

Int'l Student House Tribute Dinner
Hosted by His Excellency Gérard Araud, Ambassador of France to the United States
Remarks by ISH-DC Resident Scholar Julien Maire

Thank you Mr. Ambassador for hosting this incredible evening, and thank you to International Student House for giving me the opportunity to attend this dinner. I am very honored to be here.

My name is Julien Maire and I am a resident of International Student House from Burgundy in France. I hold a Master's Degree in economics jointly offered by Ecole Polytechnique, ENSAE and HEC Paris. I also graduated from Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS). My research focuses on international economics and macroeconomics, and as a consultant at the World Bank, I am contributing to the World Development Report 2020 by assessing the macroeconomic implications of global value chains.

As we are gathered here tonight, I would like to reflect on the US-European relationship which builds upon a long-standing history, and it manifests today through many diverse channels including diplomacy, foreign affairs, culture and economy. Allow me to assert here that France is widely considered to be one of the oldest allies of the US. However, although these relations are strong, they are not always smooth. Countries face new challenges, and especially issues related to trade remain a highly debated topic.

We live now in a highly globalized world. Countries are more interconnected than ever. Technological advances in communication and transportation have played a great role: the rise of commercial aviation has empowered individuals to travel anywhere in the world in a matter of hours and the internet has enabled me to stay connected with my girlfriend in Hong Kong. Technological advances have also fostered global trade. Exports of goods and services are more than five times higher today compared to the 1990s.

Don't forget that Europe is the main trade partner of the US. However, according to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, trade wars are posing a major threat to the global economy. Countries should work together, they need to cooperate and not only on trade issues. International cooperation is critical.

The main message I want to emphasize tonight is that the International Student House in Washington DC lays a strong foundation for international cooperation. Residents come from all over the world and gathered around one goal: fostering global citizenship. By global citizenship, I mean a core of shared values: open-mindedness, freedom, tolerance, and also the promotion of inter-cultural dialogue which is necessary for addressing global challenges.

International Student House is a place of intense and inspiring discussions. A few days ago, during breakfast, I talked with an American friend about the US political system and US foreign policy. We also discussed French politics and the ongoing "Great National Debate" led by President Emmanuel Macron. Over dinner, I often find myself discussing development strategies in developing countries and the role of international organizations in ending poverty with my friends coming from Nigeria, South Korea or India.

What makes a good democracy? How to avoid corruption? How to reduce inequality? Sometimes the topic can be very specific, such as -how can we improve water service

delivery to the urban poor in Manila? These issues often take center stage in our conversations.

International Student House is not only about sharing discussions over a meal, but it is also about sharing cultural events and traditions. Recently, we celebrated the Chinese new year. It was a fantastic opportunity to discover Chinese food, Chinese music and to learn calligraphy.

What is striking at International Student House is that despite all the different backgrounds and personal stories, we all want to make this world a better place and to deliver justice.

To some extent, the European Union's motto can be used for International Student House: "United in diversity". This house is like a bridge connecting cultures from all four corners of the world. International cooperation is a necessary condition to promote a shared vision of prosperity and to address global challenges of the 21st century like climate change.

On behalf of my fellow residents and International Student House, I would like to thank the Ambassador for being a bridge builder and for hosting this event. I would like to present him with a gift of appreciation.