



**Speech of Deputy Speaker Željko Reiner on the occasion of the celebration  
of National Day of France  
Friday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Hotel Esplanade**

Votre excellence Madame l'Ambassadeur,  
Honourable Members of the Parliament and Government,  
Distinguished ambassadors,  
Dear guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is truly an honour to be here with you today on the occasion of the celebration of National Day of France, *Fête Nationale*, but also to celebrate friendship between our two countries.

Allow me to warmly greet you on behalf of the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Mr. Gordan Jandroković, members of the Croatian Parliament and myself.

Croatia and France are connected by true friendship and mutual respect. Frequent meetings and visits of our highest officials prove that our dialogue is open, honest and friendly.

We are very happy that the third Action Plan for the implementation of the Croatian-French Strategic Partnership was signed in April 2018. Priorities of the Action Plan for the period 2018-2021 are set on strengthening the European partnership between our two countries with a special focus on Croatian aspirations to Schengen and Eurozone membership, and our cooperation during Croatian EU Presidency in 2020, and French EU Presidency in 2022.

We welcome positive trends in the number of French tourists in Croatia. With the regular and charter flights to Split, Dubrovnik, Krk and Pula, we expect the figures to additionally scale up. We are very much looking forward to having more French tourists discovering Croatia.



We are particularly pleased with French investments in Croatia. Croatian government is putting a lot of effort in upgrading and improving the investment climate in our country.

One of the Action Plan priorities focuses on our cultural cooperation. We support further initiatives and efforts in enhancing of studying Croatian language, one of the official EU languages, at French universities, but we also support and encourage teaching French in Croatian educational system.

When it comes to cooperation in science, I as a scientist particularly welcome the fact that the French National Centre for Scientific Research is interested in collaborating with Croatian scientists, either in terms of exchange of researchers on already existing projects, or at the level of partnership within institutions.

France has taken over the Presidency of the Council of Europe this May. Croatia chaired the Council last year. Just like most European countries, Croatia and France are confronted with the rise of populism and extremism, so we must gather around common values, built on the foundations of the European Convention on Human Rights. Both Croatia and France strive and fight for democracy, rule of law, human rights and freedoms, fight against terrorism, and we are continuously working on creating sustainable economies while protecting the environment and fighting climate changes.

I would like to conclude with this thought, reminding of a great cultural loss that we all experienced a few months ago: the Notre-Dame fire tragedy. Notre-Dame Cathedral is, without a doubt, a symbol of French history, faith, hope, civilisation, but it is also a symbol of heritage, civilisation and history of the whole Europe. But the most important lesson we learnt was that buildings without people using them are just a pile of stone bricks and wood, no matter how magnificent and glorious they are. It's the people who stood together in prayers, in thoughts and in support, that started an enormous amount of energy and love throughout the world, bringing messages of peace and unity. This is what architects and builders strive for.

Dear friends, remember: what human hands can destroy, intentionally or unintentionally, human hands can rebuild. Your Croatian friends, unfortunately,



*Ured potpredsjednika Hrvatskoga sabora akademika Željka Reinera*

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know this from their own experience. But we are also proud of our experts who did an unbelievable work in rebuilding parts of Croatian cultural heritage that were severely damaged in the aggression war against Croatia. All our experts and conservators are at your disposal in rebuilding the Notre-Dame.

It's all about togetherness, unity, respect and friendship, that no fire, flood or war will, and can destroy!

Encore une fois, bonne fête nationale de France!

Merci.