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**Speech by HE Jules-Armand ANIAMBOSOU
Ambassador of the Republic of France to Uganda**

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Bastille Day 2019

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Monday 15 July 2019

Résidence of France, Kampala

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Right Honorable Mary Karoro Okurut, Minister of general Duties in
the Office of the Prime Minister,

Honorable ministers and members of Parliament,

Excellencies and High Commissioners,

Members of the diplomatic corps,

Dear friends and partners,

Chers compatriotes,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just like every other nationality, the French are subject to certain stereotypes which are not terribly easy to shrug off. People say the French are ‘complainers’, ‘impossible to please’ and even ‘arrogant’ ...

Now, to begin my first speech in Kampala with this less-than-flattering self-portrait of the country and its people that I represent here in Uganda, which I love so much, might be surprising. But to the Ugandans present tonight, I say this: do not be surprised: be reassured! Because these stereotypes are totally false! Complainers, the French? Not at all! **In actual fact, the French are the best ... along with the Ugandans, of course!**

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On the other hand, it is also said that the French are often late. And this is perhaps a little less false... My compatriots here today who come from the South West of France – **and the South West produces talented people, whether in France, or , in Uganda** – often speak of a certain ‘Toulouse quarter of an hour’ to talk about a late arrival. As the new ambassador of France to the Republic of Uganda, **I must confess to you that I have rather exceeded this customary fifteen minutes late!**

Perhaps you will be kind enough to find my excuse justified: my arrival was delayed because of my **former role as coordinator of the Presidential Council for Africa**. An unprecedented Council set up by the President of the French Republic upon taking office in May 2017 to promote the renewal of relations between France and African countries. These demanding and exciting responsibilities kept me in Paris until the last moment.

Just **last Thursday**, four days ago, the French President opened the Élysée Palace, possibly the greatest showcase of the French Republic, to the voices and faces of Africa and the African diasporas of France. Accompanied by his Ghanaian counterpart Nana AKUFO-ADDO, the President made it clear that it was important for him not only to meet, to answer questions, to discuss policy and to gather opinions on the future of the relationship between France and Africa, but also to demonstrate to the French public the importance of Africa

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and the African diasporas to France. **To speak of Africa is to speak of France.** No fewer than 400 guests from all sectors of civil society gathered there! Through this event, the first of such stature in the history of the Fifth Republic to be exclusively devoted to the black continent, the President sent a strong message: **if Africa fails, Europe and France cannot thrive.** He is keen to maintain the link with the diasporas, to encourage civic integration and to bring an end to mix-ups and shortcuts of all kinds. It was a great success, and one clearly conducted under the aegis of **two values that seem to me paramount: frankness and dialogue.**

Once this event finished, I jumped on the first plane for Kampala: **and here I am on Ugandan land for barely 24 hours and today amongst you.** My family is looking forward to joining me within 48 hours for the summer, once the final formalities have been completed.

I would like to **thank the Ugandan authorities** who have shown enormous kindness and understanding and have greatly facilitated events to make my arrival in Kampala as smooth as possible.

Honorable Minister, I would like to thank you for being the Guest of Honour at this official reception which is my first public engagement in Kampala. I am very happy to meet you (as well as

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some of your colleagues). Just before my departure, I spoke with the President of the French Republic: he conveys to the Ugandan people and your President His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta MUSEVENI (whom I shall have the honour to meet very soon) his greetings and his most sincere friendship. **He also trusts that the friendship between our two countries will develop** - this being the entire point of my being here – and this is a goal which will be assisted by all the services of the Embassy and, of course, by a very dynamic and precious French community to whom I will address words of gratitude in just a moment.

I must, however, immediately dispel a possible and legitimate cause of perplexity: the absence in Kampala of an ambassador from France for several months does not reflect the lack of interest of France for "the Pearl of Africa" and more broadly, for this flagship that is East Africa. On the contrary! **France is well aware that Uganda is one of the strategic epicentres of the region**, both in terms of business, the economy, security and humanitarian issues, and also in terms of the empowerment of women. Even though I have not been in Uganda physically these last few weeks, please know that **I have been here in spirit**, through my meetings and readings, for at least three months, when my appointment was confirmed...

Indeed, from Paris I reached out to a number of prominent Ugandan and French individuals on whom our two countries can happily count

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for renewed cooperation. **But there is nothing better than being on the ground, meeting in the flesh, and I cannot wait to get started.**

It is therefore an understatement to say that **we have been looking forward to meeting one another at long last.** I cannot speak for you, but for me, this is a moment of huge importance. For me it's **Uganda all the way:** alive, open, astonishing; this country not only rich in history and unique institutions, stunning scenery and traditions but also in its sense of innovation, vitality, creativity, generosity, spirit of resistance, resilience and perseverance; this fertile and mysterious Uganda over which hovers the shadow of the Founder of Kintu and whose youth reinvents it every day, in Kampala and everywhere in Ugandan territory, for which I waited with humility and impatience, but also with passion and, bolted to my heart, **an enormous sense of responsibility and honour.**

So **how great is my joy to be here among you at Kampala,** and to welcome so many of you to the French Residence that I am exploring with wonder and joy. Thank all of you for being present tonight. I have to warn you : as I am addressing my first speech, you will understand that I will be a little bit long !

The occasion is not exactly trivial: **it is quite something for me to introduce myself to you as Ambassador of France, on our National Day !**

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That's why I hope that this evening will be viewed very evidently as a **celebration**. A celebration of a nationally recognized history and destiny around the world. A celebration of meeting on a human scale. And a celebration of a new chapter of relations between France and Uganda.

Bastille Day, which the French hold dear, is rather special this year.

Special for me, and for all of us here in Uganda, because of the delay of one day with which we celebrate it, due to the reasons I mentioned above.

It is also special symbolically, because it is the **230th anniversary of the Storming of the Bastille**.

Even more than the popular stereotypes I mentioned at the start of this speech, the French National Day powerfully embodies the French spirit, through its **core values**. These are the steadfast symbols of the French Republic which have affected the course of world history. Of course I speak of freedom, equality and fraternity, this is our motto, but also thirst for justice, social emancipation, collective intelligence, solidarity, tolerance, openness, respect for the Rights of Man and of Citizens, faith in democratic exemplarity, and universalism.

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These **values** are defended fiercely by France on international scene, in Africa and elsewhere.

These are the **values** that such a proud and open-minded people like the Ugandans, in whom I can detect a certain Francophile appeal, must be acutely sensitive to.

These are the values that are and *will* remain at the heart of the relations between France and Uganda. **These are reliable and fruitful relations, thanks to my predecessors's efforts.** And I must say that the strong attendance tonight is for me great testimony to the quality and the diversity of the partnerships between our two countries.

Over the years, these partnerships have flourished in many areas. And you can, my fellow countrymen and countrywomen, be proud of such success, as well as the Ugandan authorities, business community and civil society.

I am thinking in particular of the **economic sector**, with a pool of private and public partners and of a range of French companies involved at a structural level in the economic development of Uganda. **I hope to increase the presence and diversity of such companies,** which in turn would provide a sustainable training force supporting

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employment and appeal. **In Uganda, we need all levels of businesses, from large corporations to small and medium-sized enterprises.**

I am aware that many of you may have questions about the oil project here and **Total's investment decision**. It's a big project, ambitious, complex and which in my opinion needs all parties to get together around a table. It is on this basis of mutual interests that, within a few months I hope, this project will become reality thereby delivering significant benefit to Ugandans and at the same time respecting the social and environmental standards which France holds especially dear.

The economic and human development of Uganda is of course a major pillar of France's work here. Last year, the French Development Agency – AFD, whose celebrating this year its 20th anniversary in Uganda, committed more than 200 million € to support inclusive, job-creating and environmentally-friendly growth in areas such as production and distribution of renewable energies, development of water supply and sanitation, support to the private sector through its subsidiary Proparco, and the protection of the natural heritage. The Embassy has also been active here in Uganda on environmental policy, health and the fight against AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis - issues on which I know the Ugandan government has been strongly engaged for years - refugee assistance, support for sporting initiatives,

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education and higher education (with for instance the creation of a Campus France office at Makerere University).

France has also been active to strengthen the security of Uganda and the region. The cooperation between the UPDF and the French army has continued to increase with the operational training of Ugandan battalions to be deployed within AMISOM in Somalia, around 6500 soldiers last year, with our support for the capacity development of Ugandan mountain troops, with several expert missions including a large-scale exercise in June, and the training of UPDF officers in France or in French military schools in Africa.

The tangible projects launched in recent months are numerous, well-judged and promising. They attest to France's commitment to **a broader development of cooperation with Uganda** and the defense of its national interests.

How do I see the way ahead?

While following in the footsteps of my predecessors, my priority is **unmistakable** and can be summed up in three words: **strengthen bilateral cooperation**. I emphasise "bilateral" because I believe this is the key to successful cooperation. The most important aspect is working hand in hand with the Ugandan authorities and all Ugandans, **whilst listening to key pillars of civil society**, on the basis of **deep mutual recognition and understanding**.

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To that end, **I will support the local initiatives and count on the extraordinary talent which already exists in all Ugandan territories.** And I know that Kampala and other places in Uganda are a real hive of activity! That's why for this first meeting, **I wanted to invite many Ugandans** – businessmen and women, entrepreneurs, artists, academics, association managers, religious representatives, journalists as well as sportsmen and sportswomen, prominent personalities and rising stars, whose commitment and work I recognized, while I was still in Paris, as outstanding: you are, here in this little peaceful corner of France in Uganda, at home.

This working framework I'll stand up for, is that which was outlined by the President of the French Republic in **the guiding Ougadougou speech on November 28th 2017.** This speech was strongly inspired by the contributions of the Presidential Council for Africa which, as I mentioned earlier, I supervised for two years.

At the Ki-Zerbo University in Ouagadougou, the French President stressed **the importance of the African continent to France**, whilst breaking the outdated and paternalistic attitude which in the past has not exactly covered our nation in glory. He also detailed a series of commitments *via* a new relationship and a new vision. He presented **a new foreign policy based – and I am emphasizing this point**

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because he reasserted it at the Élysée event four days ago – on a more harmonious partnership, on respect and equality, on a ethic of reciprocity and joint focus. This, for me, is fundamental. It is on this basis that I am assuming my role of Ambassador.

As humanism is a component part of both the western tradition and Ugandan culture, **a pragmatic and a human-based outlook** must be the driving force of the ties between our countries.

According to the French President, and every French ambassador respects this, **Africa is a key player in the future of the world** and Africans must take the control of this destiny. **Hearing Africa's voice is of the utmost importance. For the President, France is not the centre of gravity for Africa but vice versa.**

Africa, with its extraordinary geographical, historical and linguistic diversity **finds itself right in the middle of an international wave of change and challenge.** Economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection weave in and out with demographic challenge and intellectual and artistic development.

In this context, **I see Uganda as a tremendous metaphor of this Africa of the future.**

This is why the staff of the embassy and I will be putting all our efforts into achieving **clear and tangible results.**

This is why **we will continue the important projects begun by my predecessors** – such as the support for innovation and the business

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community, military cooperation, solutions to the challenges of youth employment in Uganda. And, of course, the Uganda-France Friendship Week and a second edition of the 'Kampala Geopolitics' in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Makerere University next October.

This is why, on top of this, I have also identified the sectors in which I want to further develop our ties: agriculture and sustainable development, the promotion of youth and women, and, naturally, Francophonie.

In a country which has so many Universities of quality, I would like to pay **particular attention to student mobility**. My mission will be to develop our Scholarship program to offer to Ugandans more opportunities to study in French and Ugandan Universities or to go to France for training, and thus, as per the French President's commitment, **I want to lead a deep and sustainable opportunity for higher education which will deliver significant benefit to French-Ugandan Academic and student world.**

Above all, **I want culture to be at the heart of my action as an Ambassador here in Uganda.**

The *Alliance Française* does a fantastic job in providing a high level of education and cultural activities: **we will go further and I will ask my team to redouble their efforts and creativity.**

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For the Ugandans who may not have had the opportunity to come to France, **your country has been particularly represented in recent months in our cultural institutions.** The French had the opportunity to discover in a large Parisian museum, the Palais de Tokyo, the work of a French artist, Louis-Cyprien RIALS, conducted with young artists from the Ugandan production company Ramon Film Productions, set up in a studio not far from the Wakaliga road, in a suburb of Kampala. These young Ugandans have been writing and producing films with little means for over a decade, and **it is exactly this type of initiative that I intend to support.** In a literary country like yours where **I look forward to exploring its unparalleled network of bookstores in Africa,** I am also thinking of one of your literary hopes, Jennifer NANSUBUGA MAKUMBI, a young Ugandan novelist full of talent and power which will soon be translated into French and will therefore be known by French readers. Because **like Uganda, France is a country that loves literature,** and I intend to honour through different projects this love for writing, poetry and thought – a love that will be like a bridge between our two countries.

At last, **we will have in the coming months a new opportunity to strengthen our relationship in the cultural field.** The President of the French Republic announced in Ougadougou the “**Africa 2020 Season**”. This exceptional event – here again the first of such stature – will cover the entire French territory from June to December.

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It aims to showcase to the French, in particular younger generations, the Contemporary African creativity in cinema, music, design, fashion, dance, performing arts, visual arts, architecture, gastronomy or technological innovations – in one word, everything that reflects African talent and imagination! **You can fully count on me to check that the Ugandan Artistic scene will be well represented.**

In addition to cultural issues, **the French Embassy will work to raise the profile of Uganda in France.** In the same way that a French ambassador should promote France, which is the world's top tourist destination, **it will also be for us, to effectively attract more French tourists to Uganda.** Although I have yet to discover it all personally, I am convinced that **Uganda is an exceptional tourist destination, for nature lovers and beyond.**

Dear friends, **give me time to review and refine my plans.** I'll be working on them tomorrow and all summer long, in the freshness of Kampala. New projects covering all sectors will soon be launched for the best of our bilateral cooperation. **Organizing events is one thing ; going further and implementing deep and long-term cooperation is another thing.** This is what we will do.

That is why, as of the end of this week, **I will be,** as I will be throughout my term, **constantly on the ground,** in Kampala and in all

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the districts of the country, as close as I can get to his beating heart. For it is important to me, for France to be at its best in Uganda, to have a rigorous plan of action, a substantial and vigorous vision of the future, and therefore, to see, to be available to all manner of opportunity, both planned and unplanned, to know what I'm talking about, to meet people, to explore, to dialogue, to take the pulse of the country, to identify needs. In short: **become Ugandan to be better French, French *in* Uganda and *with* Uganda!**

At last, I cannot wrap up my speech without reminding you that for such a cooperation to be successful, **we need the French community**. So allow me to say a few words in French to my fellow compatriots:

Mes chers compatriotes,

Je suis très heureux de faire votre connaissance ce soir. J'ai beaucoup entendu parler de vous. J'ai également beaucoup à apprendre de vous. Certains d'entre vous sont présents en Ouganda depuis de nombreuses années, d'autres sont arrivés plus récemment – même s'il est difficile, je pense, qu'ils soient arrivés plus récemment que moi ! Vous êtes tous des acteurs à part entière de cette relation de confiance qui unit la France et l'Ouganda, et **j'ai notamment une pensée pour tous les**

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jeunes Français qui se sont lancés dans le bain de l’Afrique, dans le bain de l’Ouganda, que ce soit au sein d’ONG, d’associations, ou dans le cadre de VI ou de services civiques que la France compte bien renforcer et améliorer. **L’Ambassade est là pour vous tous, pour vous écouter, pour vous soutenir dans vos projets et dans votre vie quotidienne.** Je souhaite que nous soyons une communauté unie, agile, joyeuse, volontariste, empathique, animée d’un même élan pour continuer à contribuer à la prospérité et au bien-être de l’Ouganda, et de la France en Ouganda. **J’aurai dès les semaines qui viennent l’occasion de vous rencontrer et de discuter avec vous de manière plus approfondie.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you will have understood, **an exhilarating chapter of our relations**, which requires the commitment and the responsibility of each of us, **is starting**. Almost fifty years after the opening of a French Diplomatic representation here in Uganda, **we are at a new turning point of our Bilateral cooperation.**

I gratefully thank all the staff of the Embassy who had to work here without an Ambassador: it is a very demanding responsibility and they deserve to take a few weeks off! There are also those who have organized this event, with energy and diligence. **I also thank our Generous sponsors** who helped us do so: Total, Bolloré, Hima Cement, Sogea Satom and Thales.

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I will stop here: I think I have spoken enough. I hope **I have made up for my lateness!**

And as I end my remarks, and before listening with interest to the remarks of our Guest of Honour, **I wish you an excellent Evening**, in an atmosphere of conviviality and sharing. Long live the Friendship between France and Uganda! Vive l'Ouganda, vive la République, et vive la France ! [*Long live Uganda, long live the Republic, Long live France !*]

As a symbol of the new chapter started Tonight, **I wish to propose a toast to the good health of His Excellency President Yoweri Kaguta MUSEVENI and to the people of Uganda!**

Thank you./