



**Speech of His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed
Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah on the
occasion of the visit of the Senate President of the
French Republic**

Tuesday, 30th of April 2019

His Excellency Gérard Philippe René André Larcher,
President of the Senate of the French Republic,

Ladies and gentlemen members of the accompanying delegation,

Their Excellencies the Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Ladies and entlemen,

It's a great pleasure to welcome our guest, Mr. Gérard Larcher,
President of the Senate of the French Republic, and his
accompanying delegation, who are visiting the State of Kuwait at
the official invitation of His Excellency Mr. Marzouq Ali Al Ghanem,
Speaker of the National Assembly of the State of Kuwait.

Mr. President,

The name of France is associated in our modern history with the
movement of the Arab Renaissance. With its culture, language and
revolution, France has inspired many Arab pioneers of the
Enlightenment age. The first attempts to build a modern state in
Egypt used France as a model to follow. They were able to build
modern Cairo according to Parisian architecture. French universities
have opened their doors to the first Arab students including Arab
intellectuals, Rifa'a El Tahtawi رفاعة الطهطاوي in Egypt and Butrus Al-
Bustani بطرس البستاني in Syria. The principles of the French Revolution
inspired many of the nineteenth-century Arab thinkers, especially
the ideas related to political freedoms, democracy and social
cohesion, which aimed to eradicate tyranny, domination and



oppression. Inspired by these ideas, they formed their associations, published their newspapers, wrote their books, fought against tyranny, called for freedom and demanded to apply democracy. The impact of the French culture pushed them to maintain dialogues within the Arab world on modernity and authenticity, influenced by philosophers of the European Enlightenment age. As an example of such dialogues between Arab intellectuals and French intellectuals, we find the debates between the two sheikhs, Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani جمال الدين الأفغاني and Mohammed Abduh محمد عبدو on one side and the French intellectuals, Ernest Renan أرنست رينان and Gabriel Hanotaux غابرييل هانوتو on the other side.

The democratic experience in France not only earned the admiration of the Arabs, but it was also the inspiring experience for all modern democracies in the world, especially in terms of political freedoms. Throughout this period, when Arabs were exposed to Western civilization, the French language was their key to communicate with the achievements of this civilization. The intellectuals used it to become acquainted with modernity. Politicians have used it in their diplomatic work, and legislators have used it to formulate laws. For me personally, French was one of the essential languages of my culture. In fact, the French language was the main language of my university studies. Diplomatic missions of the French-speaking countries have always given me the honour of pronouncing the opening speech of the International Francophonie Day's annual celebration in Kuwait. Thus, our relationship with France is not only a relationship with a great European country, but it is a relationship linked to the development of the Arab Renaissance.

Mr. President,

The traditional objectives of the exchanged official visits are no longer sufficient for the people of the 21st century. Common interests in the security of our planet, the preservation of its environment and the preservation of our common peace have become as important as strengthening the interests or bilateral relations between countries. These new goals call for people and



their civil societies to meet, to discover their diversity and to identify their common traits. The best ways to achieve this are cultural, artistic, scientific and educational exchanges. I therefore insist that official talks between countries should not be limited to strategic, military and economic issues, but should include culture, art, folklore, religion and education.

Mr. President,

I would also like to recall the honourable position of France during the occupation of Kuwait. The French government confirmed in a statement issued during the first hours of the invasion, its strong principled position condemning the aggression, demanding the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwaiti territory and supporting the request of Kuwaiti leaders to the security Council to convene an immediate meeting. France's support was not limited to the condemnation or the firm political position. It also played a military role and participated in the coalition forces: about 18000 French soldiers took part in the operation of the "Desert Storm" to liberate Kuwait. The late Emir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah paid an official visit to Paris in October 1991, where he expressed to the French government the thanks of the Kuwaiti Government and people for the firm position of France in favour of Kuwaiti right and for its effective collaboration in the liberation of Kuwait. Likewise, after taking office, His Highness the Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, travelled to Paris from where he began his official tour in Europe, which underlines the deep ties uniting our two countries. The FM band of Radio France Internationale, which broadcasts in French, was launched when the plane of His Highness the Amir landed at Orly airport. These distinguished ties between our two countries were also highlighted by the previous French President Nicolas Sarkozy, during his official visit to the State of Kuwait in 2009, which reinforced the concepts of the strategic partnership between the two countries. I myself, expressed the gratitude of the leaders, government and people of Kuwait during my official visit to France at the invitation of the Prime Minister François Fillon in April 2010, where I affirmed that France's positions would remain in the memory of the future Kuwaiti



generations and that we would always be faithful to our friends who supported us during our ordeal.

Mr. President,

I welcome you again in Kuwait, as well as your accompanying delegation, and I assure you of my pride in this visit, which reflects the deep ties that bind our two countries, and which are based on understanding and mutual respect. Mr. President, I wish you a successful stay.