

Rotary USA-France Inter-Country Committee
Positive Peace Seminar
Rennes, France
October 16-16, 2021

France is the oldest ally of the United States. For nearly 250 years, the two Republics have shared a partnership based on friendship, cooperation and peace. To honor this prosperous relationship, the French and American chapters of the France-US ICC held a third peace seminar in Rennes from October 14 to 16, hosted at the Rennes School of Business. Previous conferences were held in New Orleans in 2018 and Paris in 2016. The three-day seminar included interactive peacebuilding workshops, panel discussions and concluded with a keynote speech from former French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin.

Jointly organized by District 1650 Rennes Bretagne Mayenne, under the leadership of District Governor Michèle Toulouse, and the USA-France Inter-Country Committee, under the leadership of France Section President John-Marie Poinsard and American Section President Bart Cleary, the seminar had the pleasure of hosting 20 French and 10 American participants.

Rotary International Director 2020-2022, Peter Kyle, who is also the global manager of the Rotary International Peace Fellows Program, was in attendance and a guest speaker.

Those selected to attend the conference were chosen based on their education level (master or equivalent), as well as their commitment to promoting peace within their local environments and their involvement in peace related fields. The group was a mix of master level students and working professionals from a wide range of backgrounds – from nuclear engineering to work in local government. This diversity of experience and fields provided for a positive exchange between the participants.

Attendees participated in a two-day training workshop that was organized by the Institute for Economics and Peace, with which Rotary International signed a partnership in 2017.

The workshop centered around the concept of positive peace, which is understood and made possible via eight essential pillars including good governance, free flow of information, and transparency. Without these pillars, countries will struggle to find positive peace. Students participated eight interactive workshops deconstructing each individual pillar, which were filled with fruitful discussion.

On the final day of the seminar, former Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin's foundation, "Leaders for Peace," organized a peace lab called, "Peace

Lab - Positive Peace". French and American seminar participants were divided into several groups were asked to brainstorm and share concrete actions that can be taken to improve the level of peace in societies around the globe.

Around 250 people attended the final keynote address from Mr. Raffarin, titled "Peace: Individuals and Nations, the Race for Leadership." The former Prime Minister, who served under French President Jacques Chirac, drew from his own experience in office and forecasted the future challenges of achieving peace between nations.

"Peace does not fall from the sky," Mr. Raffarin told the audience. "Peace is a job... proposing political wisdom in the service of peace and the general interest."

Also in attendance for the keynote speech were the governors of districts 1650, 1760, 7710, 6840, 5890 and 1770. The seminar concluded with a cocktail party at the Rennes Schools of Business reception hall.

A big thank you to the entire district 1650 team and its governor, who worked tirelessly to organize registration, housing and general reception for the participants, all while ensuring the necessary Covid-19 sanitary protocols were being followed.

In addition to the seminar, attendees had the opportunity beforehand to be hosted by Rotarian families in the Rennes area and two days of visits around Rennes and the coastal city of Saint-Malo.

A white book featuring the seminar's highlights will be published as for the first 2 editions. This book will include excerpts of the elements that were discussed during the three days, including the keynote address from Mr. Raffarin. It will also include the CVs of all the participants as well as their comments and reflections on the seminar.

ICC France and USA look forward to hosting a fourth peace seminar, which will take place in the United States in 2023.

Rebecca Rosman, a Rotary Global Grant Scholar to France, was in attendance and assisted with the event. Rebecca is a freelance journalist and audio producer based in Paris. She mostly works in radio, but sometimes does print and television. She has filed stories for NPR, PRI's 'The World,' CBC, The New York Times, Monocle Magazine, Al Jazeera and others. She also produced this article.

