

FRANCOPHONE SUMMITS

THE FIRST SIX SUMMITS

There have been six Summits since 1986. They have been occasions for a remarkable mobilization of resources and energy, to compensate for the lack of an organizational structure, such as that of the Commonwealth Secretariat, to support this type of enterprise. Instead, the heads of state have chosen the "personal representatives" formula to implement their decisions. For the occasion, these representatives make up a council, which since the Chaillot Summit has become the Permanent Council of La Francophonie (CPF). The flexibility and efficiency of this formula has made it possible to very quickly assemble resources that would otherwise be impossible.

The Summits have thus drastically changed the face of La Francophonie by providing it with a political structure and a new approach to co-operation. This means that, qualitatively, La Francophonie has evolved from a traditionally cultural undertaking to a forum for co-operation in advanced and highly technical fields. Nine activity sectors are considered priorities:

- agriculture
- energy
- environment
- culture and communications
- scientific and technological information
- university research and co-operation
- legal and judicial co-operation
- education and training
- economic development

At the first Summit, held in Paris in 1986, the heads of state established the International Follow-up Committee (CIS) to ensure that the decisions reached at these meetings were implemented. This approach has played a major role in La Francophonie's new vitality. Nevertheless, some aspects of the formula presented drawbacks, for an undertaking cannot survive for long with no structure and no support apart from mere political will.

Furthermore, since most of the Summit projects were highly technical, it was necessary to call upon specialists who were not members of the political bodies. As a result, committees of experts were established and the Agency's powers and prerogatives were gradually extended to take into account the recommendations of experts and to assume a larger role as Secretariat of La Francophonie.

This natural process is now being encouraged politically, since the Agency has undergone the structural reforms and program changes called for by the Summits. Canada was involved in designing and implementing this reform process, conducted through the Commission on the Future of Institutions, a body chaired by Jean-Louis Roy, who was actively supported in his mandate by the Government of Canada, chair of the CIS at the time. This first round of reforms aptly illustrates the rapid changes experienced by the ACCT as a result of the Summits.