



FRANCOPHONE SUMMITS

EMERGENCE OF THE SUMMITS

It should be recognized in official history that the idea of bringing together the Francophone heads of state and government in a summit emerged long before the first formal meeting organized in 1986 under the auspices of France. In fact, the idea had already been sown in the 1970s, and was promoted by certain heads of state, namely presidents Bourguiba of Tunisia, Diori of Niger and Senghor of Senegal.

In the mid-1980s, the Canadian government entered into a process to enable Quebec to legitimately participate in these conferences while retaining the principle of federal sovereignty in foreign policy. The conclusion of an original arrangement satisfactory to both parties was followed by the announcement of the first Summit in 1986.

Schematically, this arrangement, which still governs the relations of the two Canadian constituents, provides for full participation by Quebec in the co-operation aspect of the Summits, while Canada is reserved the leading role for the political and economic

aspects, in which regard Quebec has "interested observer" status.

THE FIRST FIVE SUMMITS

There have been five 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. In concrete terms, Canada allocates a total budget of over \$40 million annually to La Francophonie, all subsidies included.

The Summits have thus drastically changed the face of La Francophonie, both quanti-