

Success of the G20 and strengthening of bilateral relations between France and Argentina

The Heads of State and Government of the G20 agreed, despite the United States' position, to issue a final declaration about trade – referred to as the “Buenos Aires Agreement” by the Argentine diplomats – while they also moved forward concerning climate change. For the host country, the successful organization of both the meetings throughout the year and the summit on November 30 and December 1 became the opportunity to crystallize the aim of reintegrating Argentina into the world.

The main topics of this G20 summit were international trade and climate change. The final declaration has undergone negotiations until the last moment, due to a confrontation between the United States and the other 19 members of the group.

The most intense discussions covered the climate change topic, since the US President refused to mention the Paris Agreement in the final declaration. Nevertheless, several leaders, particularly Emmanuel Macron, have stood firm. The document reaffirms the commitment of the 19 leaders with the Paris Agreement and recalls that the United States, dissenting, withdrew from this agreement. However, the declaration also includes a paragraph reflecting the concern of the 20 countries about the climate change.

With regard to international trade, the 20 States reached a consensus, stressing the importance of multilateral trading and supports the necessary reform of the WTO. In addition, the US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping held a meeting after the G20 summit. Both dignitaries announced that the United States would temporarily halt new trade tariffs on Chinese imports of steel and aluminium, while China committed to increase purchases of US goods.

Thanks to the excellent work throughout the year prior to the summit, the effective role of the Sherpas, the coordination role of Argentina, the weak impact of the anti-G20 activism and the final agreement, the outcome of this G20 is positive in general terms and specially for Argentina. The Argentine President Mauricio Macri has played a leading role, constantly pursuing to get a closer approach between his peers to reach the final declaration.

On the other hand, the bilateral meetings held on parallel to the G20 proved to be very productive for Argentina. In the framework of the visit of the French President Emmanuel Macron (the first one in Latin America), new investments were announced and several cooperation agreements were signed. In particular, two agreements were signed between the French Development Agency (AFD) and the Argentine Minister of Economy, Nicolás Dujovne, in the presence of the French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian. The European Investment Bank has

agreed to fund USD 125 million for water supply and sanitation works in the metropolitan area and waste management of the province of Buenos Aires, and committed a USD 63 million funding for the development of the solar energy in the province of Jujuy. The French Development Agency has committed to fund USD 134 million to strengthen provincial management and water and energy infrastructure.

Let us remind that France has recently sold four patrol vessels to Argentina for a total of USD 324 million for the surveillance of national seas. There is also another contract concerning the acquisition of Super Étendard aircraft fleet.

Indeed, before the Summit, President Macron held a meeting with the French and the Argentine-French communities at the Usina del Arte; Monica Orlando, head of DS office in Buenos Aires, was present at the event. In his speech, the French President talked about the G20 and how this forum had changed over the last ten years. He stated that the G20 was the appropriate space “to develop a progressive multilateral agenda” and that France and Argentina had “the unprecedented responsibility to stand firm ahead of the convenience of the contemporary world and not to quit the course of the world to demagogues”. Finally, he underlined the importance of the “Paris Agreement” and the fight for gender equality.

The French dignitary has also emphasized in his speech the importance of the bilateral relations between his country and Argentina, particularly in the sectors of trade, transport, renewable energies, urban management, tourism, agriculture and agribusiness, defence and digital technology. He announced that he had invited President Macri to a visit during the first semester of 2019 and that they had agreed to organize an economic forum jointly between the two countries by mid-2019. Finally, he commented on the programming of a cross-cultural agenda and on the progress of partnership agreements on education, encouraged by the visits of the French Minister of Education, Jean Michel Blanquer, and of Charles Torossian, expert in mathematics and co-author of the report “*21 mesures pour l'enseignement des mathématiques*” (“21 measures for teaching mathematics”).

While the president was giving his speech to the guests, Brigitte Macron visited the exhibition “Argentine women”, a collection of portraits made by the famous Studio Harcourt Paris, with the support of the Institut français and L’Oréal Group.

It is also worthwhile noting successful bilateral meetings with the Presidents of China (with the signing of over 30 bilateral agreements on trade, investment and credit), the United States and Russia. Likewise, the visit of the British Prime Minister Theresa May should also be highlighted, as the first visit of a UK dignitary since the Falklands War. Finally, all the leaders, including the IMF President Christine Lagarde, expressed their support for the Argentine government's reform policy, as well as for the agreement signed this year between Argentina and the IMF and the country's request for admission at the OECD.