

Celebration of 54th Anniversary of the signing of the Elysée Treaty

22nd January 2017

By the Ambassador of France Stéphanie RIVOAL

Your Excellency Peter,

Dear guests and friends,

For me, today is a special and emotional celebration. It is an opportunity for us to witness and always remember the possible ways to find in our hearts forgiveness and reconciliation, to find peace, stability and friendship.

The Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel¹, said in 2012, when European Union obtained the Nobel Peace Prize: « *The reconciliation between Germany and France is probably the most striking example in history to show that war and conflict can be turned so rapidly into peace and cooperation* ».

Indeed, on 22nd January, 1963, less than 20 years after the second world war, which was the bloodiest conflict in all history, General Charles de Gaulle, President of the French Republic and Dr Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany signed a treaty. **And this treaty made History.** It sealed the irrevocable commitment of Germany and France for peace and friendship between our citizens and between European countries after the long journey of reconciliation.

We are very proud to celebrate today the **54th Anniversary of the signing of the Elysée Treaty.** This bold, ambitious text has crossed

¹ Thorbjørn Jagland / tout le discours

https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/presentation-speech.html

history and has been guiding our willing and acts for decades. So far, this strong friendship between our two countries has proven to be solid, reliable in good times and in bad times.

It's **hand to hand** that we can act and look forward. One of the strongest political symbol of our relationship is the 1984 picture you saw on the invitation: the French President François Mitterrand and the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl holding hands, standing in front of the memorial to the battle of Verdun, the bloodiest of the first world war.

What is friendship? Friendship is made of will, it is made of compassion and it is made of joy.

Will: The will to build together a successful path.

France and Germany have been the instigators of the construction of the European Union, having understood early after the war the importance of such a community.

More than a friendly relationship, France and Germany share a common citizenship: we are all European citizens. This citizenship even led us to unite our monetary sovereignty.

Together, we are committed to youth, our common future, to the planet through energetic transition, and to shared prosperity through economic and social thrive.

Joy: The joy of sharing and jointly enjoying moments of life

Lets take the example of Alsace and Lorraine, two now French regions, which used to be German, after having been French in the 19th century, are now the masterpiece of this shared culture: architecture, gastronomy and arts are the results of many interconnexions between our two countries. We all love sausages: sausages from Strasbourg,

Fribourg, Brandebourg... What better proof could there be than this common taste for sausages!

Joy in sports too! In this sensational period of CAN 2017, let me tell you a little bit about football. We all know that the Ugandans love football, as much as we, the French and Germans, do!

Over the years, the national teams of France and Germany had played 37 times against each other. During the last World Cup, Germany defeated France and became the new World Champion. Last July, during the UEFA Euro, France finally defeated Germany, thanks to our marvellous Antoine Griezmann! However, France did not become the European champion. The French are great but they are also very unpredictable.

Compassion: in sharing pain and supporting each other

On 13 November 2015, France suffered bloody terrorist attacks. One of them was at the largest French football stadium during an amical game between France and Germany. Berlin has been under attack last Christmas, as well as Nice six months earlier. 224 people died during these three attacks. Our hearts bled for one another. We are united in our pain.

But in this time of global conflicts, and the recent attacks that our countries had to face for the past couple of years, our **UNITY** against violations of Human Rights, our common **RESPECT** of human life and our desire to **PROTECT** all freedoms, all these shared values saved us from Barbary. They were our shields. We know what it is like to go to war, we know the pain of losing love ones. We've been there. And we know there is something more important than anything, and everything, and it is our common humanist values.

A French writer, Jean Giraudoux, who was enthralled by Germany, said in this famous book called “Siegfried et le Limousin²” written in 1922:

« Le mot France et le mot Allemagne ne sont à peu près plus, et n’ont jamais été pour le monde, des expressions géographiques, ce sont des termes moraux ».

“The word France and the word Germany are virtually not anymore, and have never been for the world, mere geographical expressions. The words France and Germany are moral values”

Our friendship is naturally extended to Uganda for the purpose of sharing, enjoying, supporting each other for a better future.

As history echoes itself, it is also worth remembering that 1963, not only seals Germany and France reconciliation but also marks the beginning of another long journey, initiated by the newly independent African countries: the rise of a sovereign Africa, aspiring with the same strength and spirit to unity and peace.

Uganda has also experienced war in its mist. The reconciliation is still in process through different approaches such as the amnesty given by the government; the ongoing work of the International Criminal Court (ICC); and through the massive fieldwork done by non-governmental organizations. It will take time but it will succeed.

France and Germany have tried to contribute actively to the reconciliation and the international awareness by helping Jonathan Littell produce this documentary called “Wrong Elements” featuring the child soldiers.

² Pour plus d’information sur le livre : <http://temporel.fr/Jean-Giraudoux-par-Didier-Lafargue>

Today, we are pleased to host one of the protagonists. Geoffrey OTEMA is an active member of the NGO “Drop in the Bucket”. Their main objective is to increase access to education for the children who were born in captivity to mothers who were abducted by the Lord’s Resistance army in Northern Uganda.

Civil society initiatives are essential. Indeed, the direct impact of their work on people’s lives proves that they are one of the crucial actors in this long process.

That is why we have decided to honour our special guests, the directors of local NGOs from Gulu. They work every single day to promote peace and build reconciliation through dialogue.

Together with Peter, we wish to draw your attention to these people here. Today, they are more important than ambassadors.

We thank you all

Es lebe Deutschland!

Vive la France!