

As a French-speaking country, thanks to one of its two great cultures and one of its two official languages, Canada ought to welcome this idea warmly. I spoke on this subject in the House of Commons on October 24 last year when I said:

"... the Canadian Government fully supports the idea of developing closer links and more exchanges, particularly in the cultural and related fields, with those countries which, like Canada, share the heritage of the French language and culture.

It is the policy of the Canadian Government to give full expression, in its international relations, to the bilingual and bicultural character of our country. The development of our ties with the 'Francophone' countries, which we have pursued vigorously over the last few years, represents a new and valuable dimension of Canadian diplomacy. We wish, more particularly, to participate actively in any effort to find an effective framework for further co-operation among 'Francophone' states."

It is only natural that our country should play an active role in the linguistic community of French-speaking states. The advantages will add to those we already draw from our Commonwealth membership. As you know, our country has established many close links with our Commonwealth partners. A very high proportion of our external aid is directed to developing countries of the Commonwealth. Thanks to a programme of co-operation in the field of education, a great many Commonwealth citizens come to study in Canada every year, while a significant number of English and French-speaking Canadians go to other countries of the Commonwealth. We participate in the activities of many co-ordinating or consultative bodies, such as the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

This list will give you an idea of what we are achieving within the Commonwealth, for the benefit of all Canadians, including French-Canadians. In the same spirit, the Canadian Government has undertaken during the past few years to strengthen and develop our ties with the French-speaking countries of the world and particularly with France, one of our mother countries.

Canada did not wait for the recent suggestions about "La Francophonie" in order to develop bilateral relations with the French-speaking countries of Europe, Africa and Asia. Our efforts in that direction should make our participation in "La Francophonie" much easier. I should like to describe some of the initiatives we have taken. I hope these examples will illustrate our increasing activity and the intensified effort which Canada is making towards the French-speaking countries.

Our bilateral relations have developed particularly with France. The visit which the Prime Minister and I made to France in January 1964 was a turning-point. On this occasion, General de Gaulle and Mr. Pearson agreed on the principles of broad co-operation at all levels between the two countries.