

## **Historical Background**

The Francophonie is a community of peoples who are partially or wholly French speaking. It can also be described as an institutional gathering of organizations and associations, both governmental and private sector, that are involved in dialogue and co-operation using French as their language of communication.

### **Canada's Involvement**

Recognizing the importance of the French fact at home and abroad, Canada became associated with the Francophonie from its beginnings and helped create and develop many of its institutions. Canada was one of the founding members of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation (ACCT) in Niamey, Niger, in 1970, and has played an influential, effective role in it ever since. In fact, Jean-Marc Léger, a Quebec journalist, was the agency's first secretary-general.

The Francophonie has rapidly become an integral part of Canadian foreign policy. The federal government has continually encouraged provinces with a francophone majority, or a substantial francophone minority, to become equally involved in the Francophonie, for the benefit of all Canadians.

### **Institutions**

Canada has maintained a strong presence over the years, as the community of francophone countries established various mechanisms and structures of exchange and dialogue.

The ACCT continues to be the keystone of the Francophonie. It promotes mutual co-operation in education, culture, science and technology, in the interest of forming closer ties through the use of the French language. The ACCT aims to create a new North-South solidarity and spread knowledge about the various francophone cultures. Its current secretary-general is Jean-Louis Roy, a Canadian from Quebec.

During the 1960s, two permanent ministerial conferences — one on education, the other on youth and sports — were created to contribute to the socio-economic development of the member countries.

The Francophone Games, along with cultural events, are held about every four years. The third Games are to take place in Africa in 1997. Canada shows support by providing annual or one-time subsidies and by loaning staff to several professional and educational organizations, both para-governmental and private sector.