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## INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

**Statement by:**

**The Honourable Claudette Tardif**

**Wednesday, March 17, 2010**

## THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

[*Translation*]

### INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, as my honourable colleagues, Senator Poulin and Senator Champagne, have mentioned, this year March 20 will mark not only the International Day of La Francophonie, but also the 40th anniversary of the founding of the International Organisation of La Francophonie, the OIF.

The OIF is based on the sharing of the French language and universal values. It has made the recognition and promotion of the cultural diversity of francophone countries a factor in dialogue and peace with a view to development.

On March 20, for this special double anniversary, Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, and Abdou Diouf, Secretary General of La Francophonie, will inaugurate the Maison de la Francophonie, the organization's new head office in Paris.

The headquarters, made available to the organization by the French government, will work closely with the Centre de la francophonie des Amériques, which is located in the heart of Quebec City and was inaugurated last year during the Sommet de la Francophonie.

This year, the theme for the anniversary is "diversity serving peace," which reflects the diversity of French-language speakers throughout the francophone world.

La Francophonie is also active internationally in the academic field. Established in 1961, the Agence universitaire de la

Francophonie, a worldwide association of French-language universities representing 728 institutions, will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year. I am proud to point out that the agency's president, Canadian Yvon Fontaine, is a francophone and an Acadian, and president of the Université de Moncton.

In my own province of Alberta, the Franco-Albertan flag was raised by francophones in 16 cities and a ceremony in tribute to Alberta's francophone community was held at the legislative assembly on March 9, as part of the Rendez-vous de la Francophonie events taking place across Canada from March 5 to 21.

The objective of the Rendez-vous celebrations is to highlight the important contribution francophones have made to building our country, to enhance appreciation of the French language and its many cultural expressions, and to promote bridge-building between francophone communities and all communities in Canadian society.

The Rendez-vous de la Francophonie remind us that we belong to the international Francophonie and that we have a special relationship with all the countries and governments that are members of this big family, which spans the globe.

These events remind us that living and participating in French in Canada is still difficult for members of linguistic minority communities and is not a given, even though we have the Official Languages Act.

A political commitment to implement the act and to promote the French fact and the development of linguistic minority communities, university involvement and strong community participation will ensure that Canada has a vibrant francophone community within the international Francophonie.

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