

THE DELEGATION BE SUBSTANTIAL AND THAT A MINISTER OF THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT ASSUME THE VICE-CHAIRMANSHIP. WE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THERE BE QUEBEC REPRESENTATIVES -- AND I BELIEVE WE ARE AGREED ON THIS POINT -- IN THE MAIN BODIES OF THE AGENCY, THAT IS, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

YOU EXPRESS SURPRISE THAT WE WANTED TO CHANGE THE AD HOC ARRANGEMENT WHICH PREVAILED ON VOTING AT PREVIOUS CONFERENCES, SO AS TO ADAPT IT TO A NEW SITUATION. FIRST, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE PREVIOUS CONFERENCES PROCEEDED BY WAY OF CONSENSUS, NOT BY VOTE, WHEREAS THE COMING CONFERENCE (AS WELL AS THE ENTIRE OPERATION OF THE AGENCY) WILL BE GOVERNED STRICTLY BY VOTE. IN ADDITION, THE PROCEDURE PROVIDES THAT AN ABSTENTION IS EQUIVALENT TO A FAVOURABLE VOTE, WHICH MEANS THAT THE COMPULSORY ABSTENTION WHICH YOU PROPOSE IN THE EVENT OF DISAGREEMENT WITHIN THE DELEGATION WOULD AT TIMES DEPRIVE CANADA, ALONE AMONG ALL THE PARTICIPANTS, OF ITS RIGHT TO VETO MEASURES WHICH MIGHT AFFECT ITS ESSENTIAL INTERESTS, AND IN REGARD TO CANADA'S FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE AGENCY, WHICH COULD BE IN THE MILLIONS WITHIN A FEW YEARS.

IN PRACTICE, IT SEEMS TO ME WISE FOR THE CANADIAN DELEGATION TO ABSTAIN IN CASE OF DISAGREEMENT ON MATTERS WHICH LIE WITHIN THE EXCLUSIVE DOMESTIC COMPETENCE OF THE PROVINCES: THIS WILL NO DOUBT BE POSSIBLE AND DESIRABLE IN THE VAST MAJORITY OF CASES. BUT, HOWEVER USEFUL ABSTENTION MAY BE IN RESOLVING CERTAIN POSSIBLE DIFFERENCES, IT MUST NOT PARALYZE CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY, OR ITS POLICIES ON ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION. HENCE, THE EFFORT WE HAVE MADE TO RENDER OUR AGREEMENT ON VOTING MORE PRECISE.

HOWEVER, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT AN AD HOC AND PURELY PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENT FOR THE COMING NIAMEY CONFERENCE, PROVIDED EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO CLARIFY THIS POINT EXPLICITLY IN FUTURE, AND WITH THE FULL KNOWLEDGE THAT IT MAY GIVE RISE, WITHIN THE DELEGATION, TO SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES OF INTERPRETATION AT THE CONFERENCE. THIS IS BASED ON THE PRIOR ASSUMPTION THAT THE QUESTION OF VOTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLIES OF THE AGENCY WOULD BE LEFT OPEN. I THEREFORE SUGGEST TO YOU THE FOLLOWING TEXT: