



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

LA FRANCOPHONIE

La Francophonie may be defined as the community of peoples who speak French or use it to varying degrees, either in their own countries or internationally. It can also be viewed as an institutional framework of official and private organizations and associations engaged in areas of activity and interest shared by the community's members. For some years, the term "Francophonie" has been used to describe the movement that is striving to provide an organized framework and functional structures of co-operation and exchange for those whose common language is French.

La Francophonie was founded on the French language, which is regarded above all else as a vehicle for communicating and promoting national cultures and languages. Although countries participating in the various French-speaking institutions usually have a common linguistic and cultural heritage, they are nevertheless not homogeneous from a sociocultural, political or economic viewpoint. Moreover, the diversity of national cultures and languages represented in the Francophone community is a dynamic factor

in the development of La Francophonie and its activities.

Internationally, La Francophonie has its roots in various private French-speaking associations, some of which have existed for more than 40 years. Among the members and, in some cases, the founders of each of these associations are Canadians who, in collaboration with their colleagues in other French-speaking countries, have laid the foundation for the present co-operation among Francophones at the multilateral level.

CANADA AND LA FRANCOPHONIE

Recognizing the importance of the French fact at home as well as its broad international influence, the Canadian Government has associated itself with La Francophonie from the outset, by participating actively in the creation and development of its numerous institutions.

La Francophonie is an integral part of Canadian foreign policy: it is a natural extension of Canada's linguistic configuration on the international scene. Canada is thus a