

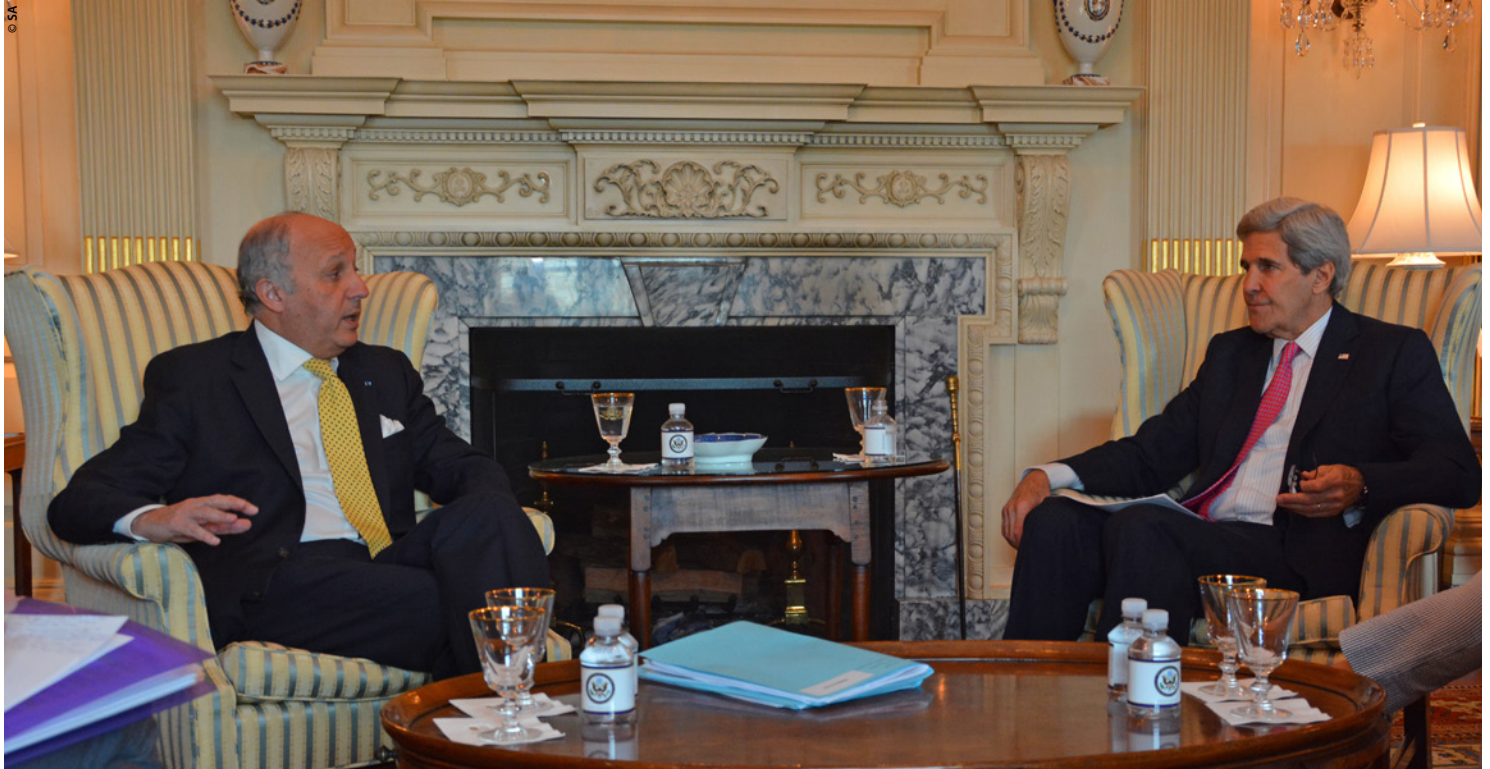


News From France

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A free monthly review of French news & trends

Minister Fabius discusses initiatives against climate change at Major Economies Forum



Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Laurent Fabius meets with his U.S. counterpart, Secretary of State John Kerry, at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. on April 19. Minister Fabius and Secretary Kerry participated in the Major Economies Forum, which brought together the highest carbon-emitting countries to discuss preparations for COP21.

From the Ambassador's Desk: A message from Gérard Araud

Dear Friends,

As the cherry blossom trees throughout the Washington, D.C. area have come into full bloom, so too has the relationship between our two countries flourished, as we collaborated on a number of important historic, economic and political efforts this month. I had the privilege of experiencing this bond directly with many of our followers during a Twitter chat at the embassy on March 30.

One name that has been continually on our minds this month is Lafayette. A close friend of President George Washington, the Marquis de Lafayette raised his own money to travel to America in 1777 to aid soldiers in the American Revolution. The spirit of Lafayette and his commitment to our countries' shared ideals of liberty and democracy remain true to this day, as a replica of his vessel, the *Hermione*, set sail on April 18, to re-create his voyage from France to the U.S., garnering praise from Presidents Hollande and Obama, who saluted this gesture to remember a champion of American independence and the bonds that have united our countries for centuries. On the very next day, the Lafayette Debates, hosted by the French Embassy and The George Washington University, provided another way to celebrate this important historical figure. Universities from across the U.S. and France convened to debate on issues related to climate change, and the winning team received a framed map of Lafayette's journey along the



U.S. coast.

On the same day, not far from the Lafayette Debates, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Laurent Fabius attended the Major Economies Forum at the U.S. Department of State. At this meeting, which brought together some of the highest greenhouse gas-emitting countries, Minister Fabius and his counterpart, Secretary of State John Kerry, addressed an issue on which both of our countries are working closely together from an economic perspective, focusing on the financing of efforts to reverse the effects of climate change. International forums such as these are essential to France and America's efforts to reach a comprehensive deal at the COP21 Global Climate Conference in Paris at the end of the year.

As always, French-American relations have continued to develop well beyond the nation's capital. From awarding WWII veterans with the Legion of Honor in Virginia, to speaking with the founders of a pastry school in Chicago that now trains local students in the art of French baking, to hosting a dynamic conversation on global affairs in Houston, I have observed that Americans are truly proud of the French ties that exist in the U.S. As the *Hermione* makes its voyage to America in the spirit of Lafayette, we will work side by side for the betterment of our two nations, just as we have for over two centuries.

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WWII veterans receive Legion of Honor in Virginia

On April 8, Ambassador of France to the U.S. Gérard Araud visited Richmond, the capital of the state of Virginia. During this visit, he honored five American World War II veterans who participated in the Normandy landings in June 1944, leading to the subsequent liberation of Europe.

Before bestowing the Legion of Honor upon these veterans, Ambassador Araud stated, "Never will we forget that without you, our American friends, we would not have been able to preserve our freedom."

Ambassador Araud also met with Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe, who took part in the awards ceremony. They discussed, together with several members of the governor's staff, the vitality of relations between Virginia and France.

Recalling the ties that bind France and Virginia—economic and cultural ties as well as historical ties—the ambassador and Governor McAuliffe spoke about the arrival of the *Hermione*, an exact replica of the ship that brought the Marquis de Lafayette to America, which will arrive on the Virginia coast this June.

Mayor of Paris visits Louisiana for annual meeting of AIMF

March 29 through April 1 marked the annual meeting of the International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF) in New Orleans. Mayor of Paris and President of the AIMF Anne Hidalgo presided over the meeting, which was attended by French-speaking mayors from all over the world.

Attendees discussed future AIMF tourism and outreach projects, as well as the contribution of the French language to political, economic and cultural development. One such project presented by the directors of the AIMF aims to enhance networking among French-speaking cities and people in North America; its principal mission is to strengthen the visibility and promote the attractiveness of these French-speaking communities, both locally and around the world.

A number of Louisiana mayors attended the annual meeting, including Joey Durel of Lafayette and Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans. Mayors Landrieu and Hidalgo took part in a conference focusing on themes such as collective memory and local development. Following the discussions, they signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which officially established collaboration between the AIMF and the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM).

Minister Laurent Fabius attends Major Economies Forum



Minister Fabius, who is currently serving as president of the COP21 Global Climate Conference, discusses initiatives to curb climate change with representatives from major developed and developing economies that have high carbon emissions at the MEF.

▲ On April 19 and 20, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Laurent Fabius attended the Major Economies Forum (MEF) on Energy and Climate, under the chairmanship of the United States, at the U.S. Department of State.

Created in 2009, the MEF seeks to foster dialogue among major developed and developing economies, generating the leadership necessary to achieve a successful outcome in the climate negotiations, and expanding research on initiatives to increase the supply of clean energy while cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

During his visit, Minister Fabius met with U.S. counterpart John Kerry as well as Mr. Xie Zhenhua, vice chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission in China, where he is the chief climate negotiator.

As president of the upcoming COP21 Global Climate Conference, which will take place at the end of the year in Paris, Minister Fabius worked alongside France's Special Representative for COP21, Laurence Tubiana, and other MEF attendees—including Manuel Pulgar Vidal, Peruvian president of the COP20 conference—to seek common positions on the key issues surrounding the current negotiations.

Business, government and innovation showcased in Chicago



From left: Ambassador Araud, Ill. Governor Bruce Rauner, 1871 CEO Howard A. Tullman and Consul General Vincent Floreani at entrepreneurial hub 1871; Sébastien Cannone, founder of the French Pastry School, surrounded by Ambassador Araud and Consul General Floreani.



▲ From March 27 to 29, French Ambassador to the U.S. Gérard Araud paid an official visit to Chicago, where he met with numerous leaders in business and government to further develop the relationship between France and the U.S., and prepare for the Paris Climate Summit in December.

Global cooperation between France and the U.S. as well as the situation after the January terrorist attacks were primary interests for attendees of Ambassador Araud's presentation at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The ambassador also expressed his hope for joint French-American cooperation on a "positive agenda" to promote a low-carbon economy. He commended the high rate of U.S. investment in France, which has increased eight percent over the last year.

During his visit he also met with acclaimed academic and economist Richard Sandor to discuss preparation for the COP21 Climate Change Conference.

In addition, Ambassador Araud met with Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner, with whom he visited 1871, Chicago's entre-

preneurial hub for digital startup companies, alongside Mr. Howard Tullman, CEO of the company. He also spoke with a number of representatives from various Jewish institutions in the city, and attended a gala for the Lycée Français de Chicago with the school's principal donors and board of directors.

The ambassador also paid a visit to the French Pastry School of Kennedy-King College at City Colleges of Chicago. The French Pastry School is a vocational institution offering innovative education to students interested in the art of baking. As an exemplary model of a formative school that has brought the art of the French *pâtisserie* to America, the ambassador was pleased to speak with its chefs and students.

Finally, Ambassador Araud visited renowned Chicago-based artist Theaster Gates and his Dorchester Projects, which foster neighborhood revitalization on the south side. They talked about Chicago's first architecture biennial to be celebrated this fall and the thriving French-American curatorial exchange.

Catherine Lévy-Silveira, Head of School at Lycée Rochambeau



Catherine Lévy-Silveira in the library of the Lycée Rochambeau in Bethesda.

▲ Since 1955, the Lycée Rochambeau in Bethesda has been providing a high quality French education to students in the D.C. metropolitan area. Today, the French international school has adapted to an ever-changing global environment. Catherine Lévy-Silveira, Head of School at the Lycée, spoke with *News From France* about her work and the “Rochambeau advantage.”

Can you speak briefly about the history and mission of the Lycée Rochambeau?

The school was initially created in 1955, and was situated at the time on Kalorama Street. Little by little, the school grew, and we moved to Bethesda in 1975.

Ever since the school was founded, its essential mission has been not only to offer French programs to the children of French expatriates, but also to open this program to all children that would like to take advantage of the program, regardless of whether they speak French or not.

This goal is at the heart of our mission, and remains the same today. We are here to offer a French program, to the French-speaking community, of course, but also to a community that is becoming more and more international.

What is your role as head of school and how did your previous work lead you to this position?

As Head of School here, I am responsible for three campuses and all school operations. I work for the Ministry of National Education, and before coming here I was a Head of School in France. Before this, I was an English professor, which helps when you arrive in the United States. So, of course, there are things that translate, but there are also important differences.

I have responsibilities that I would not have in a French school, in terms of recruitment, for example, that is a very different component. And in terms of fundraising, this does not exist either in French schools. We also have to adapt to the demands of a community that is more and more international, that has expectations that are not always typical of a purely French community.

What particular advantages does the Lycée Rochambeau offer compared to a typical American school?

What we offer more than an American school, most notably, is a curriculum that is very global and that in-

cludes compulsory material that students have to follow throughout their entire academic career.

There are nearly 60 different nationalities here at the school. Our students live and work every day with other students their age who live in a linguistic environment that is culturally very different from their own. We speak of “global citizens”—this is a very clear attitude that our students possess here at Rochambeau and I think that when they enter the job market in the future, they will have greater opportunities to expand this international worldview.

At Rochambeau our students earn a dual qualification that gives them a range of opportunities after they leave high school to pursue higher education, whether in an English-speaking country, in France, or in other foreign countries. Through this French program, they acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to integrate with English-based education systems and other systems. The advantage is the choice that we offer them on this side of the Atlantic and a program that is renowned in terms of its requirements and standards.

The Lycée Rochambeau is a bilingual school, offering classes in both French and English. Do professors employ certain techniques to ensure that students are equally immersed in both languages?


To develop bilingualism, we have implemented various processes in the school. From early kindergarten, so from age three, the children have courses in English as well as in French, with the French language taught as a foreign or second language, if the students are English speakers or Spanish speakers.

So these are the learning processes that are put in place from an early age. We have also been experimenting with dual projects, where we have one English-speaking professor and one French-speaking professor who work on the same subject, which they prepare together.

At the high school level, we also have the option of international preparation for the Baccalauréat (“Bac”) where students, from the second grade, have courses in history, geography, and in languages that prepare them for an international Baccalauréat. This is a very appealing program because it has been created in conjunction with the Ministry of National Education and by the College Board here in the United States. We have a program that is truly bilingual, and more than bilingual, I would say that it is bicultural.

The Lycée Rochambeau is part of the Agency for French Education Abroad (AEFE), which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. How do you envision the presence of French education in the United States? Is there room for growth or improvement?

The AEFE is one of France’s largest government organizations, representing about 500 schools around the world, with about 330,000 students.

Here in the U.S., the agency is well established. There is currently a strong demand for our education system and, I think, a true interest in our language. Beyond just our language, there is an appreciation for what it represents, in terms of culture and the republican and humanist values of our education system. Yes, I think there is room for this education system to expand here in the U.S. and a strong demand for us to adapt, so we are trying to respond to this demand. 

Lassana Bathily, hero of Hypercacher attacks, honored in L.A.

Amid the horror of the January terrorist attacks in France, one man emerged as a hero. On January 9, just two days after a shooting at the offices of Charlie Hebdo, Amedy Coulibaly stormed into a Hypercacher supermarket in the 20th arrondissement of Paris, where he murdered four Jewish customers, and took 15 others hostage.

Lassana Bathily, a 24 year-old Muslim stockroom employee at Hypercacher, hid customers from gunmen during an attack at great personal risk to himself in order to save their lives.

On March 24, Bathily was honored with the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Medal of Valor at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles for his act of bravery. After meeting with the French community in Los Angeles, Bathily spoke of his actions following the attack and the importance of treating all citizens with equal respect, saying, “I did not ask if they were Christians, Jews or Muslims. For me, they were just customers and hostages in danger.”

PACA Board showcases the beauty of its region

On April 16, members of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (PACA) Tourism Board hosted a luncheon at the French Embassy with Atout France, where they showcased the beauty of their region and recent initiatives undertaken there.

Bernard Jaussad, president of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur Tourism Board, attended the luncheon, with representatives who talked enthusiastically about upcoming tourism initiatives in the region. Provençal cuisine was prepared and served by Chef Mathias Dandine, whose restaurant, Le Saint-Estève, has earned a Michelin star.

Stretching from the Mediterranean coast all the way to the Alps, the PACA region is currently the second most visited region in France, after Ile-de-France (the Paris region).

This summer, the region will celebrate the bicentennial of Napoleon’s return to France in 1815, when he traveled from the island of Elba to Golfe-Juan before continuing on to Grenoble. The Route Napoléon allows visitors to follow in the emperor’s footsteps, and festivities will take place this summer to celebrate its bicentennial.

With dozens of new and renovated attractions, such as the new Fondation Vincent van Gogh in Arles, and a slew of upcoming festivals, such as the renowned Avignon Theater Festival, PACA will continue to attract visitors the world over this summer.

in depth: the Hermione

After years of preparation, the Hermione sets sail from France for America



Clockwise from top left: President François Hollande meets with Captain Yann Cariou, crew members, and visitors of the Hermione before its launch in La Rochelle, France; the Hermione sails the seas of the Atlantic; the vessel rests before leaving the port in La Rochelle; crew members work aboard the ship.

Whether gracing a point on a map or marking the name of city squares and streets, the name “Lafayette” is well-known to many Americans, and appears regularly across the United States. The Marquis de Lafayette, a champion of independence for both French and American citizens, remains an important figure in both countries. This past month, the Hermione, an exact replica of the ship that brought Lafayette from France to the United States to fight in the American Revolution, finally set sail. Beginning in Rochefort, France, the ship will follow in the steps of Lafayette, travelling to Yorktown, Va. before moving up the coast. Take a look inside this exciting French-American partnership:

Honoring America’s oldest ally

The origins of French-American friendship are rooted in the two countries’ revolutionary causes, as many important French figures were heavily invested in the American fight for independence. In 1777, General Lafayette sailed to America at the age of 19, against the wishes of the French government. There, he became acquainted with

George Washington, the first president of the United States. The two men immediately became close—Lafayette eventually even named his son George Washington Lafayette, after his American friend.

In 1778, Lafayette returned to France, where he asked King Louis XVI to support the American cause, and eventually succeeded. The King agreed to send a large well-equipped military force to America, under the command of General Lafayette. On March 19, 1780, the Hermione left Rochefort, carrying Lafayette and a strong force of French soldiers ready to fight in the name of American independence. 38 days later, the ship arrived in Boston before Lafayette continued on to meet Washington. The presence of the French military was deeply appreciated on the American front—the Continental Congress even visited the ship to commemorate its service in May of 1781.

French forces played an instrumental role in the Battle of Yorktown, where they joined Washington’s troops to blockade the British, leading to the eventual surrender of English General Cornwallis. Lafayette later returned to France in 1781, where he capitalized on this revolutionary spirit

to lead efforts to establish a new order in the French Revolution.

Two decades’ worth of work

In 1993, a small group of Lafayette enthusiasts came together with the idea of recreating the Hermione, in order to evoke the spirit, determination and legacy of this ship and its crew, and the historic ties between France and America. Under the direction of French novelist Erik Orsenna and Benedict Donnelly, president of the Association of Hermione-Lafayette, they began planning for the construction of the ship in Rochefort, in the Charente-Maritime department of France.

The design of the ship was based off of line drawings from the Hermione’s sister ship, La Concorde, and construction began in 1997. Over the next seventeen years, the ship gradually took form, while 3 million people donated money to support the project. After the final touches were put on the ship and the captain was appointed, the Hermione began sea trials.

Today, the organization boasts a number of notable French and American figures on its Board



of Directors—Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, former U.S. Secretary of State, serves as honorary chairman, while Miles Young, CEO of Ogilvy and Mather Worldwide, is president of the group. A number of events have been held to support the project, including an Inaugural Gala in New York, attended by Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and talk show host Charlie Rose. An original play was even produced in support of Hermione's voyage, inspired by Lafayette's personal letters. Hosted in partnership with the French Institute Alliance Française (FIAF) and the Friends of Hermione-Lafayette in America, the play premiered at Florence Gould Hall in New York on April 22.

The "Why not?" spirit lives on

On April 18, after decades of hard work by sponsors, artisans and crew members who helped make this project possible, the Hermione traveled up the Charente River to prepare for its inaugural journey. President François Hollande, who was in La Rochelle for the event, visited this magnificent vessel to pay tribute to the spirit

of Lafayette before its departure for the United States.

President Barack Obama joined in the commemoration of the Hermione's departure in a public letter, in which he expressed his pleasure in "celebrating the enduring bonds of friendship and solidarity that bind our nations together."


As the United States's oldest ally, France has never been at war with the U.S., and has fought alongside America for two centuries, from Yorktown, Va. to the beaches of Normandy. Recognizing the countries' shared ideals of "liberty and equality," the president expressed his desire to "renew and deepen" America's alliance with France, so that it may continue for generations to come.

Currently en route, the Hermione is set to arrive in Yorktown, Va. on June 5 before travelling to Mount Vernon, where a high-level dinner will be held at Washington's former residence in the presence of Ségolène Royal, French Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy and former president of the Poitou-Charentes region.

From the Virginia coast, the Hermione will

make a number of other stops in the U.S., including Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston and New York, where it will be docked over the 4th of July.

Numerous members of the French-American community have paid tribute to this symbol of liberty and innovation, which represents the spirit of "Why not?" a phrase coined by General Lafayette. In a joint article published in French newspaper *Ouest-France*, French Ambassador Gérard Araud and his counterpart, U.S. Ambassador to France Jane Hartley, saluted the departure of the vessel, stating that the project is a reminder of the crucial friendship that unites France and the United States. The two ambassadors wrote, "we hope that just as thousands of French people came to celebrate the departure of the Hermione, thousands of Americans will come to welcome the ship, from the ports of Virginia to Maine, with the same fervor and spirit that the Founding Fathers displayed when they welcomed Lafayette and the French forces more than two centuries ago."

For information about seeing the Hermione this summer, visit www.hermione2015.com 

Merck & Co. launches life science research fund

American pharmaceutical group Merck & Co. has decided to launch a life science research fund in France, joining hundreds of other U.S. companies that have invested in the country.

Within the next three years, this Merck & Co. initiative—entitled MSDAVENIR—will set up a 75 million euro endowment in France. The primary goal of MSDAVENIR is to establish cooperation with different companies involved in developing therapeutic solutions in order to support innovative projects that will allow medical and scientific progress. The MSDAVENIR fund will further support social responsibility initiatives, prioritizing the financial and educational support of patients and their primary care assistants.

Minister of the Economy, Industry and the Digital Sector Emmanuel Macron cited this initiative as proof of France's attractiveness to foreign investors. The decision of the American group to invest in France once again showcases the attractiveness of French international research.

Muriel Pénicaut, Director-General of Business France, further reiterated France's potential in health research and innovation by emphasizing the quality of French expertise in these fields.

French Innovation Week celebrates scientific and technological progress in Chicago

The second annual French Innovation Week was held in Chicago between April 23 and May 1 to celebrate excellence in French innovation and expertise in the area. A number of events took place throughout the city, promoting French achievements in science, technology, and culture in Chicago.

The festival focused particularly on female leadership, and innovative achievements by women worldwide. Several events looked at opportunities for women in science and business, areas in which they are generally under-represented.

French Innovation Week coincided with the fourth annual French-American Science Festival, which seeks to engage young Chicago people in fun and educational activities aimed at encouraging scientific investigation and learning. In addition, French leaders representing the automotive industry gathered to present their cutting-edge technological advancements at Chicago tech hub 1871. Innovation Week culminated in the Annual Gala of the French-American Chamber of Commerce to honor French-U.S. cooperation.

IPSEN Bioscience opens R&D center in Cambridge



From left: Ambassador Araud speaks at the opening of IPSEN Bioscience; Consul General of France in Boston Fabien Fieschi, IPSEN CEO Marc de Garidel, Ambassador Gérard Araud, IPSEN Executive VP R&D Claude Bertrand, IPSEN VP R&D Project Management & Analytics Leslie Sloan, and IPSEN VP PR & Communication Didier Veron.

▲ On April 1, Ambassador Gérard Araud took part in the grand opening of IPSEN's new Research and Development (R&D) center, Ipsen Bioscience, in Cambridge, Mass. A scientific symposium was held to mark the inauguration of the facility, bringing together several Nobel Prize laureates as well as scientists and researchers to stimulate debate and encourage scientific creativity.

In his speech, Ambassador Araud underlined the importance of the global American market for French companies. He spoke about the strength of the Boston area, which supports business development in the health and wellness sectors, and has "managed to establish itself, with its prestigious universities, large hospitals, and numerous

pharmaceutical companies and innovative startups, as the epicenter of new developments in biotechnology."

Cambridge, Mass. is a recognized hub in the U.S. for biomedical research and innovation. It is also home to highly acclaimed academic institutions, prestigious hospitals, major biotechnology startups and several Ipsen partners, such as Rhythm and Radius.

IPSEN's latest investment in biomedical facilities in Cambridge is part of the company's goal to expand its partnership with American biotechnology, medical and scientific associations. The facility's site will benefit from the dynamic Boston area while further enhancing French-American connections.

Two French companies receive Patents for Humanity award



Representatives from companies selected for the Patents for Humanity awards alongside Leila Equinet, Regional Counselor for Intellectual Property (2nd from right) at the French Embassy and Minh-Hà Pham, Counselor for Science and Technology at the French Embassy (far right).

▲ The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office recently announced the winners of the 2015 Patents for Humanity Award. Among the seven winners were two French companies: Nutriset and Sanofi.

Nutriset, a family-owned and operated food manufacturing company, was recognized for its nutritional product, PlumpyNut, which the company developed through a partnership with the French Research Institute for Development (IRD). The product rapidly delivers nutrients to infants suffering from malnutrition. The PlumpyField network now includes eight companies, and the patent

has brought new technology to developing countries, making it possible to improve nutritional conditions for their citizens.

Pharmaceutical company Sanofi was recognized for its development of a product that will facilitate the production of semi-synthetic artemisinin, which is used to fabricate anti-malarial drugs. Sanofi joined a public-private partnership to create the product, and now supplies large quantities of artemisinin anti-malarial compounds on a no-profit-no-loss basis for use in developing countries.

The Lafayette Debates bring together students from across the U.S.

Every year, the French Embassy partners with The George Washington University to host the 2015 Lafayette Debates, a series of academic debates promoting a trans-Atlantic conversation about issues relating to both France and the United States. This year, the competition consisted of public debates at French Consulates in the U.S., online contests in both French and English, and an international intercollegiate debate tournament in Washington, D.C., which was hosted by the Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication at The George Washington University on April 18 and 19.

The tradition of the Lafayette Debates started in 1824, when General Lafayette and his son, George Washington Lafayette, were inducted into a debate and literary society at The George Washington University, the Enosinian Society. Their entry into the society was commemorated by a debate series entitled the Lafayette Debates, a tradition that has been revived through the partnership between the embassy and The George Washington University.

In anticipation of the COP21 Climate Change Conference in Paris, the 2015 Lafayette Debates focused on efforts to minimize the effects of climate change. Participants debated on different aspects of this issue from a French-American perspective, and were judged by a French-American jury comprised of diplomats, scholars and climate change experts. Teams were asked to either defend or refute the claim that “all states have an obligation to anticipate, prevent and minimize the causes of climate change, and mitigate its adverse effects.”

Candidates were selected to compete at the international tournament through qualifying rounds held online, in which participants could submit both oral and written arguments for consideration by the jury.

Online finalists and teams selected from schools across the country participated in the in-person debate held at The George Washington University.

The teams selected for final rounds were the University of Michigan and the University of Toronto, provid-



Members of competing teams at the reception for the Lafayette Debates, held at the French Residence, alongside Emilienne Baneth-Nouailhetas, Attaché for University Cooperation (far left), and Frédéric Doré, French Deputy Ambassador to the U.S. (fifth from left)

ing both affirmative and negative arguments, respectively. Both teams presented compelling arguments for their case, questioning whether states that are not one of the biggest carbon-emitters should be obligated to develop their economy to adapt to climate change. The judges' panel ultimately selected the University of Michigan debate team as the overall winner of the Debates, in a narrow 4 to 3 decision.

Winners of the in-person debate were awarded with funded study tours of Paris, where they will have the opportunity to meet with top-level officials to further discuss and engage in debates on climate change and human rights issues.

In addition to the series of online and in-person English competitions, there was a francophone portion of the debate in which participants with a good command of the French language had the opportunity to engage in debate with each other. The three winners of this portion of the debates will travel to Paris to participate in the Institut Français's "LabCitoyen" program, where they will attend various lectures, debates, round tables, and workshops on the topics of climate change and human rights.

Grande Fête celebrates Francophonie around the globe



Delicious Tunisian food was served at the French Embassy's Grande Fête de la Francophonie.

In celebration of the Month of Francophonie, the Cultural Services of the French Embassy hosted the closing celebration of the Washington, D.C. Francophonie Cultural Festival, La Grande Fête de la Francophonie. In partnership with Smithsonian at 8, La Grande Fête celebrated the unique cultural traditions of various

francophone countries, which were represented at the Maison Française, the French Embassy's cultural event space.

The Washington, D.C. Francophonie Cultural Festival is an annual celebration of the diversity and richness of the French language and numerous French-speaking communities around the world. The festival includes a series of cultural events and outreach programs to engage the National Capital Region in francophone culture. Since 2001, more than 40 embassies and partners have collaborated to present an annual array of cultural events showcasing Francophone cultures from Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the Middle East. The festival featured a range of concerts, cuisine, films, literary salons and lectures for all ages.

Visitors to La Grande Fête at the French Embassy enjoyed culture, music, and gastronomy from over thirty different countries. The event featured a performance by acclaimed Haitian singer Emeline Michel, one of the top Haitian songwriters of her generation, who sings in both French and Haitian Creole. French DJ Princess Slaya also performed, presenting a mix of different rhythms from Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe.

French hip hop group IAM sets out on tour of the U.S.

In April, French hip hop band IAM played concerts across the United States, visiting seven venues. Presented by Live Nation and Def Jam Records, IAM's 2015 U.S. tour ran from April 15 to April 23 in cities such as New York, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Formed in Marseille in 1989, IAM comprises five members who are credited with bringing hip hop to France. IAM's music draws influence from all over the world, creating a unique rap style integrating French lyrics with Middle Eastern and Egyptian influence. The group also seeks to promote a positive image of Islam, paying homage to the varying cultural identities of the band's members and France itself. IAM's music seeks to integrate Islamic and Arabic subculture in France, and to prevent further outbreaks of intolerance in French politics and society.

Abderrahmane Sissako tours U.S. to promote *Timbuktu*

In April, Mauritanian director Abderrahmane Sissako embarked on a U.S. tour to promote his latest film, *Timbuktu*, which looks at the occupation of the African city in Mali by a group of Islamist extremists. The film was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film in the 2015 Academy Awards.

Sissako's aesthetic films capture the profound hardships of everyday life, and often examine the position of West Africa in relation to the rest of the world. Although his work has most recently focused on the Sahel region of Africa, he maintains a cosmopolitan approach to his work. Sissako uses a refined approach to express his devotion to a certain region and its people, and his depictions of major epochal political changes provide an educational, artistic and captivating experience for viewers.

During Sissako's tour, American audiences had an opportunity to view screenings of *Timbuktu*, a French-produced film, at a number of academic and cultural institutions. These included Princeton University, the University of Indiana, and the University of Virginia. The Motion Picture Association of America hosted a screening in partnership with the State Department, and Dartmouth College presented Sissako with the Dartmouth Film Award.

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Ambassador Araud's Twitter chat reaches nearly 100,000




Ambassador Araud reviews questions received during his March 30 Twitter chat, relayed from the French Embassy's account.

▲ On March 30, Ambassador Gérard Araud participated in an hour-long Twitter chat, during which he answered questions from the public via the French Embassy's account, @franceintheus.

An avid "tweeter," Ambassador Araud joined the social media platform in April 2014 and has since gained a strong follower base—he is currently at nearly 13,500 followers.

In the days leading up to the Twitter chat, followers of the French Embassy's account posed questions for the ambassador using the hashtag #AskFrance. Followers continued to post questions live throughout the duration of the chat.

Ambassador Araud responded to questions ranging from hard-hitting topics such as negotiations on Iran's nuclear program, the current situation in Syria and the COP21 conference on climate change in Paris at the end of 2015 to lighter interrogations, such as a discussion about his favorite cartoon character, Tintin. In total, 92,000 Twitter users saw his exchanges via the embassy's account.

Former Mayor of New York and U.N. Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change Michael Bloomberg joined in on the conversation, discussing France's actions to promote innovative solutions for climate change in preparation for the COP21 climate change conference at the end of the year. 

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