

There has always been some continuity to Canadian foreign policy. However, we came to office believing that the former government had nurtured too narrow a view of the country, and in foreign affairs, as in other fields, we are pursuing initiatives that had not been priorities for Canada before. Let me talk about one of them today.

We are accustomed to thinking of our French and English heritage in relation to the European cultures they reach back to. It is time for Canada to give more attention to the developing countries they reach out to. We are a unique country in the world, and ought to build on all our assets.

We belong to two international families - the Commonwealth and La Francophonie. The Heads of Government of both organizations will meet in Canada next year - La Francophonie in Quebec City in September; the Commonwealth in Vancouver in October.

These are more than alliances of language or tradition. They cut across the categories of wealth or colour or region which can divide the world. They allow us to exercise a status that is virtually unique to Canada - as a developed country, without colonial antecedents or ambitions, trusted by the developing world. That is important in diplomacy, as when we seek the form of agencies of the United Nations, or try to develop common policies to seek peaceful change in southern Africa. It is important in trade, as when we are able to get agreement on the inclusion of agriculture, or of services in the GATT. It is significant in establishing joint ventures, or securing development projects, as Canadian entrepreneurs have discovered in Africa and the Caribbean.

The unique capacity of the Commonwealth has been demonstrated in southern Africa, where the tensions generated by apartheid are boiling over. Those tensions will be resolved only by a change of policy in Pretoria, or by an escalating violence through the region. Obviously, it is far better to have change without violence, but that will not be easy. Among other things, it requires some agency that can reach both sides, urging moderation on black leaders and groups, building pressure against apartheid. The Commonwealth is the agency most able to play that role, and Canada has chosen deliberately to base our policy against apartheid on the Commonwealth connection.