



2015

# Ambassador's Activities

Distributor: French Embassy in the UK  
- Press and Communications Services -  
58 Knightsbridge, SW1X 7JT London  
Twitter: [@FranceintheUK](https://twitter.com/FranceintheUK)  
Web: [www.ambafrance-uk.org](http://www.ambafrance-uk.org)

**Speech by H.E. Sylvie Bermann,  
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom,  
at the ceremony to award the insignia  
of *Chevalier* in the *Ordre national de la Légion d'Honneur*  
to M. Marc Mourre  
at the French Residence in London  
Monday 20 April 2015**

*Cher* Marc Mourre,

It's an honour and a great joy to welcome you, together with your family and close friends, to present you with the insignia of *Chevalier* in the *Ordre national de la Légion d'Honneur*.

Before retracing your career, I'd like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Bernard Emié, who was behind the proposal to award you this high distinction, created by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802 to reward exceptional services rendered to France. His responsibilities as Ambassador to Algeria unfortunately prevented him from coming to London to present you with these insignia.

However, I'm overjoyed to fulfil this job: awarding this distinction is always a particularly moving moment, but it's all the more so when chance dictates that its recipient is a friend of over 30 years' standing.

Allow me to recall a few stages in your life and your brilliant career, which have made you one of the best-recognized French bankers, particularly because of your expertise in the commodities sector.

You were born in Marseille in southern France, like your wife, Odile, whom I warmly welcome. It's a region you're both deeply attached to. You regularly go to your home in Mas de Saint-Andiol, next to the property of your parents, who have done us the honour of being here this evening.

You began your higher education in the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Marseille, then obtained a DEA postgraduate diploma in management from Aix-Marseille University and ESSEC in 1977.

Your childhood dream was to become a fighter pilot, and you liked moving fast! The following year you obtained a DESS postgraduate diploma in foreign trade and international transport from the Centre Supérieur des Transports Maritimes at Aix-Marseille University, and even found the time to begin a DEA diploma in the management of cultural organizations.

You were then called up for national service and left for Hong Kong as a National Service Volunteer in business. This first step under the Republic's wing, as a cultural attaché, enabled you to realize your passion for the world of culture and for managing the organizations which promote it.

You also have a soft spot for the "Pearl of the Orient", as do I, because it's where our careers began and our paths crossed – I was then French Vice-Consul –, giving birth to a friendship which, like our shared passion for the opera, has never died.

Back in Paris, you decided to join the oil industry, attracted by its international dimension, and started work at Elf Aquitaine, flagship of the French oil industry.

Recruited by Morgan Stanley, you were in charge of trading and marketing for Europe, and – in keeping with your taste for international affairs – divided your time between London and New York.

Your tenacity, strong work ethic and natural ability to forge links didn't go unnoticed, and you were appointed Vice President and returned to Hong Kong with the task of launching energy trading in Asia.

You succeeded brilliantly and became Executive Director before the age of 40, responsible for creating the commodities department in Singapore. You were then appointed Director of Morgan Stanley Singapore and a member of the regional operating committee for Asia outside Japan.

In 1995, you returned to London as global head of marketing and of commodities activity development, and became Managing Director.

Since 2008 you've been Vice-Chairman of Commodities, in charge of strategic relations with the boards of major clients and sovereign and private equity funds. You're also a member of several of the bank's management committees.

This very busy career hasn't stopped you demonstrating a constant commitment to the global reach of France and its culture.

Indeed, you're consistently involved in France's economic diplomacy. Since 2007 you've been a French Foreign Trade Adviser in the United Kingdom and have actively participated in drawing up several reports for the banking, financial advice, insurance and pensions group. You spoke in the debates organized on the sidelines of the G20 summit in London in 2012, and when events are organized by the Embassy you always make yourself available and contribute your invaluable expertise.

Your outstanding commitment to France's economic diplomacy and your ability to forge ties have been especially noted by successive heads of economic and financial affairs at the French Embassy in London. Some of them have become your close friends.

Your commitment to promoting French culture is exceptional. I emphasize that this is the second time in five years that you've received the insignia of *Chevalier*, because you were awarded the insignia of *Chevalier* in the *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* in January 2010.

While working for an American company and living in London for nearly 20 years, you've always been a fervent champion of French culture and have, for a long time, worked voluntarily to raise funds for projects by the French Institute in the UK.

The story began in 2007, when the then Director, Laurence Auer – who refused to see her cinema go under – went knocking on the doors of possible sponsors. Touched by the project, you welcomed her request with open arms, and you've always maintained this approach. You became a trustee of the charity Friends of the French Institute, then its chairman in 2010, the year the post was created.

You don't need me to tell you that the purpose of the Friends of the French Institute is to support the French Institute in the UK in its mission of promoting French language and culture in this country and preserving France's cultural heritage. The Trust finances a number of projects, and the Institute benefits from the expertise and networks of the trustees.

Since your appointment as Chairman, the time you've devoted to the position and your constant concern for efficiency have enabled the Trust to organize itself even more effectively.

You've thus enabled ever more important projects for the Institute to be funded:

- In 2009, you co-financed the renovation of the hall and of the Ciné Lumière, offering lovers of London's independent cinemas a modern auditorium, the first in a series of rejuvenations for an Institute which, three years earlier, had been questioning Paris about its financial viability;

- in 2010, you funded the creation of the online library Culturethèque, an initiative that attracted attention, because five years later it's been replicated in more than 90 countries;

- 2010 saw the creation, also thanks to the Trust, of the Franco-British fund for contemporary music, Diaphonique;

- Music again: in 2012 it was the turn of the Institute's Steinway piano to be restored.

The same year, you decided, with the Trust, to support a new project for the Institute and embarked on an ambitious, unprecedented fundraising campaign: I'm referring to the complete renovation of the French Institute's Mediatheque. Thanks to you, the Grade II listed reading room was restored to its former glory in 2014 and is admired by everyone. You've now finished fundraising for the renovation of the Children's Library.

Of course, your philanthropy is as much about defending as it is about donating. As Chairman of the Trustees and thus someone who strategically guides this fundraising, you also donate a very great deal to these same projects in a private capacity. And because this springs from a sincere belief, you set an example and have no hesitation in involving those close to you.

You're now embarking with the Trust on phase three of the battle for the Mediatheque, and I'm in no doubt that you will win it triumphantly.

So the Institute has never had greater friends than the Friends of the French Institute, which you chair. This is a feature I want to pay tribute to: you are a committed, tireless benefactor, and your action shows that philanthropy gives a vital boost to the cultural cause.

**[www.ambafrance-uk.org](http://www.ambafrance-uk.org)**

For your remarkable career, for the example you set, for your active involvement in and contribution to our efforts to heighten its cultural impact on the world, France, this evening, through me, wanted to pay tribute to you and award you our highest distinction.

*Marc Mourre, au nom du Président de la République et vous vertu des pouvoirs qui nous conférés, nous vous faisons Chevalier dans l'Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur.*