

PM has high hopes for francophone summit

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The francophone summit should give birth to a new international club, similar to the Commonwealth, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said yesterday.

The summit, which various French governments over the past 20 years have wanted to hold, will bring together some 40 heads of government of French-speaking societies around the world for a three-day meeting in Paris, Feb. 17 to 19.

Speaking to the Montreal Council on International Relations, Mr. Mulroney said that Canada will look at ways that a French-language data bank around the world can be connected, and will be making proposals on telecommunications.

"Only technology can make francophone solidarity something concrete, and bring together scattered populations and their mutual concerns," Mr. Mulroney said.

He said it is essential for the growth of French-speaking societies around the world to develop computer connections.

"Francophones will not have to translate what they invent — the software they develop, the technology they perfect," he said. "In today's world, to fight for the French language is to create jobs for francophones, ensure that they enter modern fields and technologies. And that is what we want to achieve at the francophone summit."

Mr. Mulroney said that the economic development of French-speaking Africa is a crucial condition for the development of a true French-speaking international community.

He called the growth of Canadian ties with the French-speaking world a "vital element in Canada's international relations," which would be of great benefit to Canada's national life.

In the past, discussions over possible summits have broken down because it proved impossible to reach a consensus on the role that Quebec would play.

Mr. Mulroney said that it had been essential to loosen the tension in what he called "Ottawa-Paris-Quebec relations."

"That is why, in November, 1984,

during the official visit of (French) Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, I recognized, in the name of the federal Government, the legitimacy of direct relations between Quebec and Paris, as long as they respected the Canadian constitutional framework."

Mr. Mulroney said that he had worked to achieve a compromise so that Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa could attend the summit, and had reached a similar agreement with New Brunswick.

"What was important during these negotiations was to guarantee Canadian unity and the respect of the Constitution."

Pointing out that Canada has in-

ternational responsibilities and a role to play in the protection of minorities and linguistic rights, Mr. Mulroney said that he had recognized Quebec's point of view "and agreed that the summit should recognize the specific reality of Quebec, anchor point for French-speaking Canada."

Mr. Mulroney said that the Canadian Government insisted that Mr. Bourassa should make what he called "a major intervention" at the closing public session.

"The Canadian Government also has decided to invite the other Francophone countries to hold the next francophone summit in Quebec City," Mr. Mulroney said.