

Remarks by Samuel J. Palmisano
On the occasion of the presentation of the insignia of
Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur

Residence of France
Washington, DC
November 6, 2013

Ambassador Delattre, special and distinguished guests I am humbled and honored to receive this extraordinary award.

As a young kid growing up in Baltimore, I never could have imagined a night like this. To be accepted into this amazing group of 125,000 individuals that includes such distinguished Americans as President Dwight Eisenhower, Admiral Mike Mullen, Walt Disney, Miles Davis and Alan Greenspan is hard to imagine ---- and yet here we are. My family and I thank you, and France.

The values of liberty and equality that are the origins of the Legion of Honor represent guiding principles that have been at the core of societal progress. They also express the enduring bond between France and the United States. Over the centuries, our countries have shown the world again and again how these fundamental values bring out the best in people, inspiring them to improve the world not only for themselves and their families, but for all of humanity. Liberty and equality unleash creative expression and ingenuity, which have been the hallmarks of great French and American leaders, artists, innovators and enterprises. Long-standing adherence to these values is the reason my former company, IBM, committed itself and its resources to helping France and its stakeholders grow – a commitment that next year in 2014 becomes 100 years strong.

There have been so many individuals over the years who contributed to the bonds that forged the strength of French and American relations, including thousands of IBMers. I am so honored to be named among their ranks. And I am proud that IBM helped develop amazing technical and business leaders in France who contributed greatly to both to your country and my company. Indeed, the growth of the IT industry in France is intimately linked with IBM's history over the past century. There has been an unshakeable commitment to innovation that has unleashed tremendous economic value to the benefit of many. Like the two founding values of the Legion of Honor – liberty and equality – France and IBM's investments and commitments to advancing the state of microelectronics technology and to collaborative research and development have helped unleashed amazing business success for leading French companies such as AXA, Carrefour, Orange, Michelin and BNPP, to name a few. IBM is proud to be a partner with France and with these great French enterprises.

And while past achievements for France, French enterprises and IBM have been noteworthy, the future holds even greater promise for us. Economic and business success will be driven by those leaders, from both the public and private sectors, who embrace innovation as the driver of economic value, growth, resilient employment and competitive advantage. Given our shared history, this should come naturally to both France and my former company.

But, of course, past performance is no guarantee of future success. The path of innovation is a path of never-ending change and self-transformation. That is why we envisioned a few years ago the need for the very structure of the corporation to become more innovative in its own right. We saw the dynamics of globalization, technology, and integrated markets changing the

very nature of our daily lives. And this new model, which we call the Globally Integrated Enterprise (GIE), is important for business and public sector leaders to understand and leverage for economic and societal benefit.

Upon retiring from IBM last fall, I decided to devote my time to helping business and government alike to understand this change in organizational structure. So we launched The Center for Global Enterprise -- a new think tank whose mission is to work directly with companies, leading business schools and governments to establish and globally scale the management science of being a GIE. Our agenda is ambitious. We are building a worldwide reference library of management best practices and conducting CEO learning exchanges. We have our first one scheduled for December in China, and next year we have an agreement with INSEAD to hold a CEO Exchange in France for French and European companies.

INSEAD typifies the global perspective and orientation required to understand the world today, and we are delighted to be partnering with them. Our goal is to help CEOs drive greater growth and productivity – and government leaders to achieve more efficiency and innovation -- so as to improve their company's or their country's competitive position in the integrating world of the 21st century. Given the history of France's global engagement and the success of French companies, I am confident our work together will only deepen in the years ahead.

This coming January, 188 years ago, one of France's greatest gifts to America, the Marquis de Lafayette, visited my home town of Baltimore. It was part of a yearlong visit to the United States designed to let America show its gratitude to him for his outstanding service to us during the founding of our country. Without his help the new great experiment called representative democracy may not have gotten off the ground.

Since then our two societies have come a long way together to help make the world a better place. Tonight, with feelings of deep humility and appreciation I commit myself to helping continue this legacy of partnership for many years to come.