

STATEMENTS ON A MATTER OF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY

5. Statement by the Chief Minister regarding a partnership agreement with Ille et Vilaine

5.1 Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):

This statement relates to a partnership agreement on co-operation between the Department of Ille et Vilaine and the States of Jersey. Over the last 2 years some States Members and officials from Jersey have been working with their counterparts from the Department of Ille et Vilaine in Brittany on a wide range of topics that are of mutual interest. The collaboration has been organised within working groups relating to commerce and infrastructure, culture and education, and tourism. The work has been most productive, and as a result, a number of initiatives have been progressed, including closer liaison between our harbours and airports' operators to improve transport links, collaboration on tourism promotions, particularly with regard to the T.G.V. (train à grande vitesse) high speed train link to Paris, possible training opportunities for employees in the hospitality industry, and educational links between schools, colleges and the business school in Rennes. Just a few weeks ago we had the opportunity to hear musicians with an international reputation visiting Jersey as part of the Breton Festival du Grand Soufflet. All these projects have significant economic, cultural and educational benefits for Jersey. To underpin this important and growing relationship between Jersey and Ille et Vilaine, it is proposed that a partnership agreement should be concluded which sets out our desire to further develop the collaboration. It states that we intend to strengthen the co-operation between our administrations with particular priority on the current work programme, but with a view to broader co-operation and partnership in future. Any costs that may be involved are to be shared on an agreed basis, although there are no significant financial implications at present. The proposed agreement has been endorsed by the Conseil Général in Rennes, and I feel it is also appropriate to bring it to the attention of the States Assembly. I have attached a copy of the text of the statement for the information of Members. In accordance with my responsibilities for Jersey's external relations, I intend to sign the agreement, together with President Tourenne of the Conseil Général at the next meeting of the Brittany working groups, which is to take place in Rennes on Monday, 26th November.

5.1.1 Deputy I.J. Gorst:

While I greatly welcome that statement, perhaps the Chief Minister would agree that he, like I, would have benefited innumerable from a French-speaking primary school?

Senator F.H. Walker:

From a private school? A primary school. Oh, a French-speaking primary school. Well, Sir, yes, Sir, I think I would benefit from a French-speaking course in the first instance. A French-speaking primary school has indeed been raised, and I have taken the matter up with the Education Minister, but there are significant logistical difficulties in establishing it. His view, which I have to say I share, is that we are better off focussing more attention on the teaching of French in our current school structure.