

FRANCOPHONE SUMMITS

D) THE ROAD TO THE HANOI SUMMIT

1) La Francophonie Prepares to Travel the Information Highways

It can be said that the Summit era marked the decisive step in La Francophonie's turn to modernity. The international television channel, TV-5, audiovisual production by southern countries, distance training with CIFEAD, the development of telecommunications and scientific information through the BIEF have all appeared in the French-speaking countries. A new chapter has just opened: that of information highways.

The information highway is characterized by the convergence of technologies, the multidirectionality of exchanges and universality of access. It is giving direction to the development of information and communications technologies and industries, which are viewed as the very foundation of the new world economy.

The convergence of communications and informatics will transform every aspect of life: education, health, work, business, entertainment. The information highway, which eliminates distance and isolation, can be a tool of development for the individual and for society. For this reason, at the February 1995 Summit on the Information Society, the G7 ministers emphasized the need to promote the cultural development of all their citizens through the information highway by encouraging universality, an affordable price, equity and free access to a variety of communications content.

Within La Francophonie, the importance of the availability of a tool for exchanging information and knowledge in French has often been emphasized. The urgency of taking action to ensure that French is a language of technology, of work, of training and of professional, scientific and technical information on electronic networks was realized.

A number of principles underlie the development of a Francophone space open to the world. They include respect for the plurality of human experience and the variety of its manifestations; the democratization of access to information, which will lead societies and citizens to become active participants and not simply consumers of information products; the acceleration of development; access to higher education, to trade and cultural products, etc.



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