

Florida, the USA and France: a business partnership

First of all I want to thank you for inviting me to talk to you, in this prestigious university. Before becoming minister in charge of the French overseas and before I was elected to the senate, I lectured at the University of Dublin in Ireland.

I am all the more grateful to be given the opportunity to be once again in contact with students, since I do not have to mark your exams later.

First, I would like to thank the Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence, and particularly its Associate Director Christine Caly who organized this event.

The reason why I am here today, with the French Ambassador to the United States of America and the Consul of France in Miami is because you're bound to play a part to the special relationship that links Florida, the USA and France.

On June 6th on next year, we'll be celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Normandy landings which sealed the destiny of our two countries. Let's never forget that the United States and France owe each other their very existence as free nations. Let's never forget that from Yorktown to the beaches of Normandy our two countries have always stood shoulder to shoulder to promote the values of freedom and democracy that we together gave the world over 200 years ago.

This is still the case today. The US and France are each other's closest allies in the fight against terrorism, as illustrated by French military operation in Mali, with much appreciated American support, to combat Al Qaida in Africa. In the same vein, our two countries are in the forefront of international effort to stop the bloodshed in Syria and find a political solution to put an end to this conflict.

Based on these shared values and commitments, the French government wants today to create the very best conditions for a flourishing business partnership between our two countries. My visit here today is to reinforce the special bonds of friendship that unite France and Florida. We want to foster American investment in France and help French companies establish here in Florida.

The French Minister for Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius has defined supporting French businesses abroad as a priority for our diplomacy.

Cross investment is key to this partnership. The number one foreign investor in France is the United States of America. At the same time, US exports to France represent 30 billion USD per year. To give you an idea of size, that's roughly the annual budget of a small country like Ireland.

France is among the top 5 foreign investors here in America. There are almost 3 000 French companies in this country employing 600 000 people.

Florida is particularly attractive to French companies. 450 of them employ 20 000 people in this State.

French exports to Florida rose by 25% over one year, particularly in the area of transportation equipment, IT, electronics, chemical and pharmaceutical products.

In France like in Florida, innovation, research and development must remain our number one priority. Our government actively supports the development of clusters in all strategic sectors, bringing together the universities, the research centres and the industry. In the same spirit, France has established the highest R&D tax credit in the world.

Companies investing in France can avail from some of the best universities and research centres. France is one of the world leaders in innovation, number 2 in Europe, number 6 in the world, in terms of the number of patents.

For the second year in a row, 12 French companies are cited in the world's 100 most innovative companies. Some of these names will be familiar to you. I would like to pay tribute to Alcatel Lucent, Arkema, EADS, L'Oréal, Michelin, Saint Gobain, Thales, Safran, Bouygues and Valeo. Three French public research centres are also among the 12: the French Centre for Atomic Energy CEA, the national centre for Research in Science CNRS, and IFP Energies Nouvelles.

Another strength of ours is the fact that we have one of the best qualified workforce in Europe and in the top 3, in terms of productivity per hour. In addition, France is one of the greenest countries in the Northern hemisphere.

Our greenhouse gas emission to GDP ratio is lower than the American, the British, the German or the Japanese ratios.

Let's have a short quiz. Who among you can tell me France's ranking worldwide in terms of GDP?

Number one is the USA. Then China, Japan, Germany and France is number 5.

And for its capacity to attract Foreign Investment, France is ranked at number 4.

Our country is at the heart of Europe, and it is leading the way in key industrial areas. A few days ago in Atlanta, I took part in a cross investment forum on the Aerospace industry and Pharmaceuticals. I should mention other areas like the Agri-food sector, the IT sector and the chemical industry.

There are 35 French companies in the world's top 500. Paris is one of the most important financial centres in the world, with 4 French banks in the top 50 safest financial institutions.

France is the main gateway to the Eurozone, the largest single market in the world. 500 million consumers, 20% of the world's GDP.

I would also like to mention the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership which is currently under discussion between the EU and the US. It will help solve the regulatory puzzle and boost transatlantic trade. The EU-US trade relationship is already the biggest in the world and every trade barrier we remove can result in significant economic gains on both sides of the Atlantic.

The EU has recently adopted a plan to make sure the single currency remains stable and sustains growth.

The USA and Europe are each other's most important markets. The transatlantic economy generates close to 5 trillion dollars in commercial sales: half of the world's wealth.

Let's focus now on the partnership between France and the USA, in terms of education and scientific research. There are more than 800 bilateral university agreements between our two countries. France is the 4th world destination for Americans who study overseas.

In Science, the USA is France's first partner. Some figures are impressive: for example we have 7000 joint scientific publications.

In addition, there are prestigious partnerships supported by the French government. They combine the private sector, universities and public research labs.

I would like to mention the *Partner University Fund*, created in 2007 to promote university collaborations. A few days ago the Nobel prize in medicine was awarded to a PUF laureate. In 2002, the University of Columbia joined forces with Science Po, Polytechnique and Sorbonne university to create the *Alliance Program*. This is an innovative joint-venture aimed at sharing knowledge, practices and resources.

FIU students can access international student exchange programmes with some prestigious French business schools such as Clermont ESC or Skema.

Studying overseas is or should be an essential part of the curriculum for someone who wants to work in international trade.

This is why university partnerships are so critically important for us and for you. As Thomas Jefferson said, “Every man has two countries, his own and France” so now you know what you have to do.

Thank you very much.