

FRANCOPHONIE

The international Francophonie will celebrate its 25th anniversary this year, its principal institution – the Cultural and Technical Co-operation Agency [ACCT] – having been created in Niamey, Niger, in 1970.

La Francophonie, which was originally created as a cultural organization for promoting the French language, has greatly evolved over the 25 years of its existence.

It has now become, like the Commonwealth or the OAS [Organization of American States], a multilateral forum, constituting an important tool for the conduct of our foreign policy.

Beyond its traditional fields of action, la Francophonie has invested heavily, since the Chaillot Summit, in the area of democratization and the protection of human rights. I believe that la Francophonie is ready to take a new and even greater step in its evolution.

Canada now invites la Francophonie to reflect – during a seminar to be held in Canada next September – on what role it should play in collaboration with the UN and other regional organizations in the area of "preventive diplomacy," given the crises that have shaken two of its members, namely Rwanda and Haiti.

In terms of co-operation, it should be noted that of the 45 member countries and two governments participating in la Francophonie, 38 are developing countries, some among the least developed countries of the planet. La Francophonie, and Canada, are already very active in this regard. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and CIDA are presently engaged in a exercise of review aimed at better co-ordinating our bilateral and multilateral actions in francophone countries.

The next Summit of la Francophonie will be held in early December in Cotonou, Bénin. Canada is participating in the organization of this summit through a financial contribution of \$4 million. More than 75 per cent of this sum will be spent on goods and services in Canada.

I would like to thank the Committee members for their kind attention. I also wish to reiterate my willingness to co-operate fully with the Committee. As I mentioned earlier, our foreign policy review process has not come to an end with the tabling of the Special Committee's report nor the Government's response. It is a process that must continue; I cannot over-emphasize the importance this Government attaches to parliamentary participation.

There are, of course, many other issues that are just as important as those I have addressed here today. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have, or to expand on the topics I have just discussed.

Thank you.