

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



CIDA Photo: J. M. Carisse

H.E. Mrs. NGUYEN THI BINH, Vice-President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Mr. JACQUES CHIRAC, President of the French Republic, H.E. Mr. NICÉPHORE DIEUDONNÉ SOLGLO, President of the Republic of Bénin, and the Right Honourable JEAN CHRÉTIEN, Prime Minister of Canada.

Canada also takes part in two standing conferences: the Conference of Ministers of Education (CONFEMEN) and the Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers (CONFESJES).

Since 1986, the Francophone movement has gained new momentum thanks to six conferences of heads of state and government of countries using French as a common language. These are now commonly known as the "Francophone Summits". Canada hosted the second Summit in Quebec City, which followed the Paris Summit and preceded the Dakar Summit, and has been actively involved in all phases of the Summit process. The Summit conferences have been held in Paris (1986), Quebec City (1987), Dakar (1989), Chaillot (1991), Mauritius (1993) and most recently, Cotonou (1995).

Canadian participation in La Francophonie at the multilateral level is indicative of Canada's desire to project its image clearly on the international

scene. Furthermore, this effort to bring the Francophone community closer together is of interest not only to the federal government, but to all Canadians.

Canada holds an enviable position on the international stage: not only is it a member of the major organizations of the international community, but its linguistic duality and cultural richness make it a partner that is in demand, both in the Commonwealth and in La Francophonie.

For Canada, membership in La Francophonie thus means being part of the great network of 49 countries and

governments that have the French language in common. It also means demonstrating to the rest of the world the special nature of our Canadian existence and opening up for Francophone Canadians and Francophiles a window on the world and opportunities for influence in this broad grouping of countries in every major region of the world.

Quebec plays a leading role in the international community of La Francophonie, and the governments of the other provinces with a significant Francophone population also participate actively. Thus in 1970 the representatives of four provinces (Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Manitoba) took part in the founding conference of the ACCT. Canada has the status of member state in La Francophonie, while Quebec and New Brunswick are recognized as participating governments.