



# **DISCOURS DE MADAME NATHALIE FONTANET CONSEILLERE D'ETAT**

Prononcé à l'occasion de la fête de l'Escalade du CAGI

5 décembre 2022

*Seul le texte prononcé fait foi*

*« Je suis très heureuse d'être parmi vous ce soir, à l'occasion de la traditionnelle Fête de l'Escalade du CAGI, que je remercie pour son invitation. J'ai le plaisir de m'exprimer au nom des trois autorités hôte, à savoir la Confédération, la Ville et le canton de Genève.*

*In our canton, we do not celebrate Carnival as such, and the tradition of Halloween is not very widespread. On the other hand, everyone here celebrates the Escalade. It's a popular heritage, a time to meet.*

*It is the commemoration of the people living in Geneva, as well as an opportunity to remember the history of the city, of its unity, when on the night of December twelve, sixteen hundred and two (1602), in the darkness of the winter solstice, the Duke of Savoy and his two thousand (2000) soldiers tried to invade the City of Calvin by force of arms.*

*The episode of the Escalade, let's be precise, corresponds to the assault of a Savoyard commando section of 300 elite troop who, in order to cross the fortified enclosures of several meters surrounding Geneva, used a series of retractable ladders. Their ambition caused a lot of ink to flow. And tears to drop, since the attempt claimed a total of 72 victims.*

*Nowadays, one could say that Geneva has made use of its "inherent right of self-defense" according to article 51 of the United Nations Charter. In any case, the fortifications around Geneva have since then disappeared. They have been replaced by the Shengen Area, and that's good!*

*Geneva is a canton open to the world. Its peaceful vocation continues to be enriched thanks to all of you who come from many different horizons.*

*Four centuries after the Escalade, the resulting festival is part of the integration ritual. It celebrates the differences in identities and territorial belonging. Indeed, nearly 10%*

*of the population of Geneva, which nowadays includes more than 40% of foreign nationalities, is renewed every year, between those who leave and those who arrive.*

*Even the legendary Mère Royaume - who poored the boiling soup on the aggressor - is a pure product of this immigration, like many of the city's thirteen thousand inhabitants at the time, which has made and continues to make our canton rich. This historical figure from Lyon in France, whose real name was Catherine born Cheynel, took refuge in Geneva in 1572 following the persecution of the Huguenots. She left her mark for her ingenuity in using an improbable weapon, which has since become a symbol of victory : the bubbling cauldron, of which you will no doubt be able to enjoy a chocolate reproduction later on.*

*It is a pleasure for me, beeing in charge of gender equality to emphasize that at least two women brougth victory to Geneva during this assault, the Mère Royaume with her pot of soup and Lady Piaget who threw the key to he geneva citizens for allowen them to close the gates off he city and avoid being sloughtered.*

*Please, be assured the Escalade is not the exclusive event of true " Genevois et Genevoises ". It is the festival of all of the Canton's residents, whether they are permanently based here or temporary expatriates. Our common goal is bringing the peoples of the world together, and to welcome you is an immense pride. Dear friends of International Geneva, this city with a somewhat baroque destiny is your home.*

*The International Geneva Welcome Centre has perfectly grasped the significance of this festival by gathering us on this occasion every year in December. I would like to take this occasion to congratulate the CAGI on the resumption of its activities at full speed after the Covid crisis. For more than a quarter of a century, it has never failed in its mission to facilitate the installation and integration of your organisations and staff in our Canton.*

*Geneva has the reputation of being one of the most Latin cantons in Switzerland. It is said that we speak loudly , but I am well placed to affirm that here we also know how to act discreetly, to achieve a lot and on subjects of fundamental importance.*

*The example of Geneva's history shows us that we always need to keep our eyes fixed upon the resolution of conflicts and peace building. This is facilitated by concrete supporting measures and projects that bring together territories and people. Indeed, peace is not a punctual act, but a permanent investment over time.*

*I am sure that most of you recognize their work and mission in these remarks.*

*International Geneva, whose vocation, let us remember, was built on the consequences and lessons learned from armed conflicts, is today an invaluable center of dialogue and expertise in the service of the protection and prosperity of populations around the world. It is important for me to affirm, today before you, that international cooperation is more necessary than ever, in a context of multiplying, overlapping and intertwined crises.*

*On the occasion of this traditional celebration of the Escalade of The International Geneva Welcome Centre, I wish to thank all of you, in the name of the Swiss Confederation, the Canton and the City of Geneva. Thank you for your presence in our country and for your daily commitment to defend our common values and ideals. I wish you a very nice fête de l'escalade which will officially take place this week end in the old city of Geneva, I in particular warmly recomand you to assist Sunday at 5 PM to the historical parade organized by the historic association la Compagnie 1602 bringing in good order all costume compagnons, horses, weapons and torched bearers.*

*Merci pour votre attention et belle bête de l'Escalade à toutes et tous ! »*