

This being said, some may wonder if the Canadian decision to cease participation in the expert meeting on mass media last December in Paris does not in fact indicate some toughening of the Canadian position towards Unesco. I should answer to this that our decision in that instance was in no way directed against the Organization itself. As you know, the Government has vigorously opposed in the United Nations General Assembly the adoption of the resolution equating Zionism with racism. When the Unesco meeting of experts decided specifically to refer to that resolution in its programme of action and when our objections, and those of like-minded countries, were not heeded, we did not see any alternative to withdrawing from the meeting. This was done only after the seriousness of our objections, and indeed the objections of all Western countries, were clearly stated by the participants in the meeting. In similar circumstances, we would have adopted a similar attitude in any other technical meeting of any other U.N. agency. This should not prevent us from participating in the 19th General Conference next fall, although I must add that continued reference in Unesco circles to the resolution on Zionism will undoubtedly discourage Canadian action in support of any programmes that might be tainted by such a reference.

The significance of Unesco as an international organization is underscored by the role it is called upon to play in the implementation of a number of provisions of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. It is the Government's belief that this document, which was signed on August 1, 1975, by Prime Minister Trudeau and the heads of government of the United States and thirty-three states of Europe, has set the course for the general improvement of East-West relations for years to come. Calling on the participating states to reduce the barriers which exist among them to the movement of people, ideas and culture, it specifically cites Unesco as an appropriate forum for working towards these objectives.

I am proud to be able to say that Canada played a significant role in the Conference. In so doing, we reinforced our commitment to European culture, where much of our heritage lies, and contributed to the political gains this document has achieved for Europe and for ourselves.

As an established organization with a Regional Group devoted to European affairs, in which Canada intends to participate actively, Unesco can make a lasting contribution to the promotion of understanding and confidence among governments and people. Each project it undertakes, each conference it sponsors, constitutes another step towards cementing the bonds of co-operation which the Helsinki Agreement sought to promote. People like you, who devote their time and efforts to making organizations such as Unesco successful, give strength to the hope we all share for a better world. It is indeed you who exemplify the spirit of Helsinki.