

has spent since last April on emergency assistance for the Rwandan people.

In light of the tragic events I have just mentioned, La Francophonie has a duty to examine ways that it might attack the root causes of such conflicts, instead of deploring their effects... La Francophonie must try to contribute to the prevention of conflicts.

Mr. President, let me once again quote Léopold Sédar Senghor, this time a remark that he made at Université Laval in Quebec in 1966: "La Francophonie is a way of thinking and acting, a certain way of formulating problems and seeking solutions to them." I think that we should draw inspiration from this thought even today, if we wish to prevent conflicts and give La Francophonie a new dimension.

Together, we surely have vast reserves of creativity and imagination. Why shouldn't we be able to draw on these many varied resources to try to eliminate evils before new crises erupt? Special services already exist to protect harvests against bad weather and pests. Why couldn't La Francophonie create services through which countries who request it could receive the help of "sages" — conciliators and peacemakers who would work to reduce the causes of tension and violence? Providing such services is one concrete way that La Francophonie could respond to the urgent appeals made by the UN Secretary-General to institutions such as ours in his *Agenda for Peace*.

As the Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chrétien, declared in his recent speech to the French Senate: "If La Francophonie wishes to establish its authority, it will have to strengthen its ability to intervene politically and acquire some instruments of preventive diplomacy," because "without such instruments, it will be a mere figurehead." I therefore propose that, in co-operation with the United Nations and the Organization for African Unity (OAU), we organize a meeting of senior officials and specialists in preventive diplomacy, to be held in Canada. The purpose of this meeting would be to define a process for preventing conflicts in French-speaking countries. This process would then be presented at the next Francophone Summit, in Cotonou. The meeting in Canada would also provide the opportunity to prepare a Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of La Francophonie on the Prevention of Conflicts. Canada is prepared to facilitate the participation of representatives who would otherwise be unable to attend this meeting.

Mr. President and respected colleagues, the economic and social problems that many of our countries face do not make the headlines as often as armed conflicts do. But that does not make these problems any less pressing.