

La Francophonie

The year 1977 was productive for the affairs of La Francophonie. Canada participated in a number of international conferences and meetings attended by representatives of both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

There is a potential for nations speaking the same language to further their political, economic, cultural and trade relations. The majority of states where French is a language of communication within the country or with the outside world, i.e. some 30 countries, decided to take part in organizations representing a population of 250 million on four continents.

Canada continued to work towards the strengthening of the international French-speaking community in order to make it a useful forum and an effective framework for co-operation, particularly between industrialized and developing countries. Canada's constant support in the past, and the constructive role it continued to play during 1977, have earned it a leading place in the French-speaking community.

Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation

The highlight of 1977 for La Francophonie was the general conference of its Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation, held at Abidjan from December 14 to 17. The Canadian delegation was headed by Jean-Pierre Goyer, Minister of Supply and Services and adviser to the Secretary of State for External Affairs on matters relating to French-speaking countries. The Provinces of Quebec, New Brunswick and Ontario were represented by, respectively, Claude Morin, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Jean-Pierre Ouellet, Minister of Youth, Recreation and Cultural Resources, and René Brunelle, Provincial Secretary for Resources Development and Minister Responsible for Bilingualism.

The conference welcomed three new members to the Agency - Comoro Islands, Djibouti and Zaïre - and acknowledged the withdrawal of Madagascar. New Brunswick was admitted as a participating government, thus becoming the second Canadian province (Quebec being the first) to be granted that

status. By the end of the year the Agency comprised 26 members states, two associated states and two participating governments. The retiring Secretary-General, Dankoulodo Dan Dicko of Nigeria, was re-elected for a fresh term of four years. Three of the four deputy secretaries-general were also re-elected: Léopold Amyot, seconded from the Canadian Department of External Affairs, Abdelaziz Driss of Tunisia and Simon-Pierre Nothomb of Belgium. André Clérici of France was elected to the fourth position of deputy secretary-general, to replace the late Louis Capelle.

The Agency's General Conference in Abidjan appeared to usher in a period on consolidation. The priorities that had been defined at the last General Conference, held in 1975 in Mauritius, were reaffirmed. These priorities reflected three areas of concern - development, the promotion of national cultures and languages, and educational, scientific and technical co-operation. Moreover, in view of the limited human and financial resources the Agency had at its command, the conference declared itself in favour of greater concentration on multilateral programs with more clearly defined objectives corresponding more closely to the aims of the Agency. The conference reaffirmed its conviction that such programs had to meet the priority needs of member states and achieve results directly benefiting the people of the member countries.

An important result of the conference was the launching of the Special Development Program for promoting development through economic, social and cultural co-operation financed by voluntary contributions. This program is meant to fill the gaps in other bilateral and multilateral co-operation activities. It will study and implement development projects corresponding to the needs of each country, especially in the spheres of education, research, agriculture, health and social communication. It is open to all countries that are members of the Agency and of the French-speaking ministerial conferences. Canada, one of the chief