

In 1968, the first steps were taken towards establishing La Francophonie. The initiative came from leaders of the African and Malagasi Community who wanted to inaugurate an annual Conference of Francophone Heads of State.

Two years later, the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation (ACCT) was established, and a Canadian, Jean-Marc Léger, was appointed its Secretary-General. (Another Canadian, Arnold Smith, had recently been appointed first Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.)

Canada's Role

Canada has been associated with La Francophonie from the outset, in the creation and development of its various institutions. The flourishing French culture in Canada and its broad international significance have provided considerable motivation for Canadian involvement.

This involvement represents an international extension of Canada's bilingualism policy and constitutes a basic, permanent component of its foreign policy. In seeking to enhance the rich diversity of Canada, the federal government promotes French culture both domestically and abroad, striving to promote the utilization of French as a means of communication, cooperation and understanding between the peoples who use it in varying degrees. To this end, it has established a system of bilateral diplomatic representation with all Francophone countries, produced an extensive development cooperation program, initiated a political dialogue on major international issues and has become a member of all governmental multilateral francophone organizations, in particular the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation (ACCT) and two annual conferences: the Conference of Education Ministers (CONFEMEN) and the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports (CONFESJES).

Contribution of the Provincial Governments

The attempt to strengthen Francophone ties not only involves the federal government, but is the concern of many Canadians. Quebec took an early interest in La Francophonie and the federal government has encouraged the governments of the other provinces with large Francophone populations to become actively