

Mr. Chairman,

You know the importance that Canada attaches to consultation among Heads of State and governments that share the use of French regarding major current political and economic problems. Canada belongs to numerous international bodies such as La Francophonie, the Commonwealth, the Cairns Group on Agriculture, the large multilateral organizations of the United Nations and most regional political, economic and financial institutions. This close-knit network of institutional ties convinces us that senior-level consultation among leaders from the most diverse backgrounds, but with a deep concern for the common good, is vital to the progress of humanity.

Thus, with each successive Summit -- we are already about to begin our fourth -- our Heads of State and governments have acquired the habit of, and an affinity for, discussing and defining common positions within La Francophonie. They have learned to know and appreciate the different viewpoints of all parties concerned on issues of major importance, and I do not think that it is incorrect to say that a growing consensus of opinion is emerging among the countries and peoples of La Francophonie. This is healthy and even essential at a time when major balances of power are being questioned and when both new opportunities and new dangers are emerging on the horizon.

It is an honour for me to present an outline of the economic situation that we will be submitting to the attention of our Heads of State. I take particular pleasure in doing so since the texts before you are the result of the joint efforts of experts from many of the countries represented in this room.

The phenomenon of globalization, or global economic interdependence, is radically changing the nature of relations between developed and developing countries. There are contradictory trends in the economic developments that we are witnessing, and we must step back a little if we truly wish to alter the course of history in favour of the developing countries.

The global economic situation is a paradoxical one. The developing world has made considerable progress in the past 30 years; income, consumption, life expectancy and education improved between 1965 and 1985, while infant mortality declined. Yet more than a billion people still live in poverty today, and this brutal, almost indecent, statistic does not exclude the francophone countries of the South. It is also accompanied by a host of familiar evils such as food shortages, debt, destruction of the environment and unsustainable rates of population growth.