

Press Conference for Launch of Lapérouse 2008 Operation
Press Club
Monday, September 8th, 2008 10:30am

Speech by Patrick Buffet

It's a great honour for the Eramet Group, which I chair, to be involved in an operation as uplifting as this.

I think it's no coincidence that Mr Hervé Morin, Minister of Defence, asked Eramet in May to be a partner in the Lapérouse 2008 operation. Eramet is a major French mining and metallurgical group, a world leader and the European #1 in alloy metals and high value-added alloys. The Group has been active in the South Pacific for almost 125 years through its subsidiary Société Le Nickel (SLN). As major economic players in New Caledonia, Eramet and SLN have also played a part in the Territory's history by drawing value from its exceptional resources. Moreover, New Caledonia is firmly established as a shareholder in SLN as STCPI, the three Provinces' investment vehicle, holds a 34% stake as of July 2007.

With its five mining centres and a nickel processing plant in Nouméa, SLN produces ferro-nickel, an alloy used in stainless steel manufacturing, but also nickel matte for making the high-purity nickel contained in superalloys, used for example in aircraft, electronics and mobile energy.

Through SLN, we have followed and supported the Salomon association and its chairman Alain Conan, whose perseverance, passion and talent I'd like to acknowledge here.

The values that drove Monsieur de Lapérouse, sent across the seas by Louis XVI more than two centuries ago, still inspire the members of the expedition: a taste for challenge, team spirit and innovation. We also share those values at Eramet with our 15,000 employees worldwide, including 2,400 in New Caledonia.

With this sponsoring operation, Eramet becomes one of France's first TV sponsors as our financial support will go directly into the film that Yves Bourgeois is going to make for screening in France 3's Thalassa programme in particular. This major initiative opens up advantageous funding prospects for the producers of quality programmes and for TV channels. We are pleased to have prepared the ground for this kind of sponsorship.

Along with every Eramet employee, I'm looking forward to following this new expedition and seeing the images shot by Yves Bourgeois and his crew. Thanks to the French Navy, next week the members of the expedition will leave Nouméa for Vanikoro. We wish them every success in their quest to clear up the Lapérouse mystery, but also to increase our knowledge of these South Pacific islands and their inhabitants. Thank you one and all for your energy and enthusiasm. Best wishes from me and everyone at Eramet for success in this exciting mission.