

Your Excellency the Ambassador of France to Australia

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Heads of diplomatic delegations, Presidents, Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors of the Australian National University, of the University of French Polynesia, of the University of New Caledonia,

Distinguished Members of the Australian Department of Trade and Foreign Affairs and other Ministries and Departments

Distinguished Colleagues, Deans of Colleges, Associate Deans, School Directors, Professors and Fellows, and Higher Administration Officers of the ANU and of the above named universities

Dear Friends

This ceremony and your presence is a great honour to me, and I express my deepest gratitude. May I say from the start that I would like this ceremony to be remembered not only for the personal award with which I am being honoured, but for what it signifies about Australian and French cooperation: the cooperation existing between the ANU and my University, the EHESS, but also very importantly, the regional cooperation based on “Pacific dialogues” that we all hold dear. It is these dialogues that contribute to bringing the Anglophone and the Francophone Pacific institutions closer together: cooperation between the ANU and the French Pacific Universities, strongly

represented here in this gathering: the University of French Polynesia (UPF) and the University of New Caledonia (UNC).

Certainly the Légion d'Honneur recognizes an achievement (in this case, in terms of research and publications over many years). But the recommendation to the Head of State came from the French Department of Foreign Affairs, citing the "international development" achieved. It came from this very Embassy, from HE Ambassador Filhol, and the Head of Cultural and Scientific cooperation, Pierre Labbe, neither of them of course informing me of their intentions until later, and to both of whom I send all my respects and warmest thanks. Many thanks also to Eric Soulier, now the Head of that cooperation, who finalised the process. The "international development" which was a key to the recommendation is precisely about the regional cooperation that I have tried to develop.

This was not part of my initial planning. My presence here at the ANU was intended initially to develop a standard linkage between my University, the EHESS and the ANU. And this link has indeed continued to evolve: ANU colleagues are regularly invited to the EHESS as guest professors. But, from the start, the French Department of Foreign Affairs, through its Secretariat for Pacific Affairs, offered to sponsor a specific initiative, on temporary projects in the Pacific aimed precisely at bringing closer together researchers from institutions operating in the two principal (imported) language areas of the Pacific. And so, somewhat unexpectedly, my work at ANU became centred on this cooperation, firstly on the basis of

permanent residency in Canberra, later and until now through much shorter visits.

As my work increasingly became focused on Francophone-Anglophone cooperation within the Pacific, I found that I was developing links that, in some cases, had already been facilitated, over a long period, by an eminent Professor of the ANU, one who became a close friend, the late Professor Darrell Tryon, and I wish to pay tribute to his rich contribution and his memory. In fact, in this very room, twelve years ago, and for the very identical reason, the French State honoured Professor Tryon with the same award: the Legion d'Honneur. I happened to be visiting ANU that month and so I had the privilege to be part of the ceremony. I like to think that Darrell is again with us today in spirit (and all my thanks to his family for their presence, Madame Gabrielle Tryon, their children Miles and Mary Claire, Miles who himself worked in this Embassy some time ago).

I would also like to mention, among the ANU colleagues who welcomed me from the start and helped me in so many ways, Professor Margaret Jolly, *la grande dame* of gender studies at ANU, and Professor Christopher Ballard. Both of them are very familiar with the French social sciences and have visited the EHESS, participating with me in a number of joint projects. As they both were and are in the College of Asia and the Pacific, in its renowned School, Culture History and Language CHL, heir to the past RSAPS that was indeed the world class centre for Pacific Studies, and as Darrell Tryon was in that College, with Linguistics but also with SSGM (and I

welcome several of distinguished members of SSGM who are here), my presence at ANU was established within that College, and within CHL. It is through the renowned eminent works done in CHL, and also in CoEDL (but Professor Nicholas Evans has first long been a leader in linguistics at CHL), and in Coral Bell School for SSGM, that the Francophone Pacific Universities are keen to develop their links with ANU and are represented here at their highest levels. Many thanks also to former CHL director Ken George and former Manager Melissa Orr (now with ACT government) and to Joanna Cousins, Senior Finance officer at CAP-CHL, who all looked after me at CHL.

Why do I think that Francophone-Anglophone dialogues in the Pacific must be fostered and their development supported? The answer lies in what today French diplomacy calls “regional integration”, when thinking about New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis-Futuna. After a number of years, now long gone by, when Paris diplomacy in the Pacific was largely about maintaining or strengthening the metropolitan French presence in the region, the French Secretariat for Pacific Affairs has adopted a radically different policy. They are now only funding research projects that bring the Pacific French collectivities into collaborative work with at least one team from a Pacific non-French country or territory. The reason behind this is stated explicitly: helping the French Collectivities to advance towards their “regional integration” in the Pacific. I was in total agreement with this new policy from the outset and, at my humble level, I agreed

to help develop this regional integration, at least in the limited domain of the Humanities and Social Sciences –and I acknowledge the presence of Colleagues from New Caledonia and French Polynesia who work in that domain and share these views, in archaeology and English language (Prof. Eric Conte, Dr. Leopold Mu Si Yan), in anthropology (Prof. Bernard Rigo, Dr. Patrice Godin) and in Sociology (our long time Colleague Jone Passa).

Among many initiatives already pursued, joint symposia and workshops between ANU members and Colleagues from Tahiti and Noumea, I would like to mention two schemes that promote the mobility of students and researchers:

--the first, between the ANU and the University of New Caledonia, is the co-creation of the Darrell Tryon scholarship, which funds 1 or 2 visits per year, in both directions, up to 3 months, for students (Master, Ph D, post-doc) engaged in any research relating to the Asia-Pacific area. And I welcome here the two current laureates from UNC who are just about to end their ANU visit, Lucia Xéwé and Ornella Seigneury, who, no later than yesterday, gave a presentation in a seminar organised by SSGM. Anne Rouault, Attaché for Scientific cooperation who is now here at the Embassy but was then with the University of New Caledonia, has been very helpful in supporting this initiative, and Catherine Hodeir, attaché for University cooperation, has continued from here and had been very helpful. That initiative has been put forward jointly by the former Dean of the College of Asia

and the Pacific at the ANU, Prof Andrew MacIntyre, and myself, — and I am sure that this scheme will now be extended also to the University of French Polynesia as well, and also that it might be now established at a larger level of ANU as a whole, beyond one College.

--the second scheme is a more general funding by the French Secretariat for Pacific Affairs, established at the ANU for several years under my responsibility, to support scholarly visits to the ANU by any student or researcher (preferably early career) from *both* the Universities of Noumea and of Tahiti, as well as from any research institution established in New Caledonia, French Polynesia or Wallis and Futuna. Several visits from Tahiti are already planned for this coming year, at CoEDL, at the department of Archaeology, etc.

Another level of cooperation created a special link between “Pacific Islands Universities”, the network called PIURN, where the University of New Caledonia (again at that time with the help of Anne Rouault) and the USP played a founding role. This network firmly situates the two French Pacific universities within their Pacific Islands regional environment, and again I am pleased to have been part of the steering committee that organised PIURN 2014 at the UNC and of the PIURN 2016 at NUS, Samoa.

Finally, I will mention a great project that is just starting and that I am keen to assist with as much as I can: the University of French Polynesia is advancing towards creating a regional centre of research in the Humanities and Social Sciences for the Pacific: la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme du Pacifique, located in French Polynesia but

whose aim is to operate across the whole region, and the President of the University of French Polynesia, Professor Eric Conte, and the Head of international strategy and relations, Dr Mu Si Yan, whom I thank for their presence, will have from tomorrow discussions with ANU on this initiative.

Many more links to mention, but we don't have time. At least I have evoked some important aspects of this international development and of the "Pacific dialogues" that we indeed celebrate today in this ceremony.

Thank you,

(speech given on 18 April at the Embassy of France in Australia, Canberra)