



analytica advisors



SPEECH BY CÉLINE BAK

November 19, 2018

Maison de la France au Canada

Ceremony for the presentation of the insignia of Knight of the Order of Merit.

Ambassador, members of the diplomatic corps, my dear friends...

Here we are in a magnificent place - unique, historical.

This beautiful residence of France in Canada, here on the ramparts of the Ottawa River, was a gift from France to our country, almost 80 years ago in 1939. And it inspires us tonight.

I want to thank each and every one of you for being here tonight and especially for being there for me for a very long time.

And I would like to tell you a story. A story about the challenge that the French diplomats set for me three years ago.

In 2015, there was a lunch here at the embassy - in the beautiful dining room on my right. Mr. Nicholas Hulot, who was France's ambassador for climate change, was in Canada. Diplomats from this Maison de la France au Canada, including Ambassador Chapuis,

Minister Counselor Ferrerai and Political Advisor Benoît Combourieu invited me to a luncheon in honor of Mr. Hulot.

At this luncheon, these diplomats invited me to mobilize companies in Canada in support of the Paris Agreement.

The mobilization of private sector actors was a cornerstone of the diplomatic strategy to give courage to heads of state from around the world to agree to address climate change through an international treaty.

This lunch was the spark that started a project in which Canadian companies, such as Karen Hamberg's, here, went to Paris to present their solutions to climate change.

And, if I tell you all that, it is to tell you that French diplomacy brings light. Its genius is not just to identify people like you and me who are willing to commit and to act, but to bring them closer together so that they can face great challenges.

There is no doubt. It is French diplomacy that made the Paris Agreement possible.

Thanks to the combination of its military power and its soft power, exercised with its foreign policy, France continues to play a crucial role in solving problems in the world.

French diplomacy is the foundation on which the One Planet summits (to finance the Paris Agreement) are based. And also the Paris Peace Forum to defend democratic values against nationalism.

In a world where improvisation in foreign policy seems to be gaining ground, France is consistent. Its consistency has few equivalents elsewhere in the world. Without the hard work of French diplomats, our democratic values would be weakened today.

But what about the role of individuals? What about the role of each of us? Life takes place every day, as we would say in French “au ras des pâquerettes”. It is in the day to day that our values grow and where we defend them. And it is in this day to day that we decide the shape of our lives.

What has been decisive in my journey goes back to the time, a few years ago, when a government decided to eliminate the coal plant responsible for a significant part of its electrical energy. I was inspired by this decision and the role of Ms. Lara Ellis and Mr. Lorne Johnson both here today in this transformation. Because of Lara and Lorne's work and that of colleagues in environmental NGOs, I decided to rally people who are developing innovative solutions to climate change. I decided to speak.

And that led to lunch with Mr. Hulot, and with that to the commitment of dozens, if not hundreds, of people who also added to the work of thousands more. All this made the Paris Agreement possible. As far as I'm concerned, I did not know that what I had to say would interest anyone. We cannot know it before we speak up. I most certainly didn't.

So I think we each have a role to play, a role that is to revive the fire of our values. Otherwise this fire may be extinguished. We cannot give up if we want to give our children a planet, and a society that will support their dearest dreams.

Each person can make a difference in defending the values conveyed by the Maison de la France in Canada.

Ambassador Rispal, thank you and your colleagues for welcoming us with such distinction to your home.

I could not be more honored to be named Knight of the Order of Merit and I will wear these insignia with humility