



Harlem Désir

Secretary of State of European Affairs,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French Republic

Opening of the Conference

Tuesday, 29th November 2016, 09:00 – 10:25 h

Harlem Désir was born in Paris on 25 November 1959. He is the father of two children. He holds a bachelor's degree in Philosophy from the University of Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne and also studied history at the University of Paris 12, Créteil.

While at university, he joined the student union movement. In 1984, he founded the SOS Racisme Association, which he chaired until 1992, and the SOS Racisme international federation which brings together antiracist associations in Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Canada and Brazil. His movement was supported by many personalities in Europe and worldwide, including Olof Palme, Vaclav Havel, Abdou Diouf, François Mitterrand and Jacques Delors.

Harlem Désir joined the French Socialist Party in 1982. In 1995, he became the Party's National Secretary for Relations with the social movement, attached to First Secretary Lionel Jospin. He was National Secretary for Europe from 2003 to 2005 and later for Globalization from 2005 to 2008, attached to First Secretary François Hollande. From 2008 to 2012, he was National Secretary for Coordination, attached to First Secretary Martine Aubry.

Harlem Désir was First Secretary of the Socialist Party from October 2012 until he joined the government as Minister of State for European Affairs in April 2014.

Harlem Désir is a passionate supporter of the European cause. He was elected to the European Parliament for the first time in 1999, and re-elected in 2004 and 2009.

From 1999 to 2004, he was a member of the Standing Committee on Industry, Research, Energy and of the Standing Committee on International Trade. He was, among other functions, rapporteur on Reform of the WTO, on Economic Partnership Agreements with the ACP countries and regions, and on the EU Directive on European Works Councils. He was also in charge of the issue of the Directives on Electricity and Gas, with a focus on their public service dimension. From 2002 to 2004, he was Vice-Chairman of the European Parliament Delegation for relations with the United States.

From 2004 to 2009, Harlem Désir was Vice-President of the Socialists & Democrats Group in the European Parliament, with responsibility for economic and social issues and international trade. As a member of the Standing Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, and of the International Trade Committee, he was rapporteur on the Part-Time Workers Directive, the Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion, the Mid-Term Review of the Lisbon Strategy, on reform of international trade and of the WTO, and on trade and social norms.

From 2009 to 2014, as a member of the International Trade Committee and an alternate member of the Development Committee, Harlem Désir was in charge, in particular, of monitoring the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement, rapporteur on corporate social and environmental responsibility in trade agreements, and shadow rapporteur on the review of the Cotonou Agreement with the ACP countries.