



News From France

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Signing of the Paris Agreement marks hallmark international effort to curb climate change



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France was the first country to sign the historic Paris Agreement, which asks countries from around the world to make significant efforts to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Here, President Hollande signs the document at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

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A message from Ambassador Gérard Araud

Dear Friends,

If you've ever glanced at my Twitter page, you're probably aware that, as a typical Frenchman, I am fond of a healthy debate every once in awhile. Whether negotiating on tough issues at the international level or simply discussing cultural differences on social media or over the dinner table, both French and American societies have a fondness for spirited conversation. We celebrated this at the Lafayette Debates on April 16 and 17, inviting debaters from top schools to consider a pressing and controversial topic: domestic surveillance. This is certainly a question that both France and the U.S. contemplate every day, and we were delighted to see such informed opinions being presented by these students.

Debate and negotiations continued this month at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which held its annual spring meetings along with the World Bank Group. In Washington, D.C., Finance Minister Michel Sapin and Environment Minister Ségolène Royal discussed a variety of economic issues with their

counterparts from all over the world, including tax corruption and the implementation of carbon pricing to protect the environment. During meetings with U.S. officials including Secretary of State John Kerry and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, Ministers Royal and Sapin spoke about ways that America and France could work together on these pressing challenges. The official signing of the Paris Agreement in New York on April 22 marked a hallmark achievement for one such challenge on which France and the U.S. have worked closely together to address—the development of an international plan to combat climate change.

Even more memorable than the debates that have taken place between our two countries are the instances of cooperation—we remembered one of the most significant sacrifices made by Americans on French soil when 16 veterans were awarded the Legion of Honor on April 15. These men, who fought to liberate France at the end of World War II, remind us of what France and America can accomplish when they look beyond current debates in order to find lasting solutions.



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More than 170 countries gather to sign the Paris Agreement



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headquarters in New York. On that day, 175 states gathered to sign this document, pledging their contributions to make strides towards a cleaner and overall healthier planet.

As the host of COP21, France oversaw the ceremony. COP21 President and Minister of the Environment, Energy and Marine Affairs Ségolène Royal joined President François Hollande at the podium, and both officials expressed their wholehearted support for this unprecedented international effort to combat climate change.

France was the first country to sign the text; as President Hollande stressed the importance of continuing these efforts to limit global warming so that future generations may benefit: “We must go further than our promises,” he said, “our statements must become actions.”

Just a week earlier, Minister Royal had argued in favor of carbon pricing and the financing of certain climate initiatives at the IMF and World Bank Group annual Spring Meetings in Washington, D.C. She met with Secretary of State John Kerry at this time, where they discussed steps toward ensuring the successful implementation of the Paris agreement.

The Paris Agreement puts a great deal of focus on future generations, and young people therefore played an important role in the signing ceremony—a number of them attended as youth representatives for their countries, and Secretary of State John Kerry even brought his young granddaughter up when he signed the agreement. 

President François Hollande speaks at the United Nations. Behind him are Minister of the Environment, Energy and Marine Affairs Ségolène Royal, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and a representative of Morocco, which will host the COP22 UN Climate Conference.

IN DECEMBER, representatives from countries around the world gathered for an unprecedented event. Paris was hosting the COP21 United Nations Conference, where members of both developed and developing countries would seek to reach a universal agreement to reduce the overall rise in

global temperature to less than 2 degrees Celsius. Following months of negotiation, an agreement was reached—the most ambitious of its kind.

These negotiations then led to the official signing of the Paris Agreement, which took place on Earth Day (April 22) at the United Nations

President François Hollande attends Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C.

FROM MARCH 31 TO APRIL 1, President François Hollande visited the United States to attend the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C. While in the U.S. capital, the president held a bilateral meeting with President Barack Obama and his security team to discuss French-American cooperation in combating terrorism. In a joint statement to reporters, both presidents spoke about their countries’ role in the international coalition engaged in operations against Daesh (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria.

Given the link between nuclear security and recent counter-terrorism efforts, the summit provided an ideal forum for leaders from more than 50 countries and several international organizations to discuss both of these topics. The French and American presidents also participated in a roundtable with their counterparts focusing on the nuclear treaty both countries helped to negotiate with Iran last summer.

During their visit, President Hollande and Minister of the Environment, Energy and Marine Affairs Ségolène Royal also met with Secretary of State John Kerry.

Before leaving on April 1, President Hollande addressed reporters after a meeting with United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, answering questions about France’s efforts to increase security after a year of deadly attacks. 



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President François Hollande upon his arrival to Washington, D.C. where he attended the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit and met with his American counterpart Barack Obama

Three questions with members of the Interfaith Tour

Building bridges between people of different faiths

For hundreds of thousands of years, people have looked to religious traditions as a means of understanding different cultures and communities. While religion remains a source of tension and division within certain regions to this day, it can also help to connect people. Coexister, which was formed in 2009, is a French organization that encourages dialogue between persons of different religions. One of their sponsored projects is the Interfaith Tour, a group of four French individuals of different faiths — Samir Akacha, Léa Frydman, Ariane Julien and Lucie Neuman—who began traveling around the world in July 2015 to encourage interfaith dialogue. As their journey nears an end, they spoke with *News From France* about what they have learned.

Can you introduce yourselves and speak about the mission of your project?

Lucie: My name is Lucie, I'm 20 years old, and I'm Catholic. This year I'm traveling around the world with three other people who have different faiths and religions to me—Samir is Muslim, I'm Catholic, Léa is Jewish and Ariane is Atheist. By traveling the world on our Interfaith Tour, we are meeting people who build bridges between different religious communities.

Samir: I joined Coexister three years ago, after a trip to Jerusalem. The organization has been in operation for seven years now. We focus on three main topics: dialogue, solidarity and raising awareness. We have more than 35 groups in France as well as Belgium, England and Switzerland. I currently serve as the Vice-President of Coexister Europe. The main goal of the organization is to foster social cohesion.

Ariane: We left in July 2015 to travel to 32 countries. We traveled through Europe, then through the Maghreb, and the Middle East; the Sahara and Africa; Asia, Latin America, South America, and finally, the United States. The goal of the project is three-fold: first, to connect; second, to carry out research; and third, to raise awareness about interfaith and positive initiatives.

What examples of interfaith coexistence have you seen on your journey?

Léa: As we've gone around the world, we've seen many different types of interfaith cooperation. One such example is the Ramadan Tent Project, a student-led initiative in London. Every day of Ramadan, a tent is set up in the heart of the city, where free food is served to all different kinds of people. There may be Muslim people who come to pray and have their Iftar dinner to break the fast of Ramadan, people that are simply curious, or people who cannot afford to pay for their meals. This initiative shows that charity is one of the values of Islamic culture, and promotes mutual understanding.

Samir: During our trip, four of the regions we visited had experienced genocide. In Rwanda, we saw how the government and institutions worked together to create social cohesion in the wake of the genocide 20 years ago. While the country was once sharply divided between the Tutsi and Hutu populations, today you see



Members of the Interfaith Tour with representatives of the French Embassy in Washington, D.C. **From left:** Ariane Julien, Quentin Astoin, First Counselor Patrick Lachaussée, Samir Akacha, Political Counselor Nicolas Pillerele, Léa Frydman, Faycel Djerrab and Lucie Neuman.

children of the perpetrators and victims fall in love, start to have families together, rebuild trust with their neighbors and look past the differences that once separated them. Seeing what Rwandan society has become today is an inspiration for us to fight anti-Semitism, racism and Islamophobia in France.

Léa: And in the United States, there are a lot of interfaith initiatives in which the government is very involved. We met with a lot of officials from the State Department involved in task forces against anti-Semitism, as well as other kinds of discrimination.

What do you hope to bring back to France?

Samir: Through conflict resolution we've learned how to truly live together, with honesty and concern. When we go back to France, we will speak about all the wonders we've seen around the world; all the possibilities of dialogue and collaboration between communities.

Léa: We'll visit 70 cities around France when we return. We'll speak at around 100 conferences about our experiences.

I think the recent events in France have pushed us to question our version of *laïcité* (secularism), and bring this topic to the forefront of public debate. Coexister has been involved in re-thinking the way that we approach the concept of *laïcité* in public schools and what it means to grow up in a secular environment in France.

En chiffres...

Percentage of **INVESTMENTS** in France that came from American companies in the year 2015. American companies contribute to a quarter of R&D investment decisions in the country. 53 countries in total decided to invest in France in 2015, compared with 47 in 2014.

18%

Number of **INVESTMENT DECISIONS** made in France in 2015, the best report in five years. These investments created more than 33,600 jobs in the country. This boost in job creation marks an increase in 27% since 2014; good news for the French economy.

33,600

France's rank as a **GLOBAL EXPORTER** of services. Around 125,000 companies in France export goods, and an average of 19 investment decisions are made every day in the country. In 2015, French goods exports brought in 455.1€ billion, a 4.3% increase from 2014.

#3

The Lafayette Debates honor the French-American spirit of intellectual exchange



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TO FRANCE, America has always been a young country. While the United States' European counterparts have a much longer history as nations, France and the U.S. have been connected for more than two centuries by their shared modern ideals of liberty and democracy.

In 1824, when the Marquis de Lafayette paid a return visit to the U.S., it was truly a young nation, still in its first phases of development. Having led successful military efforts on behalf of France to aid the U.S. in its fight for independence more than 40 years earlier, Lafayette was regarded as a bona fide hero and admired for his commitment to the promotion of American ideals abroad. He even served as the first head of the Society of the Cincinnati, formed by officers of the Continental Army and their French counterparts who served in the American Revolution.

Lafayette's year-long "hero's tour" marked his historic return to the United States as the last surviving general of the Revolution. During this visit, he had the opportunity to see the great progress this young nation had made following his intervention in its fight for independence in the late 1700s.

One of Lafayette's many stops included Columbian College, which is now George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Accompanied by his son, Georges Washington Lafayette, he was inducted into the Enosinian Society, the school's debate and literary organization. Following this induction, Lafayette took part in a debate with some of its members. Although the general could not have known it at the time, this tradition would be honored by many students years after both he and his son were gone.

Honoring a time-old tradition

On April 16 and 17, George Washington University and the Embassy of France in Washington, D.C. co-hosted the annual Lafayette

Debates, a collegiate debate contest inspired by the Lafayettes' visit to America, and created with the goal of promoting transatlantic dialogue. The debates honor a 200-year tradition of intellectual exchange between the United States and France.

The present-day Lafayette Debates were revived in 2013 by the Department of Academic Cooperation at the Embassy of France. The competition invites young debaters from universities in Canada, France and the U.S. to prepare arguments on a particular issue of significance to the international community. The competing students share their thoughts not only with each other, but also with scholars, diplomats and other experts on international relations and law.

This year's topic

This year's debate topic was chosen in the wake of the Paris terror attacks. The events



I read, I study, I examine, I listen, I reflect, and out of all of this I try to form an idea into which I put as much common sense as I can.

— Lafayette, on his process of thought

have repeatedly raised the question of how far democratic governments should go in addressing terrorism threats, and to what extent their actions may or may not infringe on civil liberties. The 2016 Lafayette Debates asked students to oppose or support the following statement: "Democracies should respond to the threat of a terrorist attack by substantially increasing domestic surveillance." Debaters analyzed the implications of this statement for global security and democracy, and prepared statements on their assigned positions. All arguments were admissible, but competitors were asked to focus on the coherence of their statements and the accuracy of their references.

A challenging discussion

The first rounds of this year's competition were held at George Washington University on April 16. Four rounds of debate took place throughout the day, and 35 teams from 22 universities participated. The U.S. Naval Academy was represented along with other French and American military schools, including the Ecole de Guerre. These schools competed for a separate title, which was awarded to the Ecole de Guerre.

In the last rounds of the general debate, finalists from Stanford University and George Washington University focused on encryption. Stanford University's team gave a compelling opposing argument relating to government usage of personal data, stating that an overwhelming quantity of data prevents security workers from identifying true threats, and that encryption gives technology users freedom and protection. One debater said, "Even if you don't believe it matters domestically, there are people across the world who use encryption standards to defend themselves from governments that would otherwise silence them," arguing that removing encryption standards

effectively takes away the ability of citizens to protect themselves from oppressive regimes.

The George Washington University debate team argued in support of the statement, saying that “Not regulating data tangibly increases the propensity that terrorists can be successful and wreak more havoc on society.” The team argued for a pragmatic and legal way to protect democracy without violating civil liberties, and suggested that more sharing of information between countries could help to prevent further attacks.

While the final round lasted an hour, it moved swiftly, with representatives from each team delivering statements followed by questions from their opponents. An exercise that demands coolness under pressure, the debate showcased the participants’ in-depth knowledge of the subject, previous legislation concerning the right to privacy and the modern-day debate surrounding the complex subject of encryption.

Looking at issues differently

In an interview with Stanford University’s Harry Elliott, who won an award as a top individual debater, he said that the biggest challenge of this particular competition compared to previous ones was the breadth of the topic. Oftentimes debate competitions focus on specific legislation, rather than a broad topic such as domestic surveillance—Elliott said that because this topic was more general, extensive preparation was required.

Joseph Nelson, a George Washington University debater who placed first in the individual competition, noted that in the world of debate, being assigned to argue for a side that you disagree with can open your mind to different opinions. Debate, Nelson stated, “forces you to encounter different perspectives and different issues.” “People have biases and find evidence to defend their viewpoints, and debate makes you challenge that bias.” Many of the Lafayette Debates participants agreed that this was a positive element of the activity.

Stanford University places first

After a panel of judges voted, Stanford University’s debate team came in first place. All qualifying teams and the top three individual speakers won a paid study trip to Paris, where they will serve as “young ambassadors.” The prize winners will meet professionals and academics in the field to further their understanding of the debate topic. A way of honoring France and America’s shared tradition of public exchange, the Lafayette Debates continue to encourage intellectual growth and dialogue on both sides of the Atlantic.



Opposite page, top right: The debate team of the Ecole de Guerre, which won the competition for military academies.

Above, clockwise from left: A portrait of the Marquis de Lafayette around the time that he traveled to the United States in 1824; a young Georges Washington Lafayette in July 1790; an illustration of Columbian College. Members of the debate teams from George Washington University and Stanford University on stage before competing in the final rounds of the competition.



Following Panama Papers revelations, fight against tax evasion takes precedence at IMF Spring Meetings



Minister Michel Sapin with Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren at the U.S. Senate. The two officials spoke about the fight against tax corruption, and the financing of terrorism, during his visit to Washington, D.C.

French Finance Minister Michel Sapin visited Washington, D.C. from April 14 to 16 for the annual Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group. The meetings took place just a week and a half after the publication of the “Panama Papers”—a

massive collection of records of hundreds of shell corporations, hidden assets and other tools used for tax fraud. The records have been linked to several prominent politicians and public figures around the world.

In light of the leak, Minister Sapin reaffirmed France’s role in combating tax fraud and evasion. While in the U.S. capital, the minister, along with his counterparts from the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Spain, signed a joint letter detailing a new initiative to increase international efforts on this end. The letter signed by Minister Sapin and the aforementioned European counterparts proposed new efforts to increase transparency and the exchange of information on offshore accounts. Throughout his time in Washington, D.C., Minister Sapin stressed the need to “accelerate and clarify” the steps Europe and its international partners should take to deal with this particular issue.

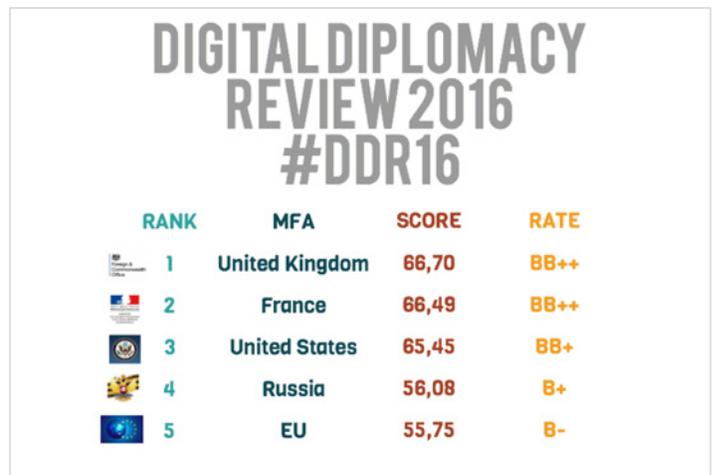
While in the U.S. capital, the minister also met with Senator Elizabeth Warren and the former head of the Department of Justice’s Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, Charles Duross. During his meetings with these U.S. officials, he discussed France’s bill on transparency, economic modernization, the fight against corruption and global efforts to impede the illegal financing of terrorist organizations.

France ranks second in Diplomacy.Live’s 2016 study

Diplomacy.Live, an NGO offering digital solutions for companies and government agencies around the world, has released the 2016 Digital Diplomacy Review (DDR16), which ranks France number two internationally. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development has made digital technology a priority over the past several years. Numerous ministers and officials, including Ambassador to the U.S. Gérard Araud, maintain active social media accounts. In the last year, the Embassy of France in the U.S. doubled its followers on Facebook (more than 30,000) and Twitter (more than 20,000).

DDR16 evaluated the digital diplomacy tools used by 210 Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) across the globe. In the 21st century, social media and online communication has had a tangible effect on traditional diplomacy, changing the hierarchical nature of the field. While certain types of political negotiations continue to happen behind closed doors, “digital diplomacy” allows for more transparency among international organizations, diplomats and elites. Using Twitter, Facebook, Google+, YouTube, Instagram and other forms of digital media, the public has more opportunities to make its voice heard, as well as interact with government officials and diplomats. Today, activities such as Twitter chats or live video Q&As are commonly organized by MFAs that wish to better explain their policies and positions on complex international issues.

With a wide range of social media accounts in numerous languages, France proved a high performer on the 2016 Digital Diplomacy Review, ranking number 2 just ahead of the United States, which was number 3, and after the United



A review of the top five ranked countries in Diplomacy.Live’s 2016 Digital Diplomacy Review. France received a score of 66.49.

Kingdom. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development in Paris has Twitter accounts in French, English, Arabic and Spanish, and uses a variety of different platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, Pinterest, Vine and LinkedIn.

MoMA's "A Strange New Beauty" looks at Degas through a different lens

The Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) recently opened a new exhibit called "Edgar Degas: A Strange New Beauty." The collection, which will remain on display until July 24, presents Degas's prolific body of work with a medium known as "monotype." A monotype involves drawing with black ink on a metal plate that is then run through a press to produce a single print. While Degas is principally known for his paintings—many of which focus on ballet—this exhibit showcases Degas's interest in other methods and his versatility as an artist.

Degas was one of the most famous French artists of the 19th century. Despite his father's wishes that he attend law school, he eventually studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and went on to Italy for three years to copy art made by Renaissance painters. In the late 1800s, he became interested in monotyping, and produced more than 300 works in this medium.

"Edgar Degas: A Strange New Beauty" demonstrates Degas's stylistic development, from his introduction to monotyping to the peak of his career. It offers more than 120 of Degas's monotypes and an additional 60 pieces, including paintings, drawings and pastels. In monotypes such as *Dancer Onstage with a Bouquet*, one can see how the artist transformed the



Edgar Degas's *Dancer Onstage with a Bouquet*, c.1876. Pastel over monotype on laid paper. The monotypes give a unique depth to some of his most well-known subjects, such as dancers.

depth and body of his subjects with this particular technique.

The first exhibit in the United States in almost

50 years to showcase these unique pieces of art, this show will be on view only at the MoMA. It is the museum's first Degas exhibit.

16 World War II veterans awarded Legion of Honor



From left: The Legion of Honor medals awarded to the American veterans; Emil Sowa receives his Legion of Honor medal. He was a radiotelegraphic operator in Morse code and participated in the D-Day landings. In September 1944, he was captured and held hostage for three weeks before being freed by English forces.



On April 15, 16 American World War II veterans were awarded the Legion of Honor at the Embassy of France in Washington, D.C.

The Legion of Honor is the highest decoration in France, a tradition first established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802. The honor is

extended to foreign nationals who have defended and fought for France or its ideals.

Each one of the men recognized in the ceremony at the Embassy of France played a vital role in the second World War, fighting overseas to help liberate France and the whole of

Europe. Although many of them were barely 20 years old at the time, the French are forever grateful for their bravery, from the beaches of Normandy to the front battle lines of Central Europe. Of the sixteen men honored on April 15, five served in Normandy, while others participated in numerous battles that led to the liberation, in areas such as Ardennes, Provence and Northern France.

Brigadier General Vincent Cousin, the French Defense Attaché, was present at the ceremony along with Consul General of France in Washington Michel Charbonnier. In his opening remarks, Consul General Charbonnier praised these men for their demonstrated devotion to "freedom, brotherhood and democracy."

The veterans awarded with the Legion of Honor are as follows: Paul J. Collins, William A. Forbes, Andrew A. Franks, Donald L. Greenbaum, Stephen L. Heffner, Jasper N. Highsmith, George L. Hundley, Samuel Katz, Donald Koons, Robert H. Latta, James Lynch, Joseph Motil, James W. Phillips, James A. Rich, Jr., Henry D. Singer and Emil Sowa.



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LOCATED ON THE BREATHTAKING FRENCH RIVIERA, Cannes is a popular vacation destination in southeastern France beloved for its beaches and sunny weather. Its name is perhaps most widely recognized for the world-famous international Cannes Film Festival, which takes place at the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès every May, attracting tourists and cinephiles from around the world.

But there is much more to this seaside town than just the festival. Conveniently located between Monaco and Saint-Tropez, Cannes is home to a vast expanse of awe-inspiring beaches where families and friends can enjoy the warmth of the Mediterranean. The Boulevard de la Croisette stretches along the coast, with an assortment of shops and restaurants.

Mediterranean fare such as *moûles frites* (mussels and fries) and fresh fish is served in abundance and often enjoyed outdoors.

Visitors are drawn to the outdoor markets scattered across the city, which sell local and homegrown produce, vintage jewelry, clothing and more. The most popular market, Marché Forville, is in Le Sequet, the old quarter of Cannes. Le Sequet's cobbled streets, historic architecture and cultural monuments provide the perfect setting for an afternoon stroll.

If spectacular beaches and charming architecture aren't enough, Cannes is only an hour away from premier ski resorts in the Southern Alps, as well as the larger port city of Marseille.

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