

Fostering Co-operation through la Francophonie

Paris Summit

In February 1986, the first "Conference of Heads of State and Heads of Government of countries using French as a common language" was held in Paris, France. This long-awaited historic event gave new impetus to international co-operation in matters concerning the French language, and gave Francophone countries an international forum where political, economic, social, technical or cultural matters could be debated. The Paris summit was recognized as a resounding success with Canada demonstrating its leadership ability in seeking a consensus on a number of issues.

Forty-one heads of state and government attended the 1986 summit at which Prime Minister Brian Mulroney led the Canadian delegation. Two provincial premiers — Robert Bourassa of Quebec, where French is spoken by the majority of the population, and Richard Hatfield of New Brunswick, an officially bilingual province — attended as representatives of participating governments.

Prime Minister Mulroney was one of six leaders to speak at the opening ceremonies of the summit. He welcomed the active participation of the two provincial premiers and said that Canada's commitment to *la francophonie* "meets a fundamental requirement of our national life." Through it, "the entire breadth and depth of the French-speaking community is offered to the Francophones of Quebec and the other provinces."

Mr. Mulroney underlined that the positive impact of belonging to la Francophonie goes beyond Canada's French-speaking population. All Canadians benefit from expanded cultural and trade relations with these countries.

The prime minister also stressed that North-South co-operation must be increased and that use of the French language must be extended into scientific and technical communication.

Canadian Initiatives in Paris

At the Paris summit, Canada announced a number of new initiatives to help Third World Francophone countries:

- a scholarship program designed to give students in Francophone countries an opportunity to study in Canadian universities, and to specialize in areas of knowledge and research to which the Paris summit accorded priority status. Canada allocated \$30 million to this five-year program;
- a technical training assistance program for the petroleum and gas industry. Canada allocated \$10 million to this five-year program;
- a world immunization program to which Canada contributed \$10 million; and
- an experimental communications network to broadcast medical and educational programs to developing countries.

In addition, Canada embarked on a program of communications, language and software co-operation.

The summit concluded with an agreement to hold the second Francophone summit in Quebec City within two years.

Quebec Summit

The second summit of Heads of State and Government of French-speaking countries will be held in Quebec City September 2 to 4, 1987. Canada, as the host country, together with the Government of Quebec, is jointly organizing this summit.

Canada's Ambassador to France, Mr. Lucien Bouchard, Chairperson of the Summit Organization Committee, will be the personal representative (sherpa) of the prime minister.

Undoubtedly, the same spirit that characterized the Paris summit will prevail at the Quebec one. Canada will pursue the considerable efforts initiated during the first summit and will attempt to

sustain the determination to co-operate previously expressed by all participants.

As the 1987 summit host, and in view of its leading role at the Paris summit, Canada will be looked upon to encourage consensus and cohesion among summit partners. As Madame Monique Landry pointed out at a preliminary meeting of the Organizing Committee of the Francophone summit:

"All the participants already see our contribution to the meeting of Francophone countries as extremely important, since we bring a new outlook. . . free of all preconceptions and forward-looking. We believe. . . that as a North American country with a unique cultural identity we are naturally equipped to develop practical and realistic projects."

Member states of
la Francophonie.

