

**Nankai University – Honorary Doctorate Awards Ceremony  
Tianjin, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Address by Mr. Laurent Fabius,  
Former President of COP 21,  
President of the Constitutional Council of the French Republic**

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***“COP 21: Keep the spirit of Paris alive”***

Mr. Chancellor of Nankai University,  
Mr. President of Nankai University,  
Master Fan Zeng,  
Ladies and Gentlemen professors and students,  
Dear friends,

Thank you for your warm welcome. It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you today, in Tianjin, at the prestigious Nankai University. You have just awarded me an honorary doctorate; you have unveiled a magnificent portrait – magnificent in its artistry, as for the model I’ll let you make up your own minds –; you have made too complimentary remarks. So much honour tests my modesty. Yet I accept your kindness as a gesture of friendship, and offer you my deepest thanks.

Your president asked me to speak about the famous December 2015 Paris Conference on Climate Change, COP 21, that I chaired, and which has given us the first universal agreement to fight against climate change. This is the first time I express myself in public on the subject since I left the presidency of the COP. But I remain keenly concerned about climate change. And I am happy that my first speech is taking place here, in China. Not only because I am a friend of China, but because China played an eminent role in the success of COP 21 and will certainly play a major role in the fight against climate disruption and for a more environmentally friendly world.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear friends,

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in the early evening, the Paris Agreement was approved by 195 countries. The Conference had raised considerable hopes, but the task was exceptionally difficult, and so there was that night a strong sense of relief at the degree of success achieved. The adjective “historic” is regularly over-used, but in this case it is appropriately applied to the results of COP 21.

Why? Because this Conference went right to the heart of the matter: thanks to worldwide commitments and actions, fight efficiently against global warming, and so keep the possibility for humankind to continue to live on our planet. This is why I often say that the fight against climate change, the great cause of our century, is a “vital” challenge – vital in the truest sense of the word.

Careful. Some tend to think it is a problem for tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. No: it is a challenge to be met today. We can already observe the fearful consequences of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The year 2015 was the hottest on record; February 2016 was the warmest February ever since the first records were made at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Extreme climate events are increasing everywhere in the world: hurricanes, typhoons, droughts. Glaciers are melting at a high speed. Rising sea levels are threatening the coastal areas of many countries, and threaten the very existence of certain countries – for instance the island nations of the Pacific and the Caribbean. China is not exempt. It is not merely global “warming” or climate “change” we are witnessing, it is truly “climate disruption”.

I travelled quite a bit while preparing for COP 21, the equivalent of more than forty round-the-world trips in just over three years. I will hold close to my heart the stories I heard and the people I met. For example, I met in Bangladesh an elderly woman, who had been forced to move nine times because of flooding. An engineer in the Far North showed me places where the ice sheet had collapsed and explained to me the devastating consequences. In Bolivia, I met a farmer who wept at the damage done by lack of respect for what he called “Mother Earth”. In Africa, there was a young woman – women and the poor are generally the first victims of climate disruption – who described the dramatic drying up of Lake Chad and its disastrous consequences.

The fight against climate disruption is not only a vital issue for humankind, but a global one – ultimately the most global issue of all. Global because the threat is planetary, there is no frontier for gas emissions, and none of the world’s regions would be spared by the consequences of our inaction. Global because disruption affects not only the climate, but also public health, food security, development, migrations, and thus has an impact on security and peace. I underline the risks associated with uncontrolled climate disruption: scarcity of food and water, massive migration of people displaced by rising oceans or droughts, threats of conflicts over control of coal, oil and gas – many countries are already confronting these challenges. Then, to act in order to prevent climate disruption, by turning towards energy savings, renewable and low-carbon energy, is to act for peace, directly to ensure the security of present and future generations, and first and foremost yourselves.

Today, thanks to science, we know for a fact that with every year that passes, more harmful greenhouse gases are emitted, and that they accumulate over decades, even centuries, leading to a situation that will be irreversible if we don’t act soon and strongly enough. In 2015, we emitted a total of 36 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub>! This leaves us all with a heavy responsibility: we are the first generation to be fully aware of the threat, and the last to be able to act effectively to counteract. Global warming places humankind in what I might call a universal race against time. Later, it will be too late. For these reasons, negotiations for the Paris Agreement last December were not ordinary international discussions that could have easily been postponed without consequences in the event of failure. Hope for humankind depended of the success of COP 21.

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As I said, the result was far from settled in advance. I remember the meeting in Warsaw in 2013, three years ago, when France was chosen to host and preside over COP 21. The delegates there came to me and all said the same thing: “*Mr. Fabius, good luck!*”. At the

time, I didn't fully grasp the implications... – but I came to understand them in the months that followed.

The mission of COP 21 was complex: to bring 195 countries into agreement – 196 parties with the European Union –, each with a different situation and position, and covering subjects that will shape their development for decades to come. The diversity of situations is expressed in the unequal share of the production of global CO<sub>2</sub> by different countries and continents: 26% for China, 16% for the United States, 11% for the European Union, 6% for India, 5% for Russia, 5% for the Middle East, 4% for Latin America, 3% for Africa. This diversity of situations contributes to explain why the history of the annual Conference of Parties (or COP), has not been – to be diplomatic about it – remarkable for its string of successes. In particular, the failure of COP 2009 in Copenhagen left a very lasting mark.

Nonetheless, in Paris, there was a special momentum. On the one hand, the 2011 COP, held in Durban, legally and specifically tasked 2015 COP 21 with reaching an agreement: we were under a sort of “obligation”. On the other hand, the “planets aligned” in an auspicious way to create a positive context that previous Conferences did not enjoy. The “science planet” was in our favour: the work of scientific IPCC experts established an unquestionable basis for the reality of global warming, its human origins and its exacerbation. At the same time, they provided a scenario outlining the dramatic consequences of inaction: a temperature increase of 4°, 5° or even 6 °C by the end of the century. Then – and it is a major shift –, it has now become more difficult to question the phenomenon. The “social planet” was also in positive alignment: awareness of the need for an agreement had risen prior to the Paris Conference, with a significant increase in commitment from economic and financial stakeholders, regions, NGOs, religious and spiritual authorities, as well as anonymous citizens. The “political planet”, aware of the likely catastrophe, was also in a favourable position: beyond the strong commitment of the European Union, the Chinese and the U.S. President gave particularly bold support, which was decisive as it was a requisite for success that the largest greenhouse gas emitters should be on board.

So the planets were aligned, but it remained to transform this favourable context into a worldwide agreement. One of the questions that I was commonly asked before the Paris Conference was: how shall we be able to measure the success of COP 21 if it happens? I named several criteria: eventually, all were met. Above all, this agreement is “universal”: all 196 parties adopted it. It is based on Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (known as INDCs), i.e. long-term national commitments, from 189 countries – a considerable achievement. During COP 20 in Lima at the end of 2014, it was decided that every state should present its roadmap to keep the global temperature rise well below 2°C between now and 2100: with the proposed INDCs, 97% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions have been covered, which is as remarkable as it was unexpected. The Paris agreement is “ambitious” as well: it includes the long-term limitation of global warming at 2°C; whilst pursuing “efforts to limit” the temperature increase to only 1.5°C, a limit particularly vital to small islands; and a goal of carbon neutrality is set in the second half of the century. Furthermore, a mechanism for a five-yearly review of commitments is planned, to begin in 2023; there will be an initial evaluation in 2018, enabling follow-up; Moreover, a joint transparency framework has been defined. The agreement is also “legally binding” in so far as possible, given political constraints. Lastly, the agreement is “fair”: the notion of differentiation between rich countries and others is applied in various areas, and wealthy nations are committed to show solidarity for the more vulnerable; in particular they will spend at least 100 billion dollars a year on climate concerns in poorer countries, with a new quantified target to be set before

2025. “Universal”, “ambitious”, “legally binding”, “fair”: the Paris Agreement is not a low-end compromise, it is a robust agreement. It is, as I said, the first universal climate pact in history and certainly the most important international agreement to be signed at the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In terms of how the agreement came about, COP 21 will be scrutinised by historians, diplomats and scholars. But there are some lessons we have already learned. It shows that diplomacy and multilateralism can triumph over confrontation: whereas the international community had been at a stand-off on the question of climate change for many years, the Paris Agreement proved that diplomatic efforts could be effective, and that, under certain conditions, a global compromise could be achieved. I have often been asked about the method that delivered our success. Let me tell you a little bit about it.

As soon as France was selected in 2013, the Minister of Foreign Affairs – myself at the time – was instructed to organise and preside over COP 21 and the entire French diplomatic network was enlisted to raise awareness through contacts with governments and civil societies around the world, emphasizing the importance of COP 21 and promoting all necessary initiatives. The personal French President’s commitment and indeed that of the entire government was strong. This intense, meticulous diplomatic effort was useful.

As the months went by, we worked, I worked rather like a sculptor. A sculptor moulds the clay and first builds the core of his future work before adding other features and shaping the details; each part of the work must be solidly fixed so that the whole is cohesive and strong. In the same way, we had to work so that, little by little, through numerous group meetings and individual contacts, the countries of the world could become convinced. As you may know, in the COPs, the countries are grouped in various coalitions: the very influential so-called G77 + China (134 countries); BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India and China); ALBA group (including Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua), the Umbrella Group (Australia, Canada, the United States, Russia, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Ukraine), the AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans); the African Group; the Arab Group; the European Union, and so forth. In spite of their differences, they all had to be convinced to reach the same conclusions. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made a very strong personal commitment. Christiana Figueres, the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) dedicated herself to COP 21’s success: the support she and her team provided was crucial before and during the Conference.

In this regard, Franco-Chinese relations were key. I don’t say that because I am in front of a Chinese audience, but because it is a reality, a reality which has contributed to the success. In early November 2015, one month before Paris COP 21, the “China and France Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change” was a determining factor; we prepared it with Chinese negotiator Mr. Xie Zhenhua, and President Xi Jinping and President Hollande personally adopted it. Crucial points of the future Paris Agreement were already written in this text, including the 2°C target; the equal importance given to “adaptation” to global warming and “mitigation” of global warming; the five-yearly review plan; the improved transparency framework; the importance of financial support to the poorest and most vulnerable countries – all key elements. In parallel, China and the United States worked closely together. The Peruvian presidency of COP 20 also provided valuable guidance. Our constant concern was to bring about a convergence of view points as far in advance of the Conference as possible, in particular through a series of informal, ministerial level meetings in

France at which China, the United States and the European Union always participated. In this way – as opposed to what happened in Copenhagen in 2009 – only some of the decisions were left to be debated during the two-week Conference.

At the same time, international civil society was mobilised. Non-governmental actors – regions and cities, businesses, the financial sector, NGOs – became involved and their voices were heard. For them, the success of the Paris Conference was based on two things: on the one hand, adoption of the universal legal agreement on climate, and on the other, the mobilisation of international civil society through the implementation of the so called “Lima-Paris Action Agenda” (LPAA), also named “Agenda for action”. This call for action worked well and resulted in many public-private partnerships; the future of it is promising.

Another important contribution to the ultimate success of COP 21, which may seem secondary but which was of prime importance, was the decision to invite Heads of state and government to attend the very beginning of the Paris Conference, and not the end as usual. In the past, they had usually come at the end, observed the failure of negotiations and were helpless to intervene: too little too late. The decision to do just the opposite – a decision made by the French President and myself after discussions with the Chinese President – was the result of a lesson we learned from our analysis of the failure of the 2009 Copenhagen Conference. Therefore, the very day the Conference opened on November 30<sup>th</sup>, more than 150 Heads of state and government were physically present in Paris and delivered a personal and positive speech, a powerful incentive to an agreement: they were the largest number ever assembled in one place, at one time, to discuss one subject. This exceptional session gave the whole Conference a decisive kick-off and negotiators had to live up to its promise.

The negotiations themselves went forward as planned embodied by the following key words : “listening carefully, being transparent, staying ambitious, and favouring compromise”. I declared that the COP would be “inclusive”, and remained faithful to this method, that each party would have a voice, and that each would be heard clearly and understood. During the first week of the Conference, work was carried out in a group of expert-negotiators from the 196 parties who had spent four years preparing the draft agreement, the so-called ADP Group, set up during the 2011 Durban COP. This ADP Group clarified some issues, but could not reach a conclusion on many others. The two ADP co-chairs and the main coalition groups agreed that I as COP President should receive their draft proposal at the end of the first week, when responsibility for negotiations fell to me: this left enough time to negotiate the unsolved questions and conclude. We worked night and day during a week to prepare three successive drafts, each drawn up with the 196 parties, the groups and their leaders. Negotiations were intense and complex, requiring the active participation of the presidency, assisted by fifteen ministers from different countries whom I had chosen as facilitators on specific subjects. We did not go to sleep. Thus, little by little, the number of points for debate was reduced. At the end of the negotiations, after working specifically and personally with both China and the United States on December 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, I was able on the 12<sup>th</sup> to present a text that seemed to me the best we could achieve. In the evening, eventually it was approved by consensus and sealed by the now famous green gavel in the shape of the COP 21 logo – the logo that you see here and in Master Fan Zeng’s painting. The world has done it. In just a moment, I will be giving to Master Fan Zeng a copy of that gavel as a vivid witness of COP 21.

In summary, the success of the Paris Agreement was possible thanks to a clear strategy, continuous effort, precise organisation and collective convictions. I would add that beyond negotiations between States, the personal dimension and relationships – something we must

never neglect – , the human dimension and relationships, was a decisive factor – including right up to the last minute where we had to convince the last reluctant countries. The confidence we had patiently acquired in the months preceding the Conference, in particular between France and China, was a key to such a successful conclusion.

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Ladies and Gentlemen professors and students, Dear friends,

The Paris Conference was a turning point: the world has now officially decided to live with reduced carbon levels, and to target carbon neutrality. The consequences will be of great significance for us, for our world, for our children and our grandchildren, not only in terms of the climate itself, but as I said earlier, also with regard to water, the fight against poverty, preservation of nature, prevention of massive migrations, creation of new jobs, avoidance of conflicts and – let us hope – peace. And yet – I stress that point - the agreement of December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 is not the end. The follow-up and implementation will call for major efforts, and the challenges remain numerous. I will conclude on this point.

The first challenge concerns the very process of ratification of the Paris Agreement. This is a decisive step towards the implementation, because its entry into force is subject to ratification by at least fifty-five countries that account for at least 55 % of global greenhouse gas emissions. It is thus important that ratification takes place as quickly and in as many countries as possible. On April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016, under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General and the President of France, the UN will hold in New York a high-level signing ceremony. The presence of representatives of every government will have high symbolic importance – even though the 196 parties present in Paris in November have already legally adopted the text. Ratification is the next, indispensable, step.

The second challenge concerns application of the Paris Agreement-which includes 29 articles, and the accompanying decision, which has 140 points. In December, principles were established and objectives were set: now it is time to turn them into actions. The Group in charge of preparing implementation decisions will hold their first meeting next May in Bonn in Germany. The objective is to reach a common and precise definition of financing for climate programmes (100 billion dollars per year annually), to determine the method for the five-yearly review of national commitments, and to set the framework for transparency in follow-up. More generally, the difficulties experienced by certain countries will have to be overcome : the dependence on fossil fuels (oil and gas) in such countries as the Gulf countries, Algeria, Nigeria, or Venezuela, for example; the significant consumption of coal – which emits a high level of CO<sub>2</sub> – particularly in China and India, and so on and so forth. Concrete advances must be achieved with COP 22 which will take place in November 2016 in Marrakesh (Morocco).

A third challenge concerns the period leading up to 2020. Beyond the implementation of the Paris Agreement to enter into force in 2020, we will have to set up monitoring of pre-2020 actions and what we call the Lima-Paris Action Agenda. I could give the example of the excellent “International Solar Alliance”, initiated by Indian Prime Minister Modi, which seeks to establish cooperation between developed and developing countries in order to attract investment and technology in the solar sector, very promising for countries located between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. I could mention too “Mission Innovation”, launched by

President Obama and President Hollande with private investors such as Bill Gates, intended to boost massively financing for research and development in clean technologies and to identify innovative, cost-effective solutions. I might also point to France's work to encourage the "Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems" (*CREWS*) initiative for small islands and risky areas; or to the system of climate insurance for the most vulnerable nations, supported by Germany; or to initiatives for the protection of tropical forests. I particularly underscore the importance of financial commitments in favour of renewable energy in Africa, which should be met rapidly. During the Paris Conference, a minimum of 10 billion dollars were promised to supply the African continent with 10 extra Gigawatts of energy from renewable resources by 2020: this is essential because today no less than 1.3 billion people – 18% of the world's population – do not have access to energy, and most of them live in Africa.

In the face of all these challenges, I hope that the "spirit of Paris" will prevail. Obstruction, backtracking are real risks. Think for instance about the results of the impact of US presidential election next November: if a climate change denier were to be elected, it would threaten global action to fight climate disruption. There are also risks associated with certain reluctant countries. We must not underestimate these risks. We must not imagine that everything is all settled. We must keep the spirit of Paris alive. For that, it is necessary to maintain universal mobilisation – not only among States, but among all Non-governmental actors as well. Each and every one of us, especially young people, has a part of the solution at hand: our life-style choices, our means of transportation, our use of water and heating, our energy savings or our waste management, our dedication to research and innovation, and so on. Because it is a truly global threat, the solution must be global as well.

One last word. The fight against global warming is a great challenge but also a great opportunity: we can and must promote green growth and a new low-carbon economy; foster sustainable development that will serve ourselves and future generations. In this transition, necessary for humankind's survival, the Paris 2015 Agreement, by setting ambitious and universally accepted principles, is a great step forward. But implementation remains a considerable task. Application of the Paris Agreement must be as successful as its negotiation was. We are not yet here. We must keep the spirit of the Paris Agreement alive.

In this regard, the role of China, which has been decisive in the preparation for a successful Conference in Paris, will be crucial in coming years. Given the size of its population and the level of development, China is the world's largest emitter of CO<sub>2</sub>. You, especially young people, are aware of the challenge. The 13<sup>th</sup> Chinese Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) intends among its main objectives to build a green development what is called an "ecological civilisation". China intends to multiply by 2 its wind energy capacity and nuclear energy production, by 3 its solar production, by 10 its number of electric vehicles, while reducing its coal production and consumption and extending in 2017 to the whole country its carbon pricing system. These are major objectives and achievements. Hopefully the Chinese peak of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will decrease before 2030. I know how determined Chinese president and Chinese authorities are to confront these issues, and I have faith that China will remain committed to climate protection and sustainable development, and the transition to an "ecological civilisation".

I began this speech by expressing my warm friendship with China. Genuine friendship means sharing the daily aspects of life, and also sharing its great objectives and causes. The preservation of our planet is one of the great objectives and causes that link China and France for the sake of human kind. Thank you.

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