
STATEMENT

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AS DELIVERED

AN ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY BENOÎT BOUCHARD,
HEAD OF THE CANADIAN DELEGATION,
AT THE OPENING SESSION
OF THE FIFTH FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT

MAURITIUS
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Affaires extérieures et
Commerce extérieur Canada

External Affairs and
International Trade Canada

Canada

Mr. Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, Heads of State and Government, Heads of Delegation, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are assembled today for the fifth Francophone Summit. Our surroundings are nothing short of wonderful.

The Right Honourable Kim Campbell, Prime Minister of Canada, regrets being unable to participate in this event in person, having been detained in Canada by our impending general election. Mr. Prime Minister, she has asked me to express Canada's sincere thanks to you, to your government and to your people for the warm reception you have extended to us, and her sincere wishes for the success of the Summit.

You may rest assured that Canada intends to show itself worthy of your hospitality and to work actively toward the success of the Mauritius Summit. We trust that la Francophonie, a truly multilateral entity toward which Canada, along with the participating governments of Quebec and New Brunswick, has shown generous and consistent dedication, will benefit from our presence here.

Our summits afford the opportunity both for happy reunions and for paying tribute to those who have paved the way. It is a great privilege to express thanks to our outgoing president for his invaluable contribution, particularly during the past two years. He made it possible to give substance to the Resolutions of Chaillot, thereby profoundly shaping la Francophonie as a dynamic community on the international scene. As the author and architect of the Francophone Summits, and as an active participant, twice in the capacity of host, in all our meetings since 1986 in Paris, President Mitterrand has personified the essential role played by France in building our community. We are deeply grateful to him.

Mr. Prime Minister, we left one another in Chaillot on a note of optimism. With the end of east-west antagonism, we saw the possibility of focussing resolutely on the need to promote democracy, human rights and development. In the Chaillot Declaration, these elements were brought together when we affirmed that there could be no development without freedom, and no true freedom without development.

In order to give substance to this declaration, we gave concrete support, within our means, to the process of democratization being initiated by a number of our states. This led to close co-operation, which enabled us, as a community, to speak with one voice at the United Nations Human Rights Conference in Vienna.

While we should be pleased with these actions, let us not fail to reaffirm that any country that refuses change and balks at following the most elementary principles of due process, will be met with disfavour until the unacceptable situation is remedied.

In this regard, Canada unreservedly condemns those who persist in obstructing democracy in Haiti, and reiterates its full support for President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Canada shares with Mauritius the privilege of being a bilingual and multicultural country. Consequently, you will understand that Canada attaches great importance to the theme of unity in diversity.

The Mauritius Summit invites us to follow in the footsteps of Chaillet, emphasizing the stabilizing, enriching influence of minorities, be they ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious.

The multiplicity of local conflicts arising from nationalistic tendencies tragically illustrates just how much failure to respect human rights or to ensure fundamental freedoms jeopardizes the stability and security of many of the world's regions.

Children are often the very first victims of these sad situations because of their particular vulnerability to conflict, poverty and famine. Canada saw the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Children in Dakar as an encouraging sign that the international Francophone community was mobilizing to assist children. Canada promised to be closely involved in the 10-year action plan adopted at the conference.

Mr. Prime Minister, Canada will make a financial commitment toward implementing concrete measures resulting from this conference. On the one hand, we aim to improve educational systems and training for young people; on the other, we aim to promote functional literacy among women to combat discrimination against them in education and to prepare them better for their role as educators and catalysts of development.

Beyond the resolutions that we will adopt here in Mauritius, Canada earnestly hopes that this summit will mark the beginning of a thorough examination of the international role that la Francophonie can and must play in establishing greater political and economic stability. Our community must answer the urgent appeal issued in his "Agenda for Peace" by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a veteran of our summits, whose presence among us I am, in turn, pleased to acknowledge.

In the same vein, Canada will continue to seek the Francophone community's support for the non-proliferation of weapons, including the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. Prime Minister, we have said, "no true freedom without development." This is the meaning that must be given to

"Democracy and Development," the other theme of the Mauritius Summit. Not that the Francophone community has remained idle in the area of development -- far from it. Our solidarity has been expressed for more than two decades by implementing a wide range of successful co-operative programs in the areas of culture, the environment, education, communications, economic and democratic development, and respect for human rights.

The Mauritius Summit challenges us to do more and better. In macroeconomic terms, Canada and the other member countries of la Francophonie are dedicated to the economic development of the countries of the South. Our solidarity must also be expressed by developing tools for economic growth at the grass-roots level, promoting the mobilization of savings by establishing savings co-operatives and credit unions, and developing partnerships to create small- and medium-sized businesses.

To this end, in the coming months, Canada will develop a program designed to strengthen associations in the countries of la Francophonie, which will represent the interests of the private sector, such as business groups, encouraging the formation of partnerships, especially with their Canadian counterparts.

Freedom and development are formidable challenges that la Francophonie will be able to meet only through joint action. As a member of the Commonwealth, the Organization of American States and la Francophonie, Canada attaches particular importance to the principle of multilateralism, which alone ensures genuine dialogue among nations.

This approach favouring truly multilateral effort in design and implementation of our actions is, moreover, perfectly embodied by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. His numerous recent initiatives are consistent in every respect with the objectives of our community. I can assure him that Canada will join the other member countries of la Francophonie in working with enthusiasm and determination to make a meaningful contribution to the development of his draft "Agenda for Development."

La Francophonie is progressing as a forum for dialogue and as a community sharing the same language and values. Its institutions are the manifestation of its vitality. They are the indispensable tools by which our words are translated into action. It is up to us to guide these institutions and show them the way. We owe it to the men and women in whom la Francophonie has inspired hope. Thank you.