

US, French presidents call for 'ambitious' climate change deal

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US President Barack Obama (L) shakes hands with French President Francois Hollande during a bilateral meeting in Saint Petersburg on September 6, 2013 on the sideline of the G20 summit

The presidents of France and the United States issued a joint call Monday for other nations to join them in seeking an "ambitious" agreement to curb climate change.

Presidents Barack Obama and Francois Hollande, writing in an article in

the Washington Post and Le Monde, called for support "in pursuit of an ambitious and inclusive global agreement" to reduce [greenhouse gas emissions](#) "through concrete actions" at a climate conference in Paris in 2015.

Cooperation on a host of global issues—which include the Syrian crisis, Iran's nuclear program, and security in Africa—has resulted in France and the United States enjoying a "model" relationship, the presidents wrote.

The joint opinion piece comes as Hollande travels to the United States on Monday for a state visit.

"Rooted in a friendship stretching back more than two centuries, our deepening partnership offers a model for international cooperation," the presidents wrote.

"Transnational challenges cannot be met by any one nation alone. More nations must step forward and share the burden and costs of leadership."

Ties between the two countries have warmed considerably since chilling over France's refusal to support the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq under president George W. Bush.



French and US flags hang on the Eisenhower Executive Office Building of the White House, in Washington, DC, on February 7, 2014, three days before the arrival of French President Francois Hollande for a three-day state visit

"A decade ago, few would have imagined our countries working so closely together in so many ways. But in recent years our alliance has transformed," the presidents wrote.

The two countries "have been able to take our alliance to a new level because our interests and values are so closely aligned," they said.

Regarding [climate change](#), even as the United States and France "reduce our own carbon emissions, we can expand the clean energy partnerships that create jobs and move us toward low-carbon growth. We can do more to help developing countries shift to low-carbon energy as well, and deal with rising seas and more intense storms," they wrote.

Deeply unpopular at home and fresh from a much-publicised split with longtime girlfriend Valerie Trierweiler, Hollande will be hosted for a state dinner and talks with Obama before jetting to California to meet tech leaders.

Sources in the Elysee say the trip will highlight the "excellent working relationship" between the US and France, but Hollande will also raise a few "irritants", including concerns over mass US spying in Europe.

France has played a leading role in African security since Hollande took office in 2012, sending troops to fight Islamist rebels in Mali and to stem unrest in the Central African Republic.

But much of the focus is expected to be on economic questions.



US First Lady Michelle Obama (L) greets Valerie Trierweiler, partner of French President Francois Hollande, during a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) First Ladies event in New York on September 24, 2013

Hollande, whose approval ratings are the lowest of any modern French leader, is under intense pressure to revitalise the French economy and reduce an unemployment rate that is at a 15-year high.

After a red-carpet welcome at Andrews Air Force base on Monday, Hollande will attend a state dinner with Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, which French officials said was to take place "as planned" despite Hollande's personal woes.

The invitation had initially been made to both Hollande and Trierweiler, but the president will be attending alone after his split with the de facto French First Lady last month.

Hollande announced his separation from Trierweiler after revelations of an affair with Julie Gayet, an actress nearly 20 years his junior.

On Tuesday Hollande and Obama hold official talks at the White House followed by a joint press conference.

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