

the organ of la Francophonie for addressing conflicts, that this issue should appear regularly on its agenda, and that steps should be taken to provide the funds required to carry out effective action.

La Francophonie cannot take the place of the OAU; similarly the OAU aims not to take the place of the African sub-regional organizations but to support them. Valuable input can be provided from experiments conducted over the years at both these levels, taking the OAU into account as well as organizations such as ECOWAS and the SADCC and agreements such as the ANAD. To go a step further, there are some important needs that la Francophonie could help to meet by supporting the organizations mentioned, in particular the Mechanism.

The needs pertain to finances, of course, but also to training and the exchange of expertise. Already, within the OAU Mechanism, work is being done to build a data bank identifying resource persons. Added to this must be a "typology" of conflicts — a system for categorizing them, including conflicts now occurring. In this system the files describing member countries might contain unflattering references, thereby perhaps creating tensions between the OAU and the countries in question; and so it might be preferable to have an outside agency prepare the files.

On another level, la Francophonie can convey values. Those of its members that are signatories to the Bretton Woods agreements might consider methods of easing Africa's debt load and promoting an appropriate way of sharing the benefits of growth. La Francophonie could again look at the promotion of a culture of peace, the importance of good governance, or the restructuring required in African armies; and it could disseminate the results of its deliberations. In a word, it could help Africa build itself.

The OAU and the various sub-regional organizations have already shown that they are sometimes capable of successful mediation. Reference was made to conflicts avoided through mediations freely accepted and even requested by the parties involved. However, one cannot impose peace, serve as a mediator or, even less, win compliance with the resolutions adopted in these matters unless the parties involved agree to place their trust in the organizations offering to assist. While preventive policies are always appropriate, preventive diplomacy needs the consent of the parties to the conflict.

Intervention must be considered in connection with the need to prevent the outbreak of conflicts that might spill over the borders of the countries within which they arise. In this regard, participants expressed interest in the experience of the OSCE's High Commissioner for National Minorities.

Since the Helsinki Accords of 20 years ago, the signatory countries have recognized the right to express concern about each other's domestic affairs. The position of High Commissioner was created out of the conviction that conflicts between ethnic groups or national minorities can spread from one country to another. The High Commissioner can act with considerable independence; he can take initiatives to defuse