

that from its origins embraced all the francophone communities throughout the world and all the countries in which they were found, regardless of whether they were entirely or partly French-speaking, provided that French played an important role in them. In this respect we are near the goal. Despite a few setbacks in our efforts to bring everybody together, despite some unfavourable circumstances and some misconceptions that are still preventing some francophone countries from joining us, we must not lose sight of our initial objective of universality. From a historical viewpoint, the setbacks that we have suffered so far are negligible. We are still at the very beginning of the adventure. Reality has its constraints that cannot be ignored, but I am sure that time will become our ally, provided that our will and our resolution remain equal to our design. What we are building is not a scale model; we want the real thing.

Two basic realities

We will also remain faithful to the concepts of unity and diversity inspired by the originators of this project. They have to do with two basic realities – the community of language on the one hand, and the extreme diversity that characterizes all the francophone countries on the other. La Francophonie internationale transcends regional, ideological, ethnic, religious, cultural and economic barriers; it is represented on many continents; it exists apart from all the groupings of states that so strongly characterize the international scene today. We do not need to complain about this, nor to act as if these differences did not exist between us, or even less to launch into some absurd endeavour to make us all the same. On the contrary, we are aware of the richness that lies within this diversity. In it we see a challenge that we accept with enthusiasm, convinced that in working to meet it, we shall release useful energy which today is held captive by ignorance and distrust, and we shall find treasures we did not know existed.

Our ambition is to initiate a free dialogue between partners who are quite different from one another but who are all equal as individuals, and to set up direct exchanges without intermediaries – not even interpreters – between non-aligned and aligned states, between former colonial powers and former colonies, between representatives of very diverse cultures with their beginnings, centuries apart from one another, between nations in Africa, Europe, America and Asia, between members of the Arab League and members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and between developing countries and industrial countries.

A unique entity

In the divided world in which we live, this ambition alone should be sufficient to mobilize those of us who wish to bring people together. We cannot remain indifferent to anything that contributes to unity or that builds bridges between peoples. Although much ground must still be covered, the francophone community is a unique entity and an eminently favourable influence which can bring about the cohesiveness we are all seeking and the co-operation that must exist if there is to be harmony among nations. Founded on undeniable natural affinities, on mutual respect and negotiation, the francophone community is not an intruder amidst the institutions that have
