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Overview

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# Canada and la Francophonie

## La Francophonie

Despite the many differences between them, la Francophonie is best understood by drawing a parallel with the much better-known Commonwealth. As is particularly well-known in Canada, the Commonwealth is a unique voluntary association linking 48 independent nations across the globe, bringing together developed and developing countries, old states and new, tiny island nations and continental land-masses, representing a total of one billion people.

The centrepiece of the Commonwealth is the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), a club characterized by friendly informality that has provided moral and practical leadership on many of the major issues of the day, including South Africa, international economic order, and development questions. The most recent CHOGM took place in Vancouver in October 1987.

Canada has always been one of the Commonwealth's strongest supporters and considers it a model of multilateralism at work. The Commonwealth cuts across traditional regional and interest blocs, which makes it an ideal instrument to expand North-South dialogue and broaden international understanding and consensus. The Commonwealth enables Canada to deepen its bilateral relations with 47 countries and to reinforce its foreign policy aims as a whole.

Many of these same functions are also a part of la Francophonie, but Canada's approach to their implementation often takes a very different form.

For a long time, la Francophonie has been perceived exclusively from a linguistic point of view. Even today it escapes a ready-made definition and a precise geographic delimitation.

La Francophonie is, first of all, a community of individuals and peoples using the French language to varying degrees, and it has to be



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