



Visit of H.R.H. the Duchess of Cambridge to Luxembourg

« Bicycle Nation Luxembourg : Cycling meets art »

Place Clairefontaine - May 11, 2017

WELCOME

by Francine Closener

Secretary of State of the Economy

Secretary of State of Internal Security

Secretary of State of Defence

Your Royal Highness,

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Luxembourg has indeed had a very special relationship to the bicycle. The long list of prominent Luxembourg cycling champions is remarkable.

Yet, the country's passion not only manifests itself in the area of sport; it also can be seen in its economic development, its rich cultural scene and in its outstanding demographic evolution.

It's indeed remarkable that nearly half of our inhabitants are foreign citizens, who are welcome here. They are well integrated into society and able to communicate with one another in many languages.

There's a very specific attitude that is typical for our people and which gives the country its dynamic character. The "*Luxembourg way of doing things*" is characterized by pragmatism, an ability to adapt, as well as a tremendous talent to build its partnerships with respect. There's a capacity to listen to others, understand their needs and find solutions.

Luxembourg shares the British pragmatism and the commitment to constant improvement. These common values serve as a longstanding basis for the strong political ties and the excellent business relations between the UK and the Grand Duchy. Those values are at the core of the ties built by many previous Governments, and we shall continue to respect those values as our relationship evolves.

Your Royal Highness,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Both Sports and Culture have always connected and even inspired people and entire nations. It is indeed the cyclists who have written some of the best pages of Luxembourg's sports history.

It's less well known, but my country also has a history in women's cycling: by winning the first ever world championship for women in nineteen fifty eight, 1958, Elsy Jacobs is today together with Charly Gaul another emblematic figure, renowned and admired throughout the sports world. This world championship title and determination in her long international career therefore earned her the nickname "Grand Duchess"

Cultural life in the Grand Duchy is marked by the country's openness to the world, the number of its top-quality cultural infrastructures, its multilingualism in every field and its festivals and traditions. The result is an amazing diversity of production in literature, art, architecture and music.

Luxembourg shares the British passion for art and sports. These elements are further binding our two nations, especially in the upcoming weeks, when the Grand Duchy is gearing up to host the Tour de France, enhancing our reputation as a cycling nation. Both British and Luxembourg artists approached the different topics around the "Grande Boucle" in a creative and inspiring manner.

It's an honor and a great pleasure for me to discover together with you the results of this important artistic work.

I do invite now the Duchess of Cambridge and the Prime Minister to unveil to the public the first array of the artistic creation.