

'A Life of Outstanding Richness and Remarkable Continuity in its Objectives'



Philippe Douste-Blazy, French minister of foreign affairs (left) and FIA President Max Mosley.

Philippe Douste-Blazy, French minister of foreign affairs, heaped praise on FIA President Max Mosley for his 'exemplary commitment to the service of motor sport and motoring'. Here, in full, is the speech given by Douste-Blazy as he presented Mosley with the Légion d'Honneur, France's highest decoration.

Speech given by Philippe Douste-Blazy,
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Presentation of the insignia of Chevalier dans
l'Ordre national de la Légion d'Honneur

Mr Max MOSLEY

Tuesday 31 January 2006, at the Quai d'Orsay, 6.00 p.m.

Mr Minister, Dear Jean-François Lamour,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

It is a very great pleasure for me, dear Max, to welcome you this evening to the Foreign Ministry, accompanied by your wife, Jean, and your son Patrick, and in the presence of major figures in the motor sport world who have come to extend to you, today, their esteem and their friendship.

The Republic wishes this evening to salute your exemplary commitment to the service of motor sport and motoring. In particular, it wishes to pay homage to that sense of the general interest which has led you to promote, with much talent and efficiency, the strengthening of safety standards, not only on the roads of Europe but everywhere in the world.

As President of the International Automobile Federation [FIA] for the last thirteen years, you have never lost sight of the fact that while the automobile is a sport, it is also a means of transport of which the risks, for people and also for the environment, need to be reduced everywhere.

In the field of crash tests, electronic technologies, and the reduction of carbon emissions, the initiatives you have taken are at the vanguard of a new kind of driving attitude that I would describe as safer, more reliable and more intelligent.

Everybody here tonight knows that the services you have rendered to road safety are immense. Reflecting your merits, they have already won you honours in numerous European countries, such as the United Kingdom, Italy, or Germany.

Today, it is therefore a great pleasure for me to award to you the Insignia of Chevalier dans l'Ordre national de la Légion d'Honneur, and to express to you in public my esteem, my admiration and my delight in presenting you with this honour which is so richly deserved.

Dear Max, while it is traditional in such circumstances to talk about a person's career, allow me, regarding yourself, to mention the words challenge, initiative, and commitment.

On 28 October last year, you were re-elected as President of the International Automobile Federation for a fourth consecutive term of four years. This fact, unprecedented in the history of the Federation, is not a matter of chance. On the contrary, it is the result of a great deal of work, enthusiasm and innovation, in the service not only of a passion but also of a vision of your job that has broadened to accommodate the dimensions of new, socially aware responsibilities.

It is this exemplary and lasting commitment in the service of motor sport and motoring that I am pleased to recall before you this evening, dear Max, in describing the major stages of your life and of your career.

You were born in London, but it was in France, and later Germany, that you were educated – two countries whose languages you speak perfectly, by the way.

At the age of 18, you were received into the prestigious Oxford University, and more precisely into Christ Church College, where for three years you read physics, while at the same time assuming the responsibilities of secretary of the Oxford Union.

In 1954, you were called to the English bar, and it was in London that you practised as a barrister for five years. Some would have been content with such a promising start.

But not you, especially since at the time, your talent and your character were already urging you to multiply your activities: from 1961 you served in the Parachute Regiment of the Territorial Army and, more especially, from 1966 you became a successful amateur racing driver. After numerous wins and several lap records, you founded The London Racing Team with the late Chris Lambert, before racing in Europe in International Formula 2 under the colours of Frank Williams's team.

This affirmed passion for motor sport was to decide the future. Thus it was that in 1969 you co-founded the company March Engineering, which rapidly became one of the greatest racing car manufacturers in the world, exporting to Europe, Japan, the United States and South America.

Throughout the 1970s, you were also one of the key members of the FOCA, the Formula One Constructors Association which, at that time, you represented to the FIA.

In 1981, you played a decisive part in the negotiations that led to the Concorde Agreement: you were one of the architects of that agreement, which still governs Formula One Racing and has done for the last 25 years.

Five years later, you were elected President of the Manufacturers' Commission of the FISA [International Motor Sport Federation], and you represented the world automobile industry on the World Motor Sport Council.

One responsibility often leads to another, and it was only natural that in 1991 you were elected President of the FISA, and then in 1993, President of the FIA.

You have now been at the head of that prestigious body for thirteen consecutive years, showing remarkable competence and also shouldering heavy responsibilities since the FIA, which gathers together the automobile clubs of 122 countries, is also responsible for the Formula One World Championship, the World Rally Championship and more than six hundred other international motor sport competitions.

Beyond these responsibilities, and much to your credit, you have striven to develop a broader vision of your job, a vision that I would describe as socially aware, capable of taking into account all the risks relating to driving.

These risks are well known. First and foremost the lack of road safety which, although statistically improving in our country, remains a daily drama for many families: road accidents are the first cause of acquired disability among young people under 24 and still result in a million and a half people being injured each year in Europe.

It was to remedy that situation that you decided to implement new initiatives, both ambitious and concrete, designed to improve road safety, in particular at the European level. In 1994, you therefore created the FIA bureau in Brussels, which has enabled 40 million European motorists affiliated to your Federation to make their voice heard at the European level.

That same year, you were elected Honorary President of the Automobile Users Intergroup of the European Parliament for a five-year term. I know how much we owe to your action within the framework of that mandate, as it is thanks to the Intergroup that the European Parliament adopted the new legislation on crash testing, which came into effect in 1998.

It was also on your initiative that the European new car assessment programme, commonly called EuroNCAP, was set up. That independent crash testing organisation, which you presided over for seven years, received the accreditation of the European Commission for having moved road safety within the European Union forward by five years.

In the Commission's own words, it represents the most productive initiative in the last twenty years in the field of road safety, and is up there in first place as far as the reduction of the number of deaths on the roads is concerned.

It is primarily to people such as you, dear Max, and to the teams surrounding you, that we owe this considerable progress in terms of road safety.

We owe it to your spirit of initiative and to the quality of the work carried out: I am thinking here of the campaigns that you have led, in order to strengthen not only the standards for crash testing, but also those concerning carbon emissions from vehicles.

I am also thinking of the carbon isolation programme that you launched in 1995, in close cooperation with Edinburgh University: that was a particularly audacious pioneering initiative, as it concerned reforestation in Mexico in order to offset the pollution produced by the Formula One World Championship and the World Rally Championship.

As everybody knows, a man's actions can only be properly judged over time. Therefore, please allow me, dear Max, to pay tribute this evening to your strength of commitment, and to a remarkable sense of continuity which I would like to underline.

Indeed, it was at your instigation that the FIA Foundation was created in 2002, thanks to the 360 euros resulting from the transfer of the Formula One commercial rights. A British, non-profit-making organisation, the Foundation today devotes several million euros to improving road and motor sport safety at the international level.

I know that this Foundation recently donated 1.5 million dollars to the World Health Organisation for a joint road safety project in developing countries. That was a strong gesture towards the most deprived countries, and one which I would particularly like to salute this evening.

I also know the pioneering role that you have held in the introduction of electronic systems for improved road safety and greater traffic mobility. With great conviction, you have carried out that work as the President and Spokesperson of ERTICO – Intelligent transport systems in Europe, but also as the co-founder, in 2003, of the eSafety Internet Forum.

There again, this represented a groundbreaking advance: the European Commission has justly recognised it, adopting in its wake a Communication on intelligent transport systems and road safety.

All these initiatives, dear Max, are steps towards the development of new prevention strategies. As I said earlier, there are still too many road accidents happening for us not to do everything possible to anticipate them.

To prevent accidents, but also to care for and heal those whose lives have been blighted by them: that is another dimension of your action to which I know you are very much attached. It is not by chance that in 2005 you were appointed as a Founding Member of the Spinal Cord and Brain Institute in Paris.

This Institute, which should physically come into existence in 2008 at the Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital, is a formidable prospect for the research, prevention and treatment of neurological diseases. As the then Minister of Health, I was determined to lend it my support from the very beginning.

I would like to pay heartfelt tribute to Professors Saillant, Agid and Lyon-Caen, to whom this Institute owes so much. I would also like to thank Michael Schumacher and Jean Todt, who, on December 5 2004, the day on which the agreement was signed at the Ministry of Health, were kind enough to be present.

As you will no doubt agree, it is always difficult to mention in so little time all the qualities of a man who has held so many strategic positions and achieved so many well-deserved successes.

Throughout your career, dear Max, you have shown an exceptional capacity for commitment, which bears witness to your passion for your job.

In addition to being President of the FIA for a fourth term, you are also a member of the European Commission's High Level Group CARS 21, in which you work to promote the competitiveness of the European automobile industry at world level.

But beyond all that, your dynamism also reveals an excellent physical condition – I have been told that you are a great snow-boarding enthusiast! – not forgetting that remarkable strength of character that you have placed at the service of a genuine, socially aware conception of the automobile.

Thanks to you, road safety is improving a little more each day, and it is for that, in particular, that I would like to thank you most warmly and most sincerely this evening.

This award honours, at its true value, not only a life journey of outstanding richness, but also one with a remarkable continuity in its objectives.

Through their quality, the personalities surrounding you with their friendship and their esteem this evening bear witness to the exceptional nature of your career and of your merits.

For all these reasons, I am delighted to present you now with this high distinction, in tribute to your very great qualities.

In the name of the President of the Republic, we hereby award to you, dear Max Mosley, the insignia of Chevalier dans l'Ordre national de la Légion d'Honneur./.