

Ladies and Gentlemen, directors of the French American Chamber of Commerce, distinguished guests, I'm happy to be here to accept this award and particularly proud to represent Arkema in doing so. I want to acknowledge the tables of my colleagues here from Arkema for being a part of this evening and supporting the Chamber of Commerce. I also particularly want to thank my wife, Samantha, for joining me here this evening.

As Jeremy referenced, Sam and I have had a meandering path -- from student life in South Africa, through more than a dozen addresses, to where we have settled during the last 10 years in this great corner of Pennsylvania. Along the way, we have collected amazing experiences, and more importantly, two incredible children.

One of the main reasons we have felt so comfortable settling into the Philadelphia region has been the open, accepting nature of the people here. I think this has a lot to do with the city's rich history of embracing people from all nationalities. Of course, this especially includes the French Connection. I greatly enjoy history, and so of course, I was eager to learn more about this connection, which goes all the way back to the beginning.

When William Penn was 18 and open to influence, his father wanted to disassociate him from the non-conformist Quakers, with whom he had sympathized at Oxford. As a result he was sent to Paris for two years. This effort by his father backfired spectacularly and saw Penn reject privilege and status even more firmly, but he did embrace French culture, which he saw as the epitome of sophistication.

Penn went on to bring much of what he learnt during his years in France with him when he founded Philadelphia. This French influence long outlived William Penn. And in fact, while Philadelphia was capital of the United States in the decade after the revolution, fully ten percent of the population here was French. This explains some of the great architecture and other influences we still see today!

One of the reasons Sam and I have been able to stay in this region is the number of great companies based here, including Arkema, of course. Arkema is a unique company in many ways. As you saw in the short video, we build on our expertise in materials science to deliver sustainable solutions to a world that is very much in need of them.

We consider Arkema to be a global leader in specialty materials, and we operate in 55 countries today and sell products in many more. Today, more than 20 thousand talented people are part of the Arkema Group.

Our North American business, which is headquartered a short distance from here in King of Prussia, represents about a third of the nearly 10 billion euro revenues for our global company.

Having our global headquarters in Paris has led to a very French influence on our culture. As Jeremy mentioned, I have worked in a variety of companies influenced by cultures of their headquarters in Germany, America and France.

One aspect that sets Arkema apart from other companies I have been part of is the love of debate. Early on, I discovered that the American style of presentation, where one presents only the best solution to a problem, is met with what we refer to in King of Prussia as the “French but.” In other words, “Yes, but . . .” and is the lead into a long discussion that mostly ends with agreement on the original proposal but often with improvements and always a sense of ownership from the whole team.

From my perspective and based on what I have been told from my French friends, this collaborative way of working and socializing ideas is very much part of French culture, it is also what I love about working with my Arkema colleagues. We embrace this in the way we live out two of our core values, namely Solidarity and Empowerment.

And we have some big ideas that we have been collaborating on. Our work on new materials for current and future generations of batteries for electric vehicles is well known and we have enjoyed the publicity our Pebax material has received after each major sporting event where its incorporation into sports shoes is widely accepted as a must for elite athletes due to its flexibility, resilience and energy return.

However some less publicized applications are equally interesting. For instance one of the big concerns about wind turbines as a renewable energy solution is the fact that when the turbine blades have to be replaced, they end up in landfill. In the last few months we proved the ability to make 25m long completely recyclable blades that can be produced industrially, thus eliminating this barrier for greater adoption.

Another key area of focus for us is eco-sustainable buildings. We have developed a range of materials that enhance home comfort and energy efficiency, such as coatings that reflect energy from roofs and windows, or insulating materials that add structural strength while reducing energy usage. A key part of the success of these products is that they have a positive environmental footprint compared to the products they are replacing as well as the long term benefits coming with their application in the buildings they form part of.

Safety is a critical part of working at Arkema and one area of innovation from our 3D printing team that I find very interesting is the development of materials for custom fit printed helmets. These provide different properties for different sports. For cycling, complex shapes and materials are required to withstand a single severe impact, whereas

hockey requires a different but equally complex solution for the combination of durability and impact protection, and so on for other sports.

In fact our materials find their way into an impressive amount of products from running shoes to airplanes and in applications from cosmetics to mining. In each application while the benefit to society is impressive, what is equally impressive to me are the innovations our technologists are bringing to our production processes including the use of bio-based, byproduct or recycled raw materials to meet our ambitious sustainability goals.

Solutions like these are very important to our company, and they require a lot of creativity and collaboration. One of the great missions we have at Arkema is to build talented teams that bring diverse experiences together to increase our creativity and accelerate our growth. As we grow, we are consciously trying to build teams of people from diverse backgrounds and points of view to improve our performance.

When I moved from South Africa to North America a decade after the first democratic elections in my home country with the institutional bigotry fresh in my mind, I had what I see now as a naive view that these issues were largely resolved in such modern countries. The disappointment of finding imbalances in opportunity in education and career existing in this region has been a source of motivation for me as we work with the rest of our Arkema team to help all our employees bring their whole selves to our collaborative workplace.

In addition appreciating the diverse backgrounds of all our employees, we are working to provide these talented people with a variety of experiences in different disciplines, to help them mold themselves into strong leaders. I know I have benefitted greatly from the different experiences in my career, from roles in research to engineering and manufacturing, through supply chain and into business roles. So, I have a particular passion around creating rich opportunities that enable people with a single set of perspectives gain breadth of experiences across disciplines, as well as experience the benefits of working with a variety of teams.

This variety in experience and background, in a collaborative workplace where debate is encouraged, where we are finding exciting and innovative ways for our materials to build a more sustainable world, is what makes Arkema such an exciting company.

So I thank you for the recognition this evening, but I think I state the obvious that it is truly recognition for a great and innovative company in which I am proud to play a part.