

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

30th Regional Assembly of the Africa Region of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Yaoundé, Cameroon

From May 28 to 29, 2024

Report

A delegation from the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (Canadian Branch) attended the 30th Regional Assembly of the Africa Region of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on May 28 and 29, 2024. The delegation was made up of Mr. **Francis Drouin**, MP, Chair of the Canadian Branch and International President of the APF, and Julie Pelletier, Association Secretary of the Canadian Branch. The delegation has the honour to present its report.

Background

The APF is divided into four regions: Africa, America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific. Each region is responsible for implementing the APF's objectives within its own specific context. The regional assemblies offer a forum for making proposals and holding discussions, the conclusions of which are communicated to the APF Bureau and Plenary Assembly by the regional delegates and general delegate (GD). They meet once a year. This year, the branches of the Africa Region met in Yaoundé, at the invitation of the Cameroonian Branch.

Opening ceremony

On May 28 and 29, 2024, 120 representatives, including nine Speakers chairs, parliamentarians from the 16 branches of the Africa Region (Benin, Cameroon, Cap Vert, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Guinea-Conakry, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal and Tunisia), met at the Palais des Congrès in Yaoundé. Over two days, they debated the major issues currently affecting the region. The regional delegates of the Africa and Europe Regions were also present, as were representatives of the Pan-African Parliament.

Once the delegations had been introduced, the opening ceremony was held, consisting of six speeches. First, the senior assistant to the Mayor of Yaoundé cordially welcomed the delegates to Cameroon. Second, Hilarion Étong, First Vice-President of the National Assembly and Chair of the Cameroonian Branch of the APF, provided background on his country's key actions within the APF in recent years and reaffirmed Cameroon's commitment to the values held by La Francophonie in general and the APF in particular. Third, Bruno Fuchs, Member of the National Assembly (France) and GD, noted that Cameroon plays a crucial role in La Francophonie because of its cultural and linguistic diversity. He stated that Cameroon helps strengthen ties between francophone nations thanks to its model of intercultural dialogue. He spoke about the APF's major projects through the core actions under the 2023–2030 strategic framework. The purpose of these projects is to make the APF more efficient and responsive by promoting active parliamentary diplomacy. Following the GD's speech, Sooroojdev Phokeer, Speaker of the National Assembly of Mauritius, reiterated the importance of bodies like the Africa Region for offering a forum to debate the challenges that the continent faces, encouraging peaceful solutions and helping to consolidate democratic gains. As International President of the APF, **Francis Drouin** urged the international community to learn from

the Africa Region's best practices. He praised the decision to open up this forum to branches that are currently in constitutional crisis, as a sign of constructive dialogue. He also took stock of his tenure as President, highlighting his efforts to strengthen the influence of parliamentary diplomacy in La Francophonie, support francophone youth and reflect on ways to improve mobility in the francophone world. The opening ceremony was closed by His Excellency Cavayé Yeguié Djibril, President of the National Assembly of Cameroon, who commended the APF for taking actions that have benefited the peoples it represents. He also reiterated the need for national parliaments to take action within interparliamentary organizations through bilateral and multilateral co-operative initiatives. Lastly, he outlined the themes of the upcoming general debate before declaring the 30th Regional Assembly of the Africa Region of the APF open.

30th REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

During this segment, which was chaired by His Excellency Louis G. Vlaponou, President of the National Assembly of Benin, the delegations listened to the Africa Region's report on its activities and the regional delegate for Europe's report on his activities. The themes of the general debate were then introduced, followed by a discussion of the political situation in francophone Africa and certain aspects of how the APF operates in the Africa Region. Lastly, a decision was made about the locations of the 16th Conference of Speakers and the 31st Regional Assembly of the Africa Region.

Africa Region's activity report

The Regional Assembly was informed about the participation of African parliamentarians in APF statutory meetings, the organization of political and election missions, activities run by APF partner organizations, the first regional francophone youth Parliament, which involved approximately 30 participants, the revitalization of the region's branches, and co-operative initiatives that benefited the region.

Speech by regional delegate for Europe

At the invitation of his Africa Region counterpart, Jean Charles Luperto, Member of Parliament (Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation) and regional delegate for Europe, presented his region's main activities and priority areas, particularly the fight against disinformation. He also highlighted the synergy between the Europe Region and the Africa Region.

Debate on themes of 30th Regional Assembly

The Regional Assembly began a general debate on two themes. After a presentation given by experts, the debate was opened. A number of countries shared their contributions and experiences with the Regional Assembly, which demonstrates that the themes are relevant to the current political context. The participants reaffirmed the importance and value of sincere, objective, transparent and inclusive political dialogue for guaranteeing the protection and stability of the social climate.

- The debate on the first theme, “The use of political dialogue and the workings of State institutions,” was moderated by Dr. Samuel Nguembock, a Ph.D. in political science and permanent lecturer at the International Relations Institute of Cameroon.

Parliamentarians from Mali, Benin, Senegal, Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo outlined their respective national political contexts and their opinions on ways to achieve genuine intra- and inter-state dialogue that paves the way for democratic crises to be resolved peacefully: involve the public in dialogue, choose the right mediator, promote sincerity and transparency among participants, and make sure to implement the conclusions resulting from this dialogue.

- The second theme, “How does parliamentary diplomacy serve francophone Africa?”, was introduced by Jean-Louis Atanga Amougou, a professor of public law and international relations at the International Relations Institute of Cameroon.

Representatives from Senegal, Gabon, Morocco, Cameroon, Tunisia, Benin and Guinea spoke about the concept of “parliamentary diplomacy,” which is little known and distinct from traditional diplomacy, yet complementary to it. All participants acknowledged that now, at a time when the African continent is grappling with democratic and security crises, it is all the more vital that parliamentary diplomacy have a role in resolving conflicts between francophone nations and that it drive the political dialogue.

Political and social situations in francophone Africa

This segment gave the Regional Assembly an opportunity to hear from representatives of countries in political transition, namely Gabon, Guinea, Mali and Chad. The political situations in other parts of francophone Africa were also examined. Following this examination, the Regional Assembly:

- noted the positive engagement and improvements made in those countries as they gradually return to stable constitutional rule;
- expressed serious concern about crises of any kind, while encouraging ongoing constructive dialogue among all key players;
- demonstrated its commitment to contributing to the improvement of democratic vigilance mechanisms, a process started by APF bodies that involves greater solidarity with countries in need;
- identified the need to set aside a collaboration space for women and youth on the margins of regional assemblies; and

- expressed its full support for Gabon to be reinstated as a member of the African Union.

Operation of APF in Africa

At this point in the agenda, the Regional Assembly:

- decided to continue reviewing the statutes of the Africa Region, with the results of the review to be presented at the next Conference of Speakers and at the Regional Assembly, and delegated this responsibility to the Gabon Branch; and
- initiated the process of reorganizing the APF leadership positions (2024–2026) by selecting, with the unanimous consent of the branches present, Hilarion Étong, Chair of the Cameroon Branch and First Vice-President of the National Assembly of Cameroon, as the future APF President, with his term set to begin at the 49th Annual Session, scheduled for July 8 and 9, 2024, in Montreal, Canada.

In addition, two proposals were made and approved by the Regional Assembly. The first, which was proposed by Tunisia, called for more of the APF Bureau positions allocated to the Africa Region to be given to women. The second, which was proposed by Morocco, suggested creating a working group of African female parliamentarians in parallel with the Africa Region.

The Regional Assembly completed the final points on the agenda, which were to:

- confirm that Benin will host the 31st Regional Assembly for the Africa Region and that Senegal will host the 16th Conference of Speakers;
- acknowledge the President of the Pan-African Parliament's expression of solidarity with the APF and its Africa Region; and
- adopt the motion of solidarity moved by Angélique Ngoma, Member of Parliament from Gabon, for the Gabonese Republic to be reinstated as a member of the African Union.

In closing, President **Drouin** thanked Cameroon for its warm welcome, congratulated his colleague, Hilarion Étong, on being nominated as first vice-president of the APF and future APF President, and expressed support for the creation of a caucus of African female parliamentarians, suggesting that it could meet for the first time at the Annual Session in Montreal, Canada.

The Regional Assembly ended with the adoption of the final communiqué, the reading of a motion thanking Cameroonian officials, and closing remarks from His Excellency Marcel Niât Njifenji, President of the Senate of Cameroon.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

During his mission to Cameroon, President **Drouin** also held several bilateral meetings with local political leaders: His Excellency Marcel Niât Njifenji, President of the Senate, together with Senators Samuel Obam Assam and Aïcha Hayatou; His Excellency Cavayé Yeguié Djibril, President of the National Assembly; Hilarion Étong, Vice-President of the National Assembly and Chair of the Cameroon Branch of the APF; Minister Grégoire Owona, Minister of Labour and Social Security; and Philémon Yang, Grand Chancellor of National Orders and incoming President of the 79th United Nations General Assembly.

The topics discussed at these meetings included linguistic duality in Cameroon, food insecurity, the rising cost of raw materials, and water scarcity in northern Cameroon. Other topics that were covered included the handoff of the APF presidency to Cameroon at the 49th Annual Session in Montreal, Canada, the APF's campaign for observer status at the UN, and what Cameroon could do to support this campaign, given that its representative will be President of the 79th UN General Assembly.

Francis Drouin also met with Lorraine Anderson, Canada's High Commissioner in Cameroon, to discuss the current political situation in Cameroon. He also gave several interviews to local and regional media on the subject of the Regional Assembly and the role that the APF is playing in Africa, as well as its priority issues, namely strengthening parliamentary diplomacy, promoting dialogue and supporting parliaments in democratic crisis, improving mobility for francophones, and building the branches' legislative capabilities in key areas, such as climate change.

Through its participation in all of the meetings in Cameroon, the Canadian Branch met its objectives, which were to fulfill its international and interparliamentary obligations, strengthen its ties with the African branches of the APF, deepen its understanding of the regional issues in Africa, and defend Canadian values and interests to various parties.

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