

Institutional Francophonie: summits, economic diplomacy and the Swiss presence

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The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, founded in 1970, brings together 93 member, associate and observer states and governments and holds a summit of heads of state and government every two years.¹ Long focused on culture and education, the organisation has since the 2010s developed an economic dimension: francophone business forums, meetings of entrepreneurs and the promotion of trade within the francophone area, which, as it points out, accounts for 16.5 per cent of world gross domestic product and 20 per cent of world merchandise trade.² Switzerland is a member of the organisation and brings to it a particular voice, that of a multilingual country whose French-speaking minority is its second-largest linguistic community.³

For the Geneva financial centre, institutional Francophonie offers a framework for meetings and a source of legitimacy. The francophone economic forums bring together business leaders, ministers and investors from Africa, the Maghreb, Europe and Canada in a shared language. Geneva's umbrella organisations and institutions attend them, though without occupying the place that their economic weight would justify. A more visible participation by the financial centre in these forums, with concrete proposals on financing, training and governance, would consolidate its position as the reference financial centre of the francophone area.

1 Notes

1. Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, *La langue française dans le monde*, 2026 edition, and institutional presentation of the OIF (organisation founded in 1970, 93 states and governments). ↩

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2. Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, La langue française dans le monde, 2026 edition (summary). ↩
3. A member of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie since 1996, Switzerland has become its third-largest contributor; Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, “La Suisse au sein de l’Organisation internationale de la Francophonie”, eda.admin.ch (accessed September 2026). ↩

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