

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Québec Summit.

Indeed, meeting officially for the first time here this morning, the Organizing Committee in a manner of speaking is inaugurating the work of the Summit of Heads of Francophone States and Governments.

As Canada's Minister for External Relations, I am very happy today to express the pride we all feel at the prospect of soon being able to welcome Francophones from all over the world to our country.

Your presence here today, Honourable Minister, as well as that of the personal representatives of our prime ministers, Ambassador Lucien Bouchard and Delegate General Jean-Louis Roy, as well as the representative of New Brunswick, Mr. Normand Martin, provides further eloquent proof of the importance we all attach to the success of the Québec Summit.

Simply being gathered here today for the first meeting of the Organizing Committee is already a legitimate reason for pride and satisfaction.

The very existence of this new meeting place known as the Francophone Summit is in itself a major achievement. Only a few years ago, it would have seemed all but impossible.

The policy of national reconciliation pursued by Prime Minister Mulroney is bearing fruit, and today we are working together as responsible partners towards the realization and materialization of a dream very dear to us.

The government of Canada, Quebec and New Brunswick have moved even beyond national reconciliation and have undertaken, on the occasion of this Summit, a genuine process of national consultation. Last February, in Paris, when it enthusiastically proposed the Old Capital as the site for this important international meeting, the Canadian government was intent on involving the governments of Quebec and New Brunswick in the preparation and conduct of the event. The Organizing Committee, meeting this morning for the first time, is the result of a memorandum of understanding signed by Ottawa and Quebec.

.../2