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**DOCUMENT 39**

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**Declaration of the Gouvernement du Québec respecting Québec's participation in international forums dealing with education, language, culture and identity, March 24, 1999.**



*DECLARATION OF THE  
GOUVERNEMENT DU QUÉBEC  
RESPECTING QUÉBEC'S PARTICIPATION  
IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS DEALING  
WITH EDUCATION, LANGUAGE,  
CULTURE AND IDENTITY*

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WHEREAS the process of world economic integration now underway threatens cultural diversity which is unquestionably an invaluable heritage;

WHEREAS the Québec people have a vital interest in the promotion and affirmation of cultural identity;

WHEREAS in defence of this diversity, it is necessary to broaden the coalition of peoples, governments and States that support the struggle to include in international agreements clauses and concepts respecting not only the defence of cultural diversity, but also its promotion;

WHEREAS in these matters, international forums will have a direct impact on the decision-making power of States, on the protection of national cultures and, consequently, on the capacity of the National Assembly and the Gouvernement du Québec to act, as well as on the future of the Québec identity;

WHEREAS Québec is the only territory in the Americas whose official and common language is French and whereas the National Assembly and the Gouvernement du Québec are the only francophone democratic institutions in the Americas;

WHEREAS in its 1995 statement *Canada in the World*, making culture

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one of the three pillars of its international action, the Government of Canada ignored the existence of Québec culture and whereas federal ministers describe it as a simple “regional component” of a single Canadian culture;

WHEREAS above and beyond its jurisdictions in matters of education, language, culture and identity, the Gouvernement du Québec is the sole interlocutor competent to directly and appropriately represent the reality and interests of the Québec people;

WHEREAS Québec has an interest in increasing its relations, in both bilateral and multilateral frameworks, with States, governments, and representatives of sovereign and non-sovereign nations in order to promote cultural diversity and to make its constructive and original contribution to the international dialogue of cultures and the emergence of a coalition favouring the affirmation of this diversity;

WHEREAS within the authorities of la Francophonie, the Niamey treaty of 1970 and the agreement of 1985 establishing Québec's participation in the Sommets de la Francophonie recognized Québec's specific presence and freedom of speech and whereas Québec has contributed actively and positively to the actions of la Francophonie, notably in favour of cultural diversity;

WHEREAS in the case of international forums where Canada is the accredited State and these subjects are dealt with, and in order to avoid any controversy, the Gouvernement du Québec wishes to reach lasting agreement with the

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Canadian Government on the terms  
and conditions of its presence and the  
exercise of its freedom of speech;

*THE GOUVERNEMENT DU  
QUÉBEC DECLARES:*

THAT in all international forums  
dealing with education, language,  
culture and identity, it is fundamental  
that the Gouvernement du Québec speak  
in its own voice on behalf of the Québec  
people;

THAT the Gouvernement du Québec  
therefore intends to participate directly in  
these forums, to encourage the holding of  
them and to favour their organization  
and action;

THAT for the purposes of participat-  
ing in certain international organizations  
to which Canada is the statutorily accred-  
ited State, the Gouvernement du Québec  
intends to initiate negotiations with the  
federal government in order to reach  
agreement on the terms and conditions  
of its presence and the exercise of its  
freedom of speech.

*Québec, March 24, 1999*