

For various historical reasons, the French language spread to every continent. It was implanted in the heart of Africa, it took root in North America, in the West Indies and Asia, and in the Indian Ocean. Through the centuries, this dissemination caused the emergence of a cultural universe greatly exceeding the bounds of the European area that remains its rallying-point. In Canada, in the West Indies and in Mauritius, French has been spoken for more than three centuries; in Africa, for one or two centuries. French is spoken in all parts of the globe, but people in other places think differently from people in Europe, because life in each society is subject to differing economic and political conditions and is exposed to a different variety of cultural and technical influences. The great challenge for the Agency is exactly this -- to organize and develop the maximum possibilities of this very rich mosaic.

The reason it seemed appropriate for me to recall these fundamental facts, which many would undoubtedly consider obvious, is that, after this General Conference, the Council must apply a new general policy and change the orientation and practical methods of its programs. So that this undertaking may give the Agency the second wind that it will need from now on, it must be carried out within the limits that defines its field of action. The Canadian delegation has had the opportunity, throughout this conference, of detailing the positions of our governments on the various topics that the Secretariat and the Council have brought to our attention; however, it is useful to recall some motivating ideas that Canada considers very important.

First, the emphasis the members want to put on development, it seems to us, not only responds to present needs -- witness the resolution adopted in the seventh special session of the United Nations General Assembly -- but is, moreover, entirely appropriate to the Agency's purpose. In addition, those who are acquainted with the new international development strategy announced in September of this year by the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Secretary of State for External Affairs and Minister responsible for the Canadian International Development Agency, cannot doubt that Canada will immediately support the attempts to orient the Agency's activity more towards rural areas, for that is precisely one of the new directions for Canadian co-operation. However, it is obvious that the Agency's activities should be limited to cultural and technical development, which constitute a very broad field -- the one most often left fallow. Moreover, so that these activities can be effective, we think it necessary that they be carefully conceived and planned, that they be in proportion to the resources available to the Agency and that they be adapted to the methods within its capabilities. Furthermore, if we wish to conform to the specific purpose of this institution, we

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