



**XII^e SOMMET
DE LA FRANCOPHONIE**
Ville de Québec · 2008



October 15, 2008

Conférence ministérielle de la Francophonie

Opening of Proceedings

Speech from the minister of Canadian Heritage and minister for La Francophonie Josée VERNER

Ministers and heads of delegation,
Secretary General of La Francophonie,
Administrator,
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie,
Representatives of the Operating Agencies and the Permanent Ministerial
Conferences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure to welcome you here, on the occasion of the 24th session of the Ministerial Conference of La Francophonie, to my hometown, Quebec City, the centre of French-speaking America, which is celebrating the 400th anniversary of its founding this year. I am pleased that so many of you accepted our invitation.

Our session is taking place at a time when we are facing increasingly serious issues affecting our populations, such as the food crisis and the situation on the financial markets. The political instability that is slowing development in many of our countries is also of concern to us. In response to these crises, our Organization must maintain its political activity and its action on the ground to assist the populations affected by these upheavals.

We have set ourselves, at various meetings at this Conference, the task of working to build a stronger Francophonie, one that is better equipped to tackle the many challenges confronting us. Adopting the Charter and the Ten-Year Strategic Framework were the first steps in that direction. Since then, La Francophonie has begun modernizing management of its institutions and simplification of its structures.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Secretary General, His Excellency Abdou Diouf, the Administrator, Clément Duhaime, and the entire OIF team for their commitment and their accomplishments.

They can count on our support as we pursue our common objective: a Francophonie that is more modern, more effective and better equipped to address the challenges of the 21st century. To achieve this objective,



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we must continue to tighten programming, provide for better integration of the activities of operating agencies and permanent ministerial conferences, and adopt a results-based management culture.

We have been working with Canada-Quebec and Canada-New Brunswick for several months now on the preparations for this conference, which, as you know, is the final step before the Summit of our heads of state and government. I would like to thank them for their valuable cooperation.

Our discussions during this 24th session should enable us to provide a clear mandate for the organization to pursue its institutional reform and modernization and to develop programming based on the strategic directions proposed by the OIF and endorsed by the last Permanent Council of La Francophonie.

We can also finalize preparations for the 12th Francophonie Summit. The themes our heads of state and government will be addressing are topical. Peace, democracy and the rule of law; governance and economic solidarity; and the environment are fundamental issues for our societies, issues that will transcend La Francophonie.

The Summit will also address the issue of the French language, which is the heart of our Francophone family and the essential ingredient that brings us together and unites us.

By choosing these themes, we are sending a clear message about our political desire to discuss issues that challenge our societies and the rest of the international community and how we will work together to address them.

I hope that despite a heavy agenda, you will have the time to visit beautiful Quebec City and enjoy the hospitality of its residents.

I now declare the proceedings of the 24th session of the Ministerial Conference of La Francophonie open.

Thank you.