

as the United Nations.

It is also the most commonly taught language after English. Approximately 25 million students around the world learn it with the help of 250 000 French teachers.

Some of the best recent French-language books were written in Africa, Quebec, and the United States. And contact with diverse traditions and languages is enriching the French language and culture.

However, many francophones warn that, faced with the popularity of English and the dominance of American popular culture in music, films and television, the future of the French language is in danger. Some of the efforts of La Francophonie, therefore, are to support the use of French in scientific fields and to hold French-language film festivals.

Originally, the French language helped bring far-flung colonies under French rule. Today, the leaders of countries where French is spoken use the fact that they share this language as a reason for collaborating in order to strengthen each other.

La Francophonie is a community, based on a common language, which believes in the unity and diversity of cultures. In 1985, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then Egyptian minister of foreign affairs (and now Secretary General of the United Nations) called French "the language of non-alignment."

Leopold Sedar Senghor, the former president of Senegal, and one of the first leaders to push for summit meetings, said that French isn't just a practical common language for use in administration and education. Senghor defined the French language as "a way of thinking and of action: a certain way of asking the question and of finding solutions...thanks to a language which contains all the richness of centuries."

