



Statements and Speeches

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REVIEW OF CANADA'S ROLE IN LA FRANCOPHONIE

A Speech by the Honourable Pierre De Bané, Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, Ottawa, June 15, 1981

...Canada has played a basic role and continues to be at the forefront of the creation, support and implementation of...co-operation and dialogue among the peoples and nations which make up the international francophone community. Canada has acted and continues to act jointly and simultaneously both multilaterally and bilaterally with all these countries which share the French language as a means of communication.

This expression of closer ties, co-operation and mutual assistance required in a world of complex and interdependent relationships in all its human and technical aspects has led to the creation on the international level of many intergovernmental institutions, of which the most important is the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation, without forgetting the annual conference of ministers of education and that of the ministers of youth and sports, as well as to the creation of non-governmental organizations and associations which are also very active in the international francophone movement.

The Canadian government has been very active within the francophone community from its very beginnings. It has played a major role in the creation and development of its many institutions since the 1960s. The development of the French fact in Canada and its extension externally has been a profound motivation for Canadian involvement. The extension of Canadian bilingualism on an international level and the participation of Canada in the international French-speaking community are a fundamental and permanent element of its foreign policy. The existence and vitality of French-language Canadians provide a means and an opportunity to develop relationships and bonds of solidarity and co-operation with many countries in Europe, Africa, the Near East, Oceania, North America and Asia, which for a diversity of historical reasons and to various degrees, use French as their language of communication. The same can be said about the opportunities for fruitful contacts and exchanges with a great many countries throughout these same continents which, like the English-speaking community of Canada, speak the language of Shakespeare. It seems to me that for a young and dynamic country, Canada is placed in an exceptional situation by having what could be described as natural bonds of understanding with more than half the countries of the world.

In this context, we have established a network of bilateral diplomatic representation with all French-speaking countries. We have developed with them an important program of co-operation for development purposes. We have initiated a political dialogue on major international issues and we have finally become members of all multilateral French-speaking organizations.