



FROM KANANASKIS TO BEIRUT

Canada at the Francophonie Summit

This October 18 to 20 in Beirut, Lebanon, the ninth Francophonie Summit brought together the leaders of 55 states and governments representing 625 million people who use French as a common language. They discussed international issues relevant to Francophones all over the world, and promoted La Francophonie's vision of a diverse global society.

Since its first summit in Paris in 1986, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie has become a key multilateral forum for political dialogue and exchange, and for mobilizing resources in support of cooperation in the French-speaking world.

La Francophonie sees open dialogue as the key to a global society where diverse identities can flourish to the benefit of all. With members representing a broad spectrum of nations and cultures from Europe, North and sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, North America, and the Caribbean, La Francophonie strives for open, pluralistic approaches to culture, and it actively promotes respect for minorities and tolerance. It champions a vision of a cohesive complementarity of cultures rather than one dominant culture.

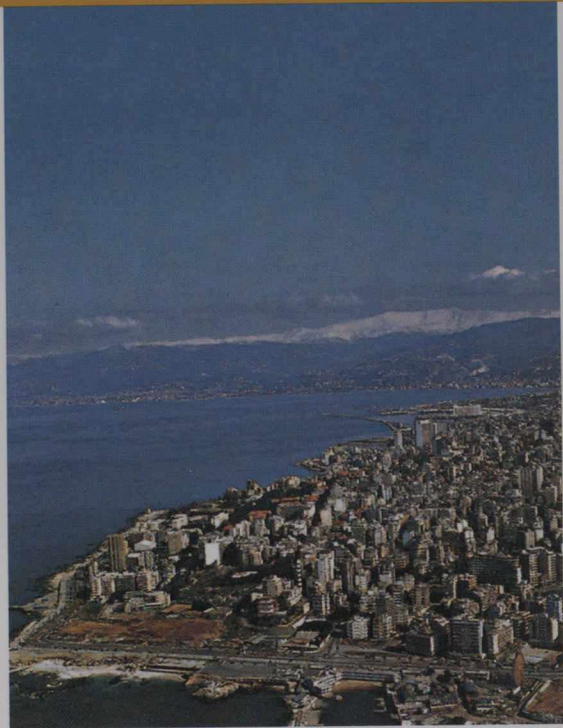
A vision of cultural diversity

The theme for the Beirut Summit was "The Dialogue of Cultures." It was explored within a wide range of political and economic discussions. In addition, proposals were tabled on programs to open the lines of

communication between member states and beyond. Attending on behalf of Canada were Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage, and Denis Paradis, Secretary of State for Latin America, Africa and La Francophonie.

Prime Minister Chrétien said in a recently published article, "La Francophonie was the very first international organization to conduct an in-depth examination of the need for promoting cultural diversity. The Beirut Summit theme will enable heads of state and government to go still further in a dialogue on understanding, acceptance and reconciliation between different cultures; and this will help to avoid more tragedies like that of September 2001, which still is making its mark on us."

Adds Secretary of State Paradis, "The broad range of cultures that make up La Francophonie and the common use of the French language lead its members to work together both politically and economically, making La Francophonie a true model of cultural diversity. Canada's commitment to multiculturalism and



Overlooking the Mediterranean Sea—Beirut, the capital of Lebanon and site of the ninth Francophonie Summit

photos: courtesy Embassy of Lebanon, Ottawa (Ministry of Tourism)



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our rich and dynamic French culture place us in an important and privileged position in this dialogue of cultures in La Francophonie, which enabled us to make a valuable contribution to the discussions at the Beirut Summit."

Canada's contribution

Canada's involvement in La Francophonie is one of the main thrusts of this country's foreign policy. Our participation reflects our country's linguistic duality and commitment to a unique, modern and diverse Francophone community within our borders. Our membership offers an