

Section canadienne de
l'Assemblée parlementaire
de la Francophonie



Canadian Branch of the
Assemblée parlementaire
de la Francophonie

Report of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Meetings of the APF Political Committee and Working Group on Reforming the APF Constitution

Luxembourg City, Luxembourg

From April 27 to 30, 2024

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), which participated in the meetings of the Political Committee (PC) and its Working Group on the revision of the APF Constitution (WG) in Luxembourg City, Luxembourg, from April 27 to 30, 2024, is honoured to present its report.

The delegation was led by **Francis Drouin**, MP, President of the APF and Chair of the Canadian Branch of the APF. He was accompanied by the **Honourable Éric Forest**, Senator, and Julie Pelletier, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

WORKING GROUP ON THE REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

Francis Drouin, MP, and the **Honourable Éric Forest**, Senator, participated in the work of the Working Group on Reforming the APF Constitution on April 27 and 28, 2024. Chaired by Christophe-André Frassa, Senator (France), this Group is mandated to examine and propose amendments to the APF Constitution and to other related administrative and financial documents. This was the last meeting of the Working Group. In addition to the Canadian Branch, the following branches were also presented: Benin, Cameroon, Cambodia, France, Luxembourg, the Federation Wallonia-Brussels, Quebec and Switzerland.

Senator Frassa called the meeting to order. President **Drouin** then thanked the Luxembourg hosts for their welcome and highlighted the four years of work done by the Working Group, which was created following the 45th Session of the APF held in Abidjan from July 6 to 9, 2019.

APF's democratic oversight mechanisms

The first item on the agenda was reviewing the draft of the new democratic oversight mechanisms (DOMs) which, unlike the old DOMs, promote the concepts of prevention, maintenance of dialogue and post-crisis support for parliamentary branches that are experiencing political instability and other major democratic crises.

The WG heard by videoconference Ruxandra Mangu, Advisor, Political Affairs and Democratic Governance Branch of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), who presented the results of a similar approach undertaken at the OIF.

The parliamentarians then conducted an in-depth study of the five proposed levels of oversight (preventive watch, observation, alert, transition and suspension), as well as the procedure for implementing the DOMs. They also decided to include the principle of autonomy of the four APF regions (Africa, Asia-Pacific, the Americas, Europe), which allows these regions to invite sections that no longer have access to the work of the APF bodies when they are under suspension. Further to the discussions, the fundamental principles of the Bamako and St. Boniface declarations were annexed to the text. Following Senator **Forest's** intervention, the vocabulary of the document has been standardized to be more gender-neutral and inclusive. Finally, operating procedures were specified for the new Oversight Committee responsible for examining all political situations: two formal meetings to be held prior to the PC meetings and occasional videoconferences, as needed. The president, Mr. **Drouin**, stated that, in the future, it

would be good for a report of this type of meeting to be drawn up in order to record in the corporate memory the questions and follow-ups to be carried out. The amended DOMs were approved.

APF Constitution

The WG studied several proposed amendments to the version of the APF Constitution adopted at the APF Bureau in July 2023. The international nature of the APF and its physical address were added to the text, and it was proposed that the chairpersons of commissions/networks be included as members of the Bureau delegation and that the use of the French terms “Assemblée,” “Session plénière” and “Séance plénière” be standardized. On the proposal of President **Drouin**, the General Secretariat was invited to consider the advantages/disadvantages for the APF of acquiring international organization status, rather than being under the French legal framework, and to present the feasibility of this to the Bureau of 2025.

Financial regulations

A version of the financial regulations revised by a legal accountant hired by the Secretariat was submitted to the WG and approved.

Procedures manual

The WG has begun its review of the procedures manual. In addition to editorial corrections, the revision process for future changes to the manual was clarified. Senator **Forest** followed up on two requests from the Canadian Branch that were voiced at the November 2023 WG meeting. First, he was informed of the results of the Secretary General’s (SG) assessment that 100% rather than 50% of mission expenses would be covered for parliamentarians attending international meetings. The SG committed to following up by email, and it was agreed that this item would be added to the next meeting of the Bureau delegation. Secondly, the Senator enquired about how much progress had been made on drafting the personnel code provided for in Article 9.2 of the rules of procedure, which were adopted by the Brussels Bureau in January 2024. The SG clarified that the Assistant Secretary General of the APF had referred the matter to the Réseau francophone d’éthique et de déontologie parlementaires, and that he hoped to be able to propose a draft at the Montreal Bureau meeting in July 2024.

It was agreed to submit the proposals regarding the DOMs, the amended statutes, the financial regulations and the procedures manual to the July 2024 Bureau in Montreal, Quebec, for approval.

POLITICAL COMMITTEE

The Canadian delegation participated in the work of the APF PC on April 29 and 30, 2024. The PC examines issues of a political nature and those relating to the rule of law and electoral processes, as well as security and counter-terrorism issues, national developments relating to the death penalty in the francophone world, relations with French-speaking institutions, the overall priorities of the Assemblée, and legal issues relating to the Constitution and to how it is revised and applied.

The session began with opening speeches by Claude Wiseler, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg; Gilles Baum, Deputy, President of the Luxembourg Branch of the APF; and Christophe-André Frassa, Senator (France) and Chair of the PC.

Cameroonian Senator Pierre Flambeau Ngayap then presented his report on the political situations in the French-speaking world. The report focused in particular on developments in the political situations in the suspended branches of the APF (Burkina Faso, Chad, Haiti, Mali, Guinea, Syria, Tunisia) or branches that had been placed on alert (Central African Republic). Nicolas Walder (Switzerland) addressed the status of the death penalty in the French-speaking world. Lastly, His Excellency Désiré Nyaruhirira, Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the OIF, spoke about the organization's approach to suspended states or states that are under surveillance (Guinea, Niger, Gabon, Chad, Haiti, Lebanon, Madagascar, Senegal). He concluded his remarks by stating that a working group was finalizing its consideration of a new approach that advocates prevention and dialogue, greater flexibility in the event of automatic suspension, and better support for states moving toward a return to democratic order.

The PC participants then took part in a panel discussion on the situation in the Sahel. Two panellists spoke on the theme "Vers une compréhension approfondie des transitions politiques : de la démocratie aux régimes militaires dans l'Espace francophone" [toward an in-depth understanding of political transitions: from democracy to military regimes in the francophone world]: Abdoul Karim Saidou, associate professor in political science, Thomas Sankara University, and Gilles Yabi, political analyst and doctor in development economics and founder of West Africa Citizen Think-Tank. Senator **Forest** asked the panellists whether the military regime that replaced the democratic regime of President Mohamed Bazoum in Niger had fulfilled the aspirations of the population, particularly in terms of security.

Senator Pierre Flambeau Ngayap presented the report of the Good Offices Mission that the President of the APF, **Francis Drouin**, conducted in Gabon from November 6 to 8, 2023. This Mission followed the military coup of August 30, 2023, in response to a highly criticized presidential election. The President of the APF met with various transitional institutions as well as other Gabonese political and civil stakeholders.

The PC held a round table during which the participants addressed their countries' current political developments. Senator **Forest** (Canada) outlined Canada's most recent federal budget, including the proposed plan to address the housing crisis. He said the next federal election is expected to take place in October 2025, despite the current government's minority status, and according to new electoral districts. Lastly, he invited all members of the PC to participate in the 49th annual session of the APF organized in Montreal by the Parliament of Canada.

As part of the PC's efforts to re-establish dialogue with all the branches of the APF and in accordance with the principle enshrined in the new DOMs, several branches were able to express themselves in order to present how the political situation in their respective countries had evolved since their suspension. The following speakers made presentations in this order: Dansa Kourouma (Guinea), President of the National Transition Council; Khadidja Adoum Attimer (Chad), Second Vice-President of the

National Transitional Council; and Omar Barhoumi (Tunisia), Deputy. The question-and-answer period that followed made it possible to specify the expectations of the countries that had been heard, assess how the APF could support them as they moved toward a return to democratic order, and clarify the recommendation that the PC will make to the Bureau.

Through its work, the PC also examined the draft reports of Philippe Courard, Deputy (Belgium, Wallonia-Brussels), on the key role of multilateralism in promoting democracy and sustainable peace, and of Senator **Forest** on the “Lutte à la désinformation et les modèles alternatifs de financement de la presse”[combating misinformation and alternative press financing models]. The senator’s report will look at how traditional media have adapted to new funding models and how these affect the work of journalists and the quality of available information. The presentation was thought-provoking, and it was agreed that experts should be invited to the PC meeting to be held in Montreal, Canada, in July 2024.

Chairman Frassa presented a summary of the activities of the Working Group on Reforming the Constitution of the APF, which concluded its work on April 28, 2024. He recalled that the Constitution and the rules of procedure had already been adopted and that the financial regulations and the DOMs will be submitted for approval by the Bureau and the plenary in Montreal, Canada, in July 2024.

Chairman Frassa then presented the recommendations of the WG members meeting in the Oversight Committee. In light of the new version of the DOMs and the facts mentioned in the report on the political situations and current affairs of the branches as reported by their representatives, the PC approved the proposals to update the status of the suspended branches, which will be presented to the Bureau in July 2024.

In addition, a resolution was adopted regarding the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The PC also considered the applications for membership of Angola (member branch), Cyprus (associate branch) and Puducherry (observer), as well as the application for a change in the status of the Andorra branch (member), and issued favourable opinions regarding these applications.

Senator **Forest** took the floor to acknowledge the work of President **Francis Drouin**. He highlighted his diligence in managing the work of the APF and his commitment to the process of applying for observer status at the UN, which began on January 31, 2023. He recalled that the President of the APF had met with several UN Permanent Representatives to obtain their support for this application. On behalf of the Canadian Branch, he invited the other branches to support this process by raising awareness among their representatives and foreign ministers regarding the importance of acquiring observer status at the UN.

The Chair of the PC concluded the meeting by stating that the next meeting of the PC would be held in Montreal, Canada, on July 7, 2024—with a meeting of the Oversight Committee prior to that of the Political Commission—and that the Senegalese Branch had offered to host the intersessional meeting of the PC in 2025.

Travel expenses

Travel expenses associated with this activity can be found in the delegation's financial report. This report is available in the [Financial Disclosure](#) section of the Parliamentary Diplomacy website.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie-France Lalonde, MP
Chair, Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie