Considering what is at stake for La Francophonie in the development of information highways. Canada considers it important to take action on a number of fronts. We must therefore:

- firmly establish a Francophone presence on the information highway;

- offer a window on La Francophonie to the entire world;

- strengthen the ties among Francophones and among Francophone institutions; consolidate existing Francophone networks while allowing them to retain their own identity and mission; increase the number of information sources in all Francophone countries; establish a decentralized and flexible structure by strengthening links between local networks and regional and international networks;

- produce, disseminate and promote information in French in the areas of culture, education, health, etc. by using worldwide resources; create software and services in French and disseminate them to communities in the north and south;

- support the development of and assistance to firms in the information field by means of exchanges, training activities, research and development;

- provide the widest possible access by working to reduce fees.

The considerable investments being made worldwide at present can be put to use for these purposes.

Canada believes it is desirable to develop links with other linguistic communities to ensure that, not only French, but also national languages can gain a foothold on information highways and flourish. If other communities make efforts in this direction, the multiplicity of content will have a much better chance of breaking the monopoly of English and, in particular, of developing gateways for exchanges. For some countries it is a question of overcoming their isolation by enabling them to link up with the trend to globalization while preserving their cultural and national identity.

In this regard, various countries where some French is spoken wish to develop relations with Francophone countries by means of information highways so as to diversify their relationships. This is the case, for example, in Vietnam, other countries in Southeast Asia and some countries in Eastern Europe.

In concrete terms, this new approach takes the form of a series of projects such as the establishment of server centres in 10 countries of La Francophonie, namely: Mali, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Benin, Cameroon, Senegal, Mauritania, Haiti, Mauritius and Madagascar. It is in Montreal, however, at the Conference of ministers responsible for information highways, to be held on May 19, 20 and 21, 1997, that this sector will find its real impetus with the adoption of an action plan that will be endorsed at the Hanoi Summit. Projects centred around information highways will clearly be one of the three principal focuses for programming at this seventh Summit.