

Moreover, the awareness of sharing certain common aspects of a cultural heritage has scarcely produced a meeting of minds or a harmony of action. These countries are not linked, to the same degree as those of the Commonwealth, by a common past. Because the heritage on which it is founded is cultural, rather than political, La Francophonie cannot be built up on the basis of similar institutions or political behaviour. Its common bonds are all to be found in the values which nourish and shape a culture, in a way of perceiving people and things; and they are expressed in a language which has linked its fate to that of the humanism of which it is one of the fairest ornaments.

I am one who believes that it is unwise to indulge in lyrical flights of fancy about La Francophonie. This community will not be built by mere lofty praise of the greatness of the French language. But we must never forget that this language is the fundamental asset, the catalyst of La Francophonie. It has something which sets it apart. The vast extent of its dissemination has made it the second most important language in the world. It is spoken on five continents, transmitting a rich and admired culture which is the bearer of some of the ideas which have enriched civilization, nourished democracy and liberated peoples. It has been used by thinkers, creators and discoverers. It also happens to be the mother-tongue of 7 million Canadians.

This is the reason why La Francophonie, despite the difficulties it must expect and the doubts it must dispel, manifests increasing vigour.

Faced with the political and economic constraints of national and international realities, the Francophone community has felt the need to define the nature of its mission. It is on the way to asserting itself as a community of countries which use their common language as a basis for the pursuit of common goals, and the creation of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation must be seen as part of this process. Contrary to the commonly held belief, the Agency is not an organization for consolidating the position of French in the world. It is essentially an institution which employs French, its only working language, to encourage a better acquaintance with the national culture of each of its members and to assist the technological development of the states associated with it.

It must, however, be recognized that, if the Francophone community is to be as rich in achievement as one might hope, it must display fresh drive and broaden its outlook. Francophone solidarity must find a level of discussion, a forum and a focus which meet the requirements of the situation. Only then will it be in a position to meet the coming challenges.

While the diversity and dispersion of its members lessen its vigour and cohesion, there is a countervailing force to be found in the political commitment of the senior leaders of each country. The meeting in Paris of some forty heads of states and governments from five continents is, in itself, an encouraging beginning for the new forward thrust of which La Francophonie stands in need.

This conference must go well beyond nostalgic speeches on what La Francophonie has not been and what it might have been. We will only look back to find the source of our solidarity and to draw inspiration from the achievements of La Francophonie. Our eyes will be turned towards the future. Our discussions will be concerned with what we are going to do. It is critically important that this Summit be marked by effective and concrete action. La Francophonie will be a doer of deeds, or it will be nothing.

The measure of this Summit will be its achievements. It must establish precise goals, and identify and implement concrete measures. And to those measures it must attach the necessary budgets.

We must above all avoid arousing expectations which would subsequently be disappointed. The results may be modest, but the essential thing is that there be results, and that they lay the foundation of a Francophonie which is concerned to meet the most pressing needs of the Francophone peoples. The proceedings of the Summit will therefore be the occasion for discussions leading to the establishment of programs of action.

Canada has been given the task of examining ways of linking the Francophone data banks together in a network which will provide access for the member countries. We have also agreed to submit to other heads of state and government recommendations on telecommunication projects matching in scale the dimensions of the Francophone community. For it is technology alone which can give tangible form to Francophone solidarity by meeting the need to establish close contact between widely dispersed peoples and making it possible for them to share their concerns. As can be seen, our participation does not merely reflect a desire to encourage