

Conflict Prevention and the Francophonie

The Canadian Approach

At the ministerial meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in December 1994, Canada invited the Francophonie to an international meeting on conflict prevention.

At that meeting, which took place in Ottawa last September, participants learned that the Francophonie is already working to prevent conflict and build peace through programs of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation and the International Association of French-Speaking Parliamentarians. Foremost among the activities are promotion of democratic practices and strengthening the constitutional state.

The recent crises in Rwanda and Burundi, among others, have once again highlighted how important it is for the Francophonie to strengthen the ability of its political bodies to react quickly to prevent or resolve conflicts over major international issues. This does not mean developing mechanisms that already exist in other bodies; rather it is a matter of urging the francophone movement to make a greater commitment to combat factors of instability.

In the declaration to be issued at the Cotonou Summit, Canada hopes participants will reaffirm the Chailot and Mauritius summit positions on the indissolubility of democracy, the constitutional state, and fundamental rights. Canada also hopes that the Cotonou Declaration will affirm the importance of stability and peace as key conditions for sustainable development.

As well, Canada will call on the permanent council of the Francophonie to speak out more on security and conflict prevention issues and take moderate action on prevention and resolution of specific situations. Canada will also ask members of the Francophonie to support the Organization of African Unity and other regional organizations that can help resolve conflicts threatening the African continent.

Further to the commitments it made at the Mauritius Summit and the deliberations at the meeting last September in Ottawa, Canada has helped draft a resolution on conflict prevention and international security. It also proposes to take action in support of the Cotonou Declaration and resolution.

In light of the prevailing situation in Burundi, Canada proposes that an informal contact group be established to stimulate consultation and the search for peaceful solutions to that country's problems. Canada also suggests setting up roundtable discussions on regional security, so interested countries can discuss conditions conducive to stability within their own territory and within