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The French Embassy in the United Kingdom presents its compliments to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and has the honour of referring to its Notes Verbales nos. 015-2020 and 22-2020 of 10 August and 16 November 2020 respectively, regarding the examination of witnesses in connection with the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire ("the Inquiry").

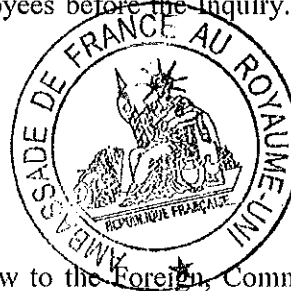
The French Embassy in the United Kingdom would like to inform the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the following points.

The French authorities share the British authorities' desire for full light to be shed on that tragic fire. They reiterate their condolences and extend their most heartfelt sympathies to the victims' families.

Regarding the issues raised by the citing, by employees of the French subsidiary of US company Arconic summoned to testify to the Inquiry, of Article 1bis of Law no. 68-678 of 26 July 1968 relating to the transfer of documents and information of an economic, commercial, industrial, financial or technical nature to foreign natural or legal persons, it is important to point out that this law confers no powers on the French administration that might remove a prohibition deriving from it. Moreover, it should be recalled that, in the French legal system, it is jurisdictions that have authority over the interpretation of criminal law.

Subject to this, it has emerged from the analyses conducted by the French administration that, given the Inquiry's terms of reference of 10 August 2017, its rules and the Attorney General's letter of 28 May 2020 regarding the examination of witnesses, the Inquiry does not appear to fall under the scope of Article 1bis of the aforementioned act.

Consequently, the French authorities do not share the position that the Blocking Statute constitutes an obstacle to the examination of Arconic's employees before the Inquiry. The company concerned has been informed of this position. /.



The Embassy avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office the assurances of its highest consideration.

London, 7 December 2020