

2) A More Political Francophonie

Canada's Approach

In addition to the modernist orientation, the preference for a more political Francophonie also began to take hold at the ministerial meeting of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) in December 1994, where Canada had invited La Francophonie to an international meeting on conflict prevention.

At the international Francophone meeting held in Ottawa in September 1995, it was apparent that La Francophonie was already engaged in the prevention of conflict and the consolidation of peace through the programs of the Agence de la Francophonie and of the International Association of French-Speaking Parliamentarians.

Priority activities in this area include the promotion of democratic practices and strengthening of the rule of law.

The recent crisis in Rwanda and Burundi, among others, have once again highlighted the importance for La Francophonie of increasing the capacity of its political organizations to respond quickly in major international crisis in order to prevent or resolve conflicts. This is not a question, however, of developing parallel mechanisms to those that exist in other organizations, but rather of encouraging La Francophonie to make a greater commitment to combatting factors of instability.

At the conclusion of the Summit held in Benin in 1995, as a result of Canada's intervention, the Cotonou Declaration affirmed the importance of stability and peace, respect for basic rights, democracy and the rule of law as essential conditions for sustainable development. Furthermore, Canada encouraged the Permanent Council of La Francophonie to impose its views to a greater extent in the areas of security and

conflict prevention by conducting small-scale activities focussing on the prevention and resolution of specific situations. It also invited the member countries of La Francophonie to give their support to the Organization of African Unity and other regional organizations with a view to resolving situations of conflict that threaten the African continent. If La Francophonie is to establish its authority, the Prime Minister of Canada said in an address to the French Senate in 1994, it will have to strengthen its capacity for political intervention and develop a procedure for preventive diplomacy. He added that without such instruments, La Francophonie will play only a minor role.

Following the commitments made at the Mauritius Summit and in view of the deliberations of the recent Ottawa meeting, Canada cooperated in drafting a resolution on conflict prevention and international security and proposed the holding of activities to support the Cotonou Declaration and this resolution.

At the Cotonou Summit, the Prime Minister reiterated the urgent necessity for La Francophonie to play a still more active role in the prevention of conflicts and crises affecting its member states. It was to respond to such concerns that Canada took the initiative of organizing an international meeting in Ottawa of senior officials and specialists in preventive diplomacy of the member countries of La Francophonie. In the wake of this important meeting, Canada presented the results of a Canadian study on the development of a capacity for rapid response within the UN.

The Canadian International Study and Co-operation Centre (CECI) has just submitted a proposal for exchanges, consultation and action in the African countries of La Francophonie. CECI proposes round tables on conflict prevention on the topic of land to identify problems likely to give rise to conflicts over land ownership.