4. Francophone Summits

4.1 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 germinated in the 1970s and was promoted by certain heads of state, namely presidents Bourguiba of Tunisia, Diori of Niger and Senghor of Senegal.

The particular situation of Canada and the objective difficulties involved in having Quebec participate in an operation which in principle was designed for sovereign states only were, of course, partly responsible for delaying the project's implementation. In the mid-1980s, the Canadian government designed a process to enable Quebec to legitimately participate in these conferences while retaining the principle of federal sovereignty in foreign policy. **Canada's Prime Minister**, The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, took this matter in hand personally and **was primarily responsible for an original arrangement** satisfactory to both parties.

Schematically this arrangement, which still governs the relations of the two Canadian constituents, provides for full co-operation by **Quebec** in the **"co-operation" aspect** of the Summit, while **Canada** reserves the primacy of roles for the **"political and economic"** aspect, Quebec having the status of "interested observer" in this regard.

From this perspective, the personal political will of the Canadian head of government was primarily responsible for making the first Summit possible.

4.2 The First Three Summits

There have been three Summits since 1986. They have been occasions for a remarkable mobilization of resources and energy that compensate for the lack of an organizational structure, such as the Commonwealth Secretariat, to support this kind of enterprise. As an alternative, the heads of state have chosen the "personal representatives" formula to implement their decisions — the establishment of an **"International Follow-up Committee"** (CIS) for each Summit. This approach ensures that post-Summit activities are flexible and can be implemented without unnecessary delay, and makes it possible to quickly assemble resources that would be impossible otherwise.