

Christine Desouches

Honorary lecturer at the Université de Paris I
Member of the strategic council of IFRI



Christine Desouches was the delegate for peace, democracy and human rights at the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) and a former special advisor to the Secretary-General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, President Abdou Diouf.

A lawyer and a lecturer at the Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne), Ms. Desouches has focused most of her career as an academic and senior civil servant to multilateral and bilateral cooperation and to understanding and supporting political and institutional dynamics in the Sahel and sub-Saharan African countries. Her accomplishments include setting up renewed partnerships between the continent and the rest of the world, including within the framework of the OIF, helping to shape and strengthen its political and geostrategic dimension.

In the same vein as her Ph.D. thesis in Political Science on the legal opposition in Africa (1983), through her positions as special advisor to the French Minister of Cooperation, Michel Aurillac (1986-1988), chief of staff of the Secretary-General of the ACCT (1988-1990) and the delegate for peace, democracy and human rights at the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF, 1991-2006), in particular to two of the Organisation's Secretaries-General, Boutros Boutros Ghali and Abdou Diouf, as well as Mr. Diouf's special advisor on political and diplomatic affairs (2007-2010), she has developed significant experience in the areas of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, crisis and conflict prevention and resolution, transitions and peacebuilding.

Based on the special relationships she has developed with many of the senior officials of the countries concerned, and aiming to tap into the relevant expertise of all the stakeholders involved — public officials, civil society, academia and institutional and skills networks — she has carried out the processes of adopting and implementing the Bamako Declaration on the Practices of Democracy, Rights and Freedoms in the French-Speaking Community and the St Boniface Declaration on Conflict Prevention and Human Security, which are standard-setting texts and guidelines for action.

Other actions to her credit out in this framework include preparing and implementing programmes involving electoral assistance and observation (approximately 150 observation missions), education and training in human rights, democratic culture and peace, support for the reform of fundamental texts and capacity-building of institutions, including judicial and parliamentary ones, as well as those aiming to safeguard the legal environment by collecting, managing and disseminating law or supporting major initiatives such as OHADA.

She has coordinated the operational implementation of early-warning and peacekeeping mechanisms, the observation and assessment of democratic practices with the publication of the first two dedicated reports, many facilitation and mediation missions, information and contacts dispatched by the Secretary-General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie in countries in or emerging from crisis and the organisation of consultations between Member States in preparation for major debates promoted within international organisations and regional partners on values, such as the principle of the responsibility to protect and the fight against impunity or renewed models of global governance.

Ms. Desouches is an expert-consultant to international organisations. In recent years, she has taught an annual course on international cooperation in the “law and international organisations” master’s degree programme at the Université d’Abomey Calavi in Benin. She has written or co-coordinated several publications, including *La prévention des crises et des conflits* (Crisis and Conflict Prevention, Bruylant, 2010 and 2013) and *De Dakar à Dakar: 25 ans d’engagement de la Francophonie au service des droits de l’Homme, de la démocratie et de la paix* (From Dakar to Dakar: 25 Years of the French-Speaking Community’s Commitment to Human Rights, Democracy and Peace, same publisher, 2014). Her present research focuses on the role of new African players in governance, peace and security (foundations, think tanks, international relations institutes, strategic studies, etc.), as well as on the new challenges of international cooperation, including cultural ones.

She holds an honorary doctorate from the Université de Montréal and sits on the Steering Committee of the Observatoire Panafricain de la démocratie (OPAD). Member of the Académie des Sciences d’Outre Mer, she is an Officer of the Legion of Honour.