

François Hollande visits Monaco

Joint plans for the future

François Hollande visited Monaco in November 2013, five years after the last official sojourn by a French President. It was an opportunity to reaffirm the close links between the two countries and to enter into new partnership agreements centred on research and sustainable development.

BY CLÉMENT AIRAULT

François Hollande, on an official visit to the Principality on 14 November 2013, was the 4th President of the 5th Republic to do so. Jacques Chirac attended the celebrations of the 700 years of the Principality in 1997, and subsequently Prince Rainier III's funeral in 2005. Nicolas Sarkozy also visited Monaco twice during his presidency, in April 2008 and in July 2011 on the occasion of the Prince's wedding. For François Hollande, this official visit was not only "*in keeping with tradition*", but also and mainly with a view to "*preparing the future*".

In just a few years, since the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed in 2002, relations between France and Monaco have

changed dramatically. Monaco has reinforced its sovereignty, yet remains highly involved in the local economy. It is a major labour market for the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region: 100,000 people are directly or indirectly dependent upon Monaco's prosperity. According to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*East of the Var, the Principality is the only centre of economic expansion*". 1,000 jobs are being created every year, and "*most are held by French people*". French strategic interests on the Rock, mainly economic, are therefore extremely important, and it is in France's interests that Monaco should have access to the European internal market. For Prince Albert II, "*bringing Monaco's companies*

closer to the European internal market will generate jobs and will thereby further benefit the neighbouring economic region". Logically, the French President re-asserted his intention to support the Prince's Government in the latter's negotiations with the European Union.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

After a private meeting with Prince Albert II and an official luncheon, François Hollande visited the workshop of the electric vehicle manufacturer, Venturi. The company was set up in France in the 1980s and taken over in 2000 by Monegasque businessman, Gildo Pallanca-Pastor, who decided to fit new vehicles exclusively with electric engines.

This visit was symbolic in many respects. The products, designed in Monaco, are manufactured and assembled in France, and the technology being used confirms the commitment of both Monegasque companies and its Government to “*combining progress and sustainable development*”. This conviction is common to both sides of the border – as demonstrated by the five partnership agreements signed between France and Monaco on that day. The representatives of the two countries met at Monaco’s Oceanographic Museum and signed a number of important agreements relating to renewable energies and research. In particular, an agreement was signed by the Principality’s Minister of State, Michel Roger, and the Head of the French nuclear energy and alternative energies Commission (CEA), Bernard Bigot. The Memorandum of Understanding defines and formalises the general principles of a strategic cooperation between the CEA and the Monaco Government.

Michel Roger also signed an agreement with the director of EDF Services, Jean-Pierre Frémont, to set up a new means of transport in Monaco, the Mobee electric car-sharing service which was introduced in June 2014. Indeed, mobility – mainly concerning the working population – is a priority issue for both States. 35,000 French people come to work in Monaco every day. It is for this reason that both Prince Albert II and President Hollande stated that they were determined to “*encourage teleworking*”. An agreement entered into in March 2014 confirms that Monaco will adopt teleworking. According to the Prince, this will reinforce “*the positive impact of the Principality’s economic dynamics*

on the neighbouring region’s labour market”. However, it has to be ratified by the National Assembly and the National Council before being launched, and that will not be before 2015.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

If ever there were an area of fruitful cooperation between France and Monaco, it is scientific research. A groundbreaking framework collaboration agreement was signed between the Director General of the Oceanographic Institute, Robert Calcagno, and IFREMER Director-General, François Jacq, to promote “*scientific and industrial culture relating to the sea world, preserving biodiversity and marine ecosystems, and encouraging the sustainable management of oceans among politicians, scientific players and the civil society*”. To put it plainly, this partnership, which has already been in existence for several years, should allow common initiatives to be developed,

increasing public awareness of the marine environment.

The local ecosystem has been studied at the Monaco Scientific Centre (CSM) for over 50 years, in particular corals. An agreement has been signed between CSM, INSERM, the Nice-Sophia-Antipolis University and the CNRS to set up a joint research unit (UMR) to study the mechanisms of ageing, using coral as a model. Lastly, an agreement signed between CSM and the University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (UVSQ) provides for the setting up of an international research laboratory to work specifically on diseases of the neuromuscular system.

These agreements offer both France and Monaco first-rate possibilities for economic development. Above all, they show “*a common will to achieve further progress together in the cutting-edge sectors of scientific research and the environment*”, added Prince Albert II. ■

BILATERAL COMMITTEES: A FRUITFUL DIALOGUE

The Franco-Monegasque Cooperation Committee (CCFM) was set up in 2005 to replace the Joint Cooperation Committee, although its remit is the same. It is headed jointly by the Secretary-General of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of State of the Principality of Monaco and handles matters of mutual interest. At the 7th meeting of the Committee held on 16 October 2013, one of the main topics discussed was the dialogue initiated between Monaco and Brussels. There are three other committees, including one dealing with cross-border cooperation issues between Monaco and France, which was set up in 2006. This committee mainly handles highly technical local issues. For example, it has defined how rescue operations should be carried out in the event of an incident in the Monaco tunnel linking both countries. The bilateral committee in charge of implementing the social security agreement deals with health matters, these being so crucial nowadays. The Joint Committee on Taxation oversees the implementation of the 1963 tax agreement, mainly concerning VAT.