

10<sup>th</sup> commemoration ceremony for the Rio-Paris accident (June 1st, 2019)

Elisabeth Borne

*Seul le prononcé fait foi*

Dear Chairwoman,

Ambassador,

Minister-Counsellor and Honorary Consul,

Elected representatives,

CEO,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was precisely 10 years ago, on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, that the Air France Airbus A330 scheduled to operate the flight between Rio and Paris disappeared over the Atlantic ocean.

This air disaster took the lives of 228 people.

Or rather, a life 228 times would be more appropriate.

Because **this collective tragedy is first and foremost** for each family, for each friend and colleague, **an individual tragedy**. In a few moments, in homage to their memory, we will listen to each of their names being read out.

If we gather once again in front of this memorial this afternoon, it is because 10 years on, the feelings of pain and grief remain as intact as ever.

Despite the passing of time, each name and face remains clearly etched in our minds and hearts.

It is also true that the beautiful Requiem we have just heard does not erase your grief or suffering.

Nor does it erase the suffering of all those who were forced to confront the loss of a loved one on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, and who were unable to join us today. I wish to express a special thought for them and for our Brazilian friends who are gathered together on the other side of the Atlantic.

On behalf of the President of the French Republic and the Government, I wanted to join you on this day of remembrance.

**Firstly, because this terrible accident was a tragedy for our entire country, and for the international community.**

Please allow me, on your behalf, to pay tribute to the representatives of the 31 countries affected by this tragedy.

I wish to thank you all - Ambassador, Minister-Counsellor, Honorary Consul, Ladies and Gentlemen – for your presence here this afternoon. It is indeed a remarkable sign of solidarity to which we are all highly sensitive.

International air travel, an incredible way of bringing people together, made us painfully aware of a shared destiny on that tragic day of June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009.

The reason for my presence today is to **share with you the entire nation's deepest compassion and solidarity.**

The shock you felt on hearing of the accident, in itself indescribable, was accompanied by a long and agonizing wait, long months of suffering and dashed hopes.

I am aware that the long search operation was very difficult for all of you and greater State involvement was not enough to further accelerate this difficult search operation.

I am also here today **to pay tribute to your association's work**. Not only in organizing this annual ceremony with the support of Air France, who I wish to thank, but also in providing personal support to all of you and ensuring everyone's voice is heard.

Dear Chairwoman, your commitment is commendable and the presence of the German association illustrates your capacity to mobilize on a large scale.

A duty we all have, our moral duty to honour the memory of the victims, is to do everything possible to ensure we learn all the lessons from this tragedy.

**To draw the conclusions, we rely on justice**, which is continuing its work. It is not my place to comment but I do know that justice can be such a time-consuming process under these circumstances. This time is necessary for setting out the responsibilities.

For its part, the State is actively committed, with our European partners, to drawing the conclusions of this tragedy.

I am referring in particular to the introduction of stricter European aircraft certification criteria, flight crew preparation rules as well as onboard tools for facilitating search operations alongside the accident analysis and investigations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These few simple words do not claim to ease the pain. My sole intention is to convey the Nation's strongest sense of solidarity.

*“Memory, is the invisible presence”*, wrote Victor HUGO. The presence of so many of you here today shows just how intact the memory of our lost loved-ones remains.

We are here today to keep this memory alive.

Thankyou.