

no organ of self-determination and self-expression could be created.

Is our vision too broad when we say that La Francophonie must be complete in every respect and must reach its full potential as an influence on the world scene? I don't think so. In any case, we are following in the footsteps of the Senghors and the Bourguibas. And this is a response to the recent invitation of President Mitterrand, who in Rwanda said: "I would be very pleased if you introduced me as an architect of La Francophonie." France, which has always been present in our midst, is not accustomed to withdrawing from a challenge, even a formidable one, although it might take little interest in something mediocre.

#### Achievements

But let us now change our tone from one of speculation about the future to a consideration of the present reality, from grandiose projects to some very concrete achievements, that have already occurred. In the vast but specific area that its founders assigned to it, the Agency has been working for 12 years. I first want to consider how far we have come and to congratulate all those who have contributed to the important work of cultural and technical co-operation over these 12 years. From experience I can say that when you're involved in something, it is not easy to objectively gauge successes and failures, progress and setbacks. When all you have ahead of you is the goal and it seems to be getting farther and farther away, you run the risk of minimizing what you have already accomplished and of seeing as insurmountable the obstacles that crop up in the path ahead.

When viewed from the outside, it is clear that the Agency has come a long way. It has become an important place of assembly and reflection. It has given a start to many new projects. It has often spearheaded urgent activities in teaching and other fields, among countries requiring assistance. It has been responsible for establishing thousands of contacts among the young people of its member countries and has contributed toward their education. Through it hundreds of young and not so young people have become involved in specific international co-operation activities. It is not afraid to ask questions about itself and its role. This is a sign of health and is the best protection against stagnation.

Does the Agency receive criticism? Probably. But today what international organization is immune to the skepticism of the restless age in which we live? It is typical of our time that all the multilateral institutions are subject to the most bitter criticism. Perhaps it is paradoxically because the need for them has never been more obvious and because people expect them to do the impossible.

When questions are asked about the Agency, as one might expect after ten years of operation, it is the duty of all its member states and participating or associate governments to reply. I shall attempt to do so here in all modesty and with good will.

*First of all, considering its role, I will make a few observations that I hope will be useful.*

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