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Speech by
the Honourable Monique Landry,
Minister for External Relations
on the occasion of the first
meeting of the Organizing
Committee of the Francophone
Summit

QUEBEC

November 3, 1986.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Québec Summit.

Indeed, meeting officially for the first time here this morning, the Organizing Committee in a manner of speaking is inaugurating the work of the Summit of Heads of Francophone States and Governments.

As Canada's Minister for External Relations, I am very happy today to express the pride we all feel at the prospect of soon being able to welcome Francophones from all over the world to our country.

Your presence here today, Honourable Minister, as well as that of the personal representatives of our prime ministers, Ambassador Lucien Bouchard and Delegate General Jean-Louis Roy, as well as the representative of New Brunswick, Mr. Normand Martin, provides further eloquent proof of the importance we all attach to the success of the Québec Summit.

Simply being gathered here today for the first meeting of the Organizing Committee is already a legitimate reason for pride and satisfaction.

The very existence of this new meeting place known as the Francophone Summit is in itself a major achievement. Only a few years ago, it would have seemed all but impossible.

The policy of national reconciliation pursued by Prime Minister Mulroney is bearing fruit, and today we are working together as responsible partners towards the realization and materialization of a dream very dear to us.

The government of Canada, Quebec and New Brunswick have moved even beyond national reconciliation and have undertaken, on the occasion of this Summit, a genuine process of national consultation. Last February, in Paris, when it enthusiastically proposed the Old Capital as the site for this important international meeting, the Canadian government was intent on involving the governments of Quebec and New Brunswick in the preparation and conduct of the event. The Organizing Committee, meeting this morning for the first time, is the result of a memorandum of understanding signed by Ottawa and Quebec.

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The organization of an international meeting of this magnitude is a challenge that we have set for ourselves. Indeed, our two levels of government will have to cooperate as never before. The task will be difficult and the problems no doubt many.

Be that as it may, we must never lose sight of the national and international importance of the Québec Summit to be held next September.

We shall demonstrate, we from the federal government, our firm and sustained resolve to improve the international political climate through active cooperation between Francophone countries. This is a pressing necessity in our view because we are constantly seeking to promote world peace and to offset the cruel economic disparities that separate the countries of the North from those of the South.

For Canada, the Québec Summit also provides a unique opportunity for demonstrating its Francophone personality. Allow me to point out that Canada is the only country to participate in the three great summits: those of the French-speaking countries, the Commonwealth, and the industrialized countries. All three of these great summits, as you are aware, will be held in Canada in 1987 and 1988.

Our membership in the Commonwealth and in the group of industrialized countries is already manifest, as is the important role played by these two groups of countries on the international scene.

At the first Francophone Summit held in Paris, Canada showed that it could propose concrete and appropriate projects leading to fruitful cooperation between Francophones from all over the world.

The 41 countries that were present in Paris also made a solemn political commitment to practise effective, tangible and dynamic cooperation, focussing on common needs and interests.

In Québec, therefore, Canada will be responsible for continuing the considerable effort it put forth during the first Summit and for sustaining the determination to cooperate previously expressed by its partners. Our contribution to the meeting to the Francophone countries is already viewed by all participants as extremely important since we bring to it a fresh outlook, free from all prejudice and turned toward the future. We believe, for example, that our belonging to the North American continent and our own cultural personality naturally incline us towards the development of practical and achievable projects.

With the choice of Québec, the cradle of French in North America, as the site of the meeting, we have an opportunity to show our heroic beginnings, our French heritage, to Francophone from every part of the world.

In this warm-hearted Québec where three-hundred-year-old walls stand next to modern skyscrapers, we want to give proof of our own special identity.

Together, on the basis of the language we share, we shall build the French-speaking community of tomorrow.