

appreciated that this community existed long before any attempt to unify its diverse components under a single banner was made.

Many leaders of this community saw the potential usefulness of such a community for engineering common activities aimed at fostering the social and cultural development and economic growth of its individual members. This explains the emergence of both private (over 200) and governmental institutions involved in the pursuit of dialogue and co-operation between Francophones from countries all over the world.

The nature of la Francophonie has also been influenced by the quest of leaders of Francophone countries for an organizational framework for its member states.

As its heritage is more cultural than political in nature, la Francophonie is essentially a matter of values permeating a culture or of a language as a unifying force. French is not only the communication medium of la Francophonie, but its catalyst. La Francophonie is now a community of countries that base the pursuit of common objectives on the use of a common language.

These definitions highlight a complex reality. There are over 40 countries that use the French language on a regular basis both domestically and in the international arena. Most of these are members of the Paris-based Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation, which was founded in 1970 and includes Quebec and New Brunswick as "participating governments." Its purpose is to foster mutual co-operation in the fields of culture, education, science and technology. Altogether, the member countries account for 250 million people, from Europe, Africa, the Americas and Oceania. In other words, its members come from the North, South, East and West and represent different political systems, different lifestyles, different standards of living and different values.

From la Francophonie to the Francophone Summit

The political leaders who emerged from decolonization in French Africa in the 1960s wanted to expand institutional and functional co-operation within the Francophone world. With their newly acquired freedom, independence and equality, they wished to create new mechanisms of consultation, co-operation, and, whenever deemed appropriate, policy co-ordination at the political level. Such ideas were fostered by men like Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Hamani Diori of Niger, and Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia.

As with the Commonwealth's leaders, consultations among political leaders of la Francophonie progressively covered all areas of endeavours and activities, whether political, economic, social, technical or cultural. What emerged in the process was a political solidarity at the highest level which demanded both the type of formalization best suited to heads of state or government and the structure to energize this co-operation on a systematic basis: a summit.

Many Francophone heads of state agreed with the idea, but several different concepts of the summit emerged in the 1970s.

Several African countries saw it as a way to expand their access to sources of development assistance, a mini-North-South dialogue. France envisaged the summit as some form of an enlarged Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation at the level of heads of government to talk language and culture.

Quebec's goal at the time was to use the Francophone Summit to foster its quest for international recognition and status while participating in the major cultural and other common endeavours of Francophone countries. Quebec wanted a summit to focus on issues within its constitutional prerogatives in the fields of language and culture.

As far as Canada was concerned, the federal government had always been convinced that regular multilateral consultations at the highest level would ensure that all its individual endeavours in la Francophonie would benefit from a common political will. To Canadians, a cultural summit would not meet the challenge and in many cases the existing Agency already covered the waterfront. Canada agreed that a summit which would focus only on North-South issues would duplicate efforts carried out elsewhere, while fueling undue expectations that could never be met entirely. Its approach was comprehensive and global: Canada wanted a summit that would have a strong political dimension and a macro-economic component in addition to an examination of cultural co-operation and development issues. In the end, this was the formula agreed to for the Paris Summit.

Prime Minister Mulroney led the Canadian delegation as a whole. The provincial premiers acted as "interested observers" in the discussions on political and economic issues and as "active participants" in the discussions on cultural co-operation in general and on development.

The role of President Mitterrand in the launching of the first summit was critical. He