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AFRICA/CONGO DR - The Francophonie Summit in Kinshasa: a turning point in relations between France and Africa?

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - Africa is the future of the Francophonie and the old "Françafrique" is out-dated. These are the considerations that emerged in the Congolese and international press in the aftermath of the end of the 14th Francophonie Summit held in Kinshasa from October 12 to 14. The Organization of the Francophonie (OIF) brings together French-speaking countries (with the notable exception of Algeria) and various associated states of the 5 continents. The so-called "Françafrique" represents the system of interest, often not very clear, linking Paris to its former colonies, which allows France to exert a strong influence on the French-speaking African countries (including those, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, which had not been colonized by France).
"Joseph Kabila signed the Françafrique death certificate" headlines today the Congolese newspaper "Le Potentiel" which focuses on the clash between the Congolese President Kabila and the French François Hollande, who, with a stopover in Dakar, Senegal, had stated "that the time of Françafrique is over." Before going to Kinshasa, the Head of the French State had described the situation in the DRC "completely unacceptable in terms of rights, democracy and the recognition of the opposition." "The DRC is definitely not complexed for the level of democracy, freedom, human rights situation," said yesterday President Kabila. At a formal level the reception of the French President marks, according to Le Potentiel, a turning point. The Head of the French State was in fact met at the airport in Kinshasa by the Prime Minister (the fourth State authorities) and not by his counterpart.
The summit, however, came to meet the request of the DRC to launch an appeal to the UN Security Council to impose targeted sanctions against groups that operate in eastern Congo (but Rwanda made reservations on this point). Other points discussed were the crisis in Mali, Madagascar and Guinea Bissau. Francophonie, born at the beginning, at least officially, with cultural and educational purposes, seems to want to take on a more political dimension, with perhaps the basis for a different relationship between France and Africa. According to Le Figaro, in the world today there are 220 million French speakers. In 2050 they will become 750 million, of which 85% will be in Africa. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 15/10/2012)

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