, the fact that Canada’s government has changed, these are all promising signs.

Moving beyond COP21, what are your and the UN Global Compact’s goals for sustainable development in the decades to come?

For a long time, international diplomacy was only managed by diplomats and governments, but now we understand that it’s difficult to make progress on sustainable development without the help of businesses and local governments. We have to find ways in the next years to get them involved in the negotiation process.

En chiffres...

The percentage by which the European Union, which has 28 members including France, hopes to reduce GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS from 1990 levels by 2030. The EU has joined 184 countries in announcing their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) thus far.

The number of Heads of State who attended the opening day of COP21, marking the largest group of leaders to ever attend a UN event in a single day. All gave short speeches about their countries’ contributions.

The amount that 11 countries, including France and the U.S., have committed to the LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FUND, which addresses urgent adaptation needs in the least developed countries, providing climate change related programs.

$248 million 40%

© Consulate of France in Boston
PARIS IS A CITY ADORED for its lively neighborhoods and outdoor cafés. On any given Friday in the City of Light, one is hard pressed to find any street empty, as the rues are filled with both tourists and locals that have come out to converse, relax and enjoy one another’s company. This was the case on Friday, November 13, both in central Paris and at the Stade de France, where thousands had attended a soccer match between France and Germany. As night fell, these scenes of revelry were destroyed by coordinated terrorist attacks at the stadium, in several Parisian restaurants and inside the Bataclan theatre.

The world watched in horror as news of these attacks broke, and the death toll of innocent civilians—which eventually reached 130—climbed. Just ten months after the attacks on the offices of Charlie Hebdo and the Hypercacher supermarket, Paris had once again been assaulted by terrorists. It did not take long for the rest of the world to react.

In the early hours of the morning in Paris, suspects remained at large while locals and tourists were cautioned to stay inside. The American administration reacted quickly, as President Obama made a statement just after the first acts of violence took place. While the situation was still unfolding, the American president immediately offered support, saying, "We stand prepared and ready to provide whatever assistance that the government and the people of France need to respond." The days that followed this horrific night were filled with pain and confusion, but they were also met with tremendous solidarity and support from the international community.

Spontaneous demonstrations
Just like President Obama, it did not take long for Americans to gather in support of France following news of the attacks. Vigils were organized in cities across the United States, from New York to San Francisco and everywhere in between.

Outside of the Embassy of France in Washington, D.C., hundreds came to leave flowers and messages of condolence late Friday evening, and throughout the weekend. Books of condolence were opened on November 17. Mayor of Washington, D.C., Muriel Bowser paid her respects at the embassy, as well as House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, who evoked the solidarity expressed by the French when the United States experienced similar acts of terror: "On 9/11 the French said we are all Americans. Today, we are all French." Speaker of the House Paul Ryan also hosted Ambassador of France to the United States Gérard Araud at the U.S. Capitol.

At a vigil organized on Lafayette Square in front of the White House just a day after the attacks, a large crowd from both the French and American communities turned out to offer their sympathies for the victims and their families. Ambassador Araud said a few words to the crowd, asking them to think of "all the spouses, relatives and friends" of the victims who were now carrying a burden of "grief and mourning." White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough attended the vigil, as did Ambassador of the European Union to the United States David O’Sullivan. As the night grew colder, attendees huddled together to sing France’s national anthem “La Marseillaise,” and light candles.

Hundreds of citizens from around the world gathered in front of the White House, at Lafayette Square, to mourn the victims of the Paris Attacks on November 14, just a day after they occurred.
Beyond the U.S. capital, France was met with an outpouring of support from citizens throughout America. Hundreds turned out for vigils organized in cities such as Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Nashville, New Orleans, New York and San Francisco. Local officials and personalities from each city took part in these demonstrations of solidarity—among them were Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, basketball player Tony Parker and actress Sharon Stone.

In the days that followed the attacks, thousands of condolence messages were sent to the French Embassy and Consulates throughout the country, expressing their support in both French and English. Often just a simple “Nos cœurs sont avec vous et votre pays,” or “Our hearts go out to you and your country,” the messages were a small way for citizens around the world to offer their sympathies with France in the wake of the horrific tragedies.

In a tribute to the victims of the attacks in Paris on November 27, President Hollande said that these young people were targeted for living out the very ideals of their country: “It was because they represented France that they were gunned down. It was because they represented freedom that they were massacred.” In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, both French and Americans felt more compelled than ever to defend these shared values of freedom, liberty and democracy in the name of these victims.

U.S. officials reach out to French leaders

Top-ranking officials in the United States were quick to react to the attacks and increase American efforts to address this global threat. On November 17, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry went to Paris to meet with his counterpart, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Laurent Fabius, as well as President François Hollande. In his meeting with President Hollande, Secretary Kerry offered the condolences of the American people and discussed ways that both countries could increase their efforts to effectively combat Daesh (ISIS), the group responsible for the attacks. Of the relationship between the United States and France following the events on November 13, he said “the level of cooperation could not be higher.”

Secretary Kerry also met with Ambassador of the United States to France Jane Hartley at the U.S. Embassy in Paris, which was lit up in blue, white and red for the occasion. He thanked the staff of the U.S. Embassy and their families for all the work they were doing and remained hopeful for the future, saying, “I believe that justice will prevail and the vision that the vast, vast majority of the world shares will absolutely prevail.”

One week later, President François Hollande traveled to Washington, D.C., where he met with President Obama at the White House. President Hollande thanked his counterpart for his support in the hours immediately after the attacks and the days that followed. He also spoke of France and the United States’ joint response to the threats posed by Daesh, as well as diplomatic efforts to facilitate a credible political transition in Syria.

During a press conference, President Obama saluted the people of Paris for their remarkable strength following the attacks, and affirmed the United States’ commitment to working together with France to ensure that Daesh is defeated. In speaking about the Syrian refugee crisis, President Obama expressed his intention to allow more refugees into the United States, just as France had pledged to do. Evoking the motto on the Statue of Liberty—“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free”—the president said that this is “the spirit that binds [America] to France, and the spirit we need today.”

When addressing the French community at a reception held later that day at the Embassy of France, President Hollande encouraged those in attendance to remember what made France so beloved, and to continue to live their lives as proud French citizens despite these episodes of violence: “Our joie de vivre, our human qualities, our sense of welcoming, of celebration, of culture: all of this has been commended by our friends throughout the world, and this is what we must continue to promote.”
After Paris attacks, arts are more important than ever

As artists in Paris and around the world responded to the November 13 attacks, the city’s cultural institutions returned to normalcy amid renewed government support.

Museums, movie theaters and other cultural sites were closed during the three-day period of national mourning due to security concerns. The final two days of Paris Photo, an international photography exhibition taking place at the Grand Palais, were cancelled. Because the deadliest attacks took place at the Bataclan, a well-known music venue in Paris, musical artists exercised particular caution. Groups including U2 and the Foo Fighters called off or postponed their scheduled performances.

By the afternoon of November 16, many of the city’s main cultural sites, including the Louvre museum and Eiffel Tower, were reopened to the public with increased security.

Artists and cartoonists responded to the attacks with tributes to the City of Light. Many of these were widely shared on social media, notably artist Jean Jullien’s design of the Eiffel tower within a peace sign. “I express myself visually, so my first reaction was to draw a symbol of peace for Paris,” Jullien said.

Additionally, cities around the world lit major buildings in the colors of the French flag, displaying their support. Following two days of darkness, the Eiffel Tower was illuminated in blue, white and red through November 25. “Fluctuat nec mergitur” was projected on the Eiffel Tower, as well as in a number of public spaces around Paris. The Latin phrase, meaning “She is tossed by waves but does not sink,” is the motto of France’s capital.

Minister of Culture and Communication Fleur Pellerin announced new measures to support cultural institutions that were financially hurt by the attacks. A fund of 4 million euros will be used to “account for difficulties that the performing arts industry will face—notably those that are most vulnerable—because of cancellation, decline in attendance or investment in security,” she said.

“Everything will be done to ensure that art remains alive in our country,” Minister Pellerin stressed. “Culture is our greatest shield, and our artists are our best weapon.”

New exhibition at the VMFA explores the “evolution of a genius”

While it has been nearly 100 years since Auguste Rodin passed away, there are few areas of the world where his work goes unnoticed. His most famous pieces, which include “Monument to Victor Hugo” and “The Thinker,” are quickly recognized by even the most novice art enthusiasts. Now, the latest exhibition on display at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Rodin: Evolution of a Genius gives guests an inside look into the sculptor’s illustrious career.

Organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Musée Rodin in Paris, the exhibition features nearly 200 works by the sculptor. Many of the works come from the Musée Rodin in Paris and have never been shown before in the U.S. Fascinated by the human body as much as he was with the natural world, the celebrated artist once spoke of his wish to capture “nature with its changing and countless forms” in his work. Recognizing that the process is as interesting as the final product, Rodin: Evolution of a Genius focuses not just on his sculptures, but also the process behind his best known works, examining the techniques and models he used throughout his career.

The VMFA is hosting several activities and events inspired by Rodin’s life and work as part of the exhibition. Some of the scheduled events include classes, such as “Rodin 101” and “Working from the Model.” The museum’s Sculptor in Residence program gives visitors an inside look at the techniques behind sculpture work, as contemporary artists perform demonstrations and discuss their creative processes. Guests can also test out materials such as marble, bronze and plaster—often favored by Rodin himself—as well as examples of the tools he used to create his most intricate pieces.

Rodin: Evolution of Genius will be open to the public until March 13, 2016.
**Passionate French student takes home prize from Google Science Fair**

14-year-old Elliott Sarrey became the first French national to take home a prize from the Google Science Fair when he won the Incubator Award for Bot2Karot, a smartphone-activated gardening robot that he invented.

Sarrey, a member of an IT club and a robotics club that he and his friends founded, worked on Bot2Karot for over three months in a workshop based out of his home in Lorraine. Sarrey designed his project from scratch before creating a prototype of Bot2Karot and spending two months modeling his product. The robot, which is entirely handmade, can complete gardening tasks like hoeing soil and watering plants with a few taps on a smartphone application. In creating Bot2Karot, Sarrey used skills he has been developing from a young age. His childhood love of Legos gave him experience "ignoring the instructions, putting toys together, dismantling them, putting them back together my own way," he said, and transitioning to robotics was not much of a stretch.

After Sarrey qualified as one of 20 finalists for the Google Science Fair, he and his father flew to the United States in September to compete in the annual science competition, which is open to students around the world between the ages of 13 and 18.

The Incubator Award, which was awarded to Sarrey, is offered to a student between 13 and 15 years old who submits an outstanding scientific project. He won a scholarship of $10,000 from Google for Bot2Karot and a year-long mentorship with the French company Parrot, which specializes in producing wireless products like drones, to help him develop and finish his project.

Bot2Karot received praise for offering a sustainable solution, allowing people to grow their vegetables locally and save water and energy, and making gardening accessible to people with limited mobility.

**NETVA 2015 welcomes talented French startups to the U.S.**

Companies selected this year have launched a variety of different products, from mobile applications designed for the general public to tools targeted to specific sectors like retail, international security and medical research. This year's NETVA selectees include VPproject, a company whose product "Mr. Gabriel" is the first smartwatch application designed to help users alert their contacts in case of an emergency, and Neolys Diagnostics, a company that invented a medical tool that will allow oncologists to adjust treatment depending on their individual patients' radiosensitivity.

Participants that completed their training in Boston, an academic and scientific hub, had the opportunity to participate in Mass Challenge, where they pitched their projects to investors. In San Francisco, NETVA laureates learned about the unique startup culture of Silicon Valley, and the tools necessary for success in a fast-paced technology environment. Other NETVA laureates spent a week of immersion in Toronto, the largest research and economic hub in Canada, and Washington, D.C., home to more federal laboratories than any other region in the United States. Each city provided a unique forum for participants to develop their skills.

Since its launch, NETVA has brought 65 startups from France to the United States to gain valuable business experience and create partnerships across North America. Some NETVA winners have been very successful, such as 2013 laureate Idova, a company whose sound-recognition software OtoSense was named one of the top 100 startups in North America in 2015 by Red Herring.

With 30 partners in the United States and Canada, NETVA offers French startups a unique opportunity to expand and promote French Tech in the United States and abroad.
SITUATED ON THE BORDER OF FRANCE WITH GERMANY in the Alsace region, Strasbourg offers visitors a taste of both French and German heritage. The city—the seventh largest in France—is dynamic, with a young population, and a variety of sites and attractions.

Strasbourg is the capital of the Alsace region, as well as the seat of the European Parliament. Strasbourg’s historic center, Grand Île, was made a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1998. Petite France, a section of the Grand Île, is particularly popular thanks to its picturesque medieval streets and architecture. The gothic Strasbourg Cathedral, located on the Grand Île, is the best known local attraction, but the city also has many examples of Germanic and contemporary architecture.

Visitors should be sure to try the sauerkraut, which is an Alsatian specialty, usually served with an assortment of cooked ham and sausages. Alsace is the largest beer-producing region in France, and Strasbourg is home to the Kronenbourg breweries.

December is one of the most popular times of year to visit Strasbourg, as the city hosts its annual Christmas Market in the streets and squares around the cathedral. The first such market was hosted in 1570. The Christkindelsmärik, as it is called in Alsatian, takes place from the last weekend in November through the end of December, welcoming over 300 vendors. Celebrated products include mulled wine and spicy bredele, traditional Alsatian biscuits.

The market attracts over 2 million visitors each year, a number that has been growing with high-speed train services from destinations across Europe. The Strasbourg market has also inspired similar markets around the world in cities such as New York, Tokyo and Moscow.