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And now we are on the point of being able to balance those advantages with an exciting undertaking among French speaking nations. Participation in La Francophonie provides us with a forum in which expression can be given to Canada's other major linguistic entity. Thus it constitutes another vital element in Canada's international relations. La Francophonie stands to provide a similarly dynamic link between the almost 40 nations with which we share the French language. The participants in La Francophonie are not brought together by a common history or political tradition, as are the Commonwealth nations. They are, however, joined by a shared linguistic heritage and a belief that it is through joint endeavour and co-operation that the people from both North and South can best search for solutions to the problems of today's increasingly interdependent world.

We in Canada are familiar with cultural, linguistic and regional diversity. We regard it as a source of our richness and our strength. It is my hope that at our meeting in Paris later this month, Francophone leaders will draw inspiration from our diversity, enjoy a productive dialogue and give new impetus to closer and greater co-operation.

It is our own life as a nation which will be the first to benefit from a successful Summit. I have committed my government to work for national reconciliation. We are pursuing this goal by initiating and maintaining a dialogue with the provinces, and particularly, through the enhanced growth and development of Francophone Canada. It is, of course, not possible to speak of the French Canadian Community without recognizing the pre-eminent position and role of Québec. It is there that the Francophone community first put down roots in North America, fought for survival and progressed, and succeeded, with the support of a provincial government exercising its own powers, in displaying its abilities in every area of internal activity.

The troubled course of the relationship between Québec and Ottawa during recent years introduced an element of tension, with respect to both France-Canada relations and the participation of Ottawa and Québec in the international Francophone activities. But it was not all negative. On the contrary, with the agreement of the federal government Québec was, as early as 1971, admitted to the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation as a participating government. It also agreed, as of 1978, to be represented in the Agency together with New Brunswick. I see as part of this continuing evolution the statement of the new Québec Minister of Federal-Provincial affairs to the conference held in Paris on December 14 last, in

preparation for the Summit, in which he expressed his pride at sitting with the representatives of New Brunswick.

But it was necessary to relax the tension in the relations between Ottawa, Paris and Québec. Therefore, in November 1984, during the official visit of Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, I recognized, on behalf of the federal government, the legitimacy of direct relations between Québec and Paris, on the understanding that the Canadian constitutional framework would be respected.

With regard to La Francophonie, my government has called on all its resources in order to work out a generous compromise which would enable the Premier of Québec to attend a Francophone summit. With the same open-mindedness, and in accordance with the model already established in the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation, we have reached a similar understanding with the government of New Brunswick.

During these negotiations we had to ensure the maintenance of Canadian unity and respect for the Constitution. For the government of Canada must fulfil its international obligations and play its part in the protection of minorities and the affirmation of their linguistic rights. But we recognized the point of view put forward by the government of Québec, and we agreed that the Summit proceedings must accommodate the specific reality which Québec represents as the mainstay of Canada's Francophone community. We therefore insisted that Premier Bourassa must be able to deliver a major speech at the public closing session.

The government of Canada has also decided to invite the other Francophone countries to hold the next Summit in Québec City. Premier Bourassa and I will seek to persuade our colleagues in the community to accept this invitation. If we succeed, the announcement that the next Summit will be held in Québec City will be made by Premier Bourassa in his closing speech.

I am proud to have played my part in resolving these questions in a manner which, while guaranteeing Canadian sovereignty and unity, gives Francophone Canadians unparalleled access to the world Francophone community.