

# Cooperation between Wuhan and Essonne injects new vitality into Sino-French friendship

By Helen Pan, Intern Zheng Xiao'an & Sunny Nie

Francois Durovray, president of the County Council of Essonne, France, visited Wuhan with his delegation from May 2 to 6. During his stay in Wuhan, he shared his observations and trip agenda in Wuhan with *Changjiang Weekly* and his wishes to deepen cooperation between Essonne and Wuhan.



Francois Durovray

## Brief introduction

Francois Durovray

Francois Durovray has been president of the county council of Essonne since April 2, 2015. He is also a director of Île-de-France Mobilités.

Durovray was born in Paris. He spent his childhood in Essonne and has been engaged in politics since the age of 15. Prior to the position of the president of the County Council of Essonne, he was the mayor of Montgeron and official French right-wing UMP party candidate.

## All-round cooperation between two cities

It was Francois Durovray's first visit to Wuhan. He said that it was a great delight to visit Wuhan as this city and Essonne has had many friendly exchanges over the years. A sister-city relationship between Wuhan and Essonne was established in December 2012 and has seen all-round cooperation in areas such as education, cultural exchanges, and business.

Durovray said that he was very impressed by the confidence and pride shown by Wuhan citizens towards their city. "Wuhan is a city under construction and under development. We saw self-assurance whenever we visited local schools, cultural centers, and the Wuhan Planning Exhibition Hall."

A highlight of the visit was the cooperation agreement signed between the Yellow Crane Tower Park and Domaine departmental de Chamarande, the largest public park in Essonne, on May 3. Durovray said that the alignment between the two parks worked successfully thanks to the sister-city relationship between Wuhan and Essonne. He added that the two parks have a lot in common as the Yellow Crane Tower Park is the most symbolic landmark of Wuhan, and the Domaine departmental de Chamarande is also the leading cultural heritage attraction of Essonne. "Wuhan and Essonne have had cooperation in sustainable development in the past, our

cooperation in that regard also laid the foundation for the alignment of the two parks."

Durovray praised the cooperation between the Yellow Crane Tower Park and Domaine departmental de Chamarande and said that in fact Wuhan and Essonne has had exchanges in cultivation and forestry in the past. "The Yellow Crane Tower Park sent their staff to France to learn French garden art and technology. We also dispatched personnel from Essonne to the Yellow Crane Tower Park to study Chinese garden art and skills. In this regard, we have begun cooperation and exchanges long ago." Durovray said that the cooperation agreement signed on May 3 will further help both cities promote their tourism industries, and tap into innovation areas. "The scenery in the Yellow Crane Tower Park is very picturesque. They maintain the park superbly, and I am sure both sides can learn from each other and benefit from working together."

Besides the cooperation between Yellow Crane Tower Park and Domaine departmental de Chamarande, Durovray also witnessed an education agreement signed between a Wuhan middle school and its Essonne counterpart and a business agreement between a Wuhan company and a biological enterprise from Essonne during his brief stay here.

## Inviting Wuhan citizens to explore Essonne's history and cuisine

"The regular exchanges over the past years between Wuhan and Essonne injects new vitality into Sino-French friendship. It also serves as a mirror, reflecting the increasingly close ties between China and France." Durovray said that the French are fascinated with China, its long history and rich culture. He hoped that the Chinese people will also fall in love with Essonne and France for the same reason. "Essonne is a perfect example of France's rich culture and history."

As a special spokesperson of Essonne, Durovray said that Essonne is proud of their historical heritage left behind by kings from different periods of France's history. Besides the Domaine departmental de Chamarande, Essonne boasts heritage sites such as the French Museum of Photography (Le musée Français de la Photographie), which keeps the largest collection of photographs in Europe. "In the museum,

visitors can find rare photos, including those taken in China a long time ago." Durovray also recommended Wuhan citizens visit the park of Courances, a beautiful park that has been acclaimed as the epitome of the French formal garden style. It has been said that the structure inspired André Le Nôtre, a distinguished landscape architect who designed the park for the Palace of Versailles. "We also have the Domaine de Courson, a unique park built by the Lamoignon family under Louis XV where people still feel a strong sense of romance."

Durovray spared no effort in his introduction to Essonne's local specialties such as watercress, peppermint, honey, and locally-crafted beer to its Chinese sister city. "Essonne is a mini gourmet kingdom of French cuisines," said Durovray, extending his invitation to the people of Wuhan to come to Essonne and explore its flavors and historical heritage.