

Rwanda is set to host the 46th meeting of ministers from Francophone countries later this week, with a focus on the development of women and youth. The two-day gathering will take place Nov. 19-20 in Kigali.

The meeting comes 30 years after the landmark Beijing Conference on women's development, aligning with this year's theme: *"30 Years After Beijing: The Role of Women in the Francophonie."*

Oria Kije Vande Weghe, communications director for the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) and spokesperson for its secretary-general, said the organization places special emphasis on programs for women and young people.

"We focus heavily on women and youth, investing in initiatives that address issues such as employment and education," Kije Vande Weghe said. "Programs include technology training and support for women to become self-reliant, enabling them to help their families and pursue schooling. One initiative, 'La Francophonie avec elle,' launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, helps women grow their businesses and achieve financial independence. Many projects in Rwanda have benefited from this program."

Grace Nyinawumuntu, director general at Rwanda's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of the Americas, Europe, and international organizations, said participants have begun arriving in the country.

"Guests started arriving yesterday, and more will continue to come today and tomorrow," Nyinawumuntu said. "Visitors from OIF countries do not need a visa to enter Rwanda, a policy the country adopted five years ago to encourage Francophone exchanges."

The OIF, which represents 93 countries—including 56 full members, 5 associates, and 32 observers—counts an estimated 321 million French speakers worldwide. Rwanda has been a member since 1970, when the organization was founded.

The previous ministers' meeting was held in Paris, and Rwanda will also host the next session, highlighting the country's growing role within the Francophonie.