

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

Bureau Meeting of the APF and Parliamentary Conference on Francophone Cooperation in the Areas of Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change

Can Tho, Vietnam

From January 21 to 24, 2025

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch that took part in the Bureau Meeting of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) in Can Tho, Vietnam, from January 21 to 24, 2025, is honoured to present its report.

The Canadian delegation was composed of the **Honourable Éric Forest**, Senator, and Julie Pelletier, Administrative Secretary.

The Bureau brought together about 20 francophone parliamentarians from five continents. In addition to the Canadian Branch, parliamentarians from the Belgium/French Community of Wallonia-Brussels, Benin, Cambodia, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Laos, Luxembourg, Morocco, Mauritania, New Brunswick, New Caledonia, Quebec, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Romania and Switzerland branches were represented. Representatives from the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) and the Association des secrétaires généraux des parlements francophones (ASGPF) also took part in the proceedings.

BUREAU

The meeting began with speeches by Nguyen Thuy Anh, Chair of the Vietnamese Branch; His Excellency Tran Thanh Man, President of the National Assembly of Vietnam; Hilarion Étong, President of the APF; and Tran Viet Truong, Chair of the Can Tho City People's Committee.

Bureau and APF membership

After adopting the agenda and the minutes of the Bureau meeting held in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, on July 5, 2024, the participants noted certain changes in the Bureau's composition: (a) the appointment of Malick Ndiaye, President of the National Assembly of Senegal, and Ouch Borith, First Vice President of the Senate of Cambodia, as vice-presidents of the APF; (b) the appointment of Mama Diara Beye, M.P. (Senegal), as Chair of the Economic, Social and Environmental Affairs Committee, and the appointment of Viviane Teitelbaum, Senator (Belgium), as Chair of the Network of Women Parliamentarians; (c) the appointment of regional delegates: Francine Landry, M.P., Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick (Canada) to the Americas; Vaimu'a Muliava, Councillor of the Congress of New Caledonia (France) to Asia and Pacific; Anne Lamblin, and Belgian Federal Senator and Deputy in the Parliament of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium) to Europe; (d) the appointment of Shirin Aumeeruddy-Cziffra, Speaker of the National Assembly of Mauritius to the Bureau; and (e) the appointment by the Network of Women Parliamentarians of Latifa Lablih, M.P. (Morocco), as second Bureau representative.

President Étong noted that six of the nine new Bureau members were women—three Africans, two Europeans and one North American—and that this gradual increase in the number of women in the APF's groups was progress that should continue.

The Bureau decided to submit four new applications to the Political Committee for instructions and advice. These applications are from the assemblies of Ghana, São Tomé and Príncipe and Landtag of Saarland to join as member branches, and from the

Association of Parliaments of the Indian Ocean Commission (AP-IOC) to join as an observer. If approved, the applications will be ratified at the Bureau and then during the plenary session at the 50th Session in July 2025 in Paris.

APF membership to the AP-IOC

After confirming that joining the AP-ICO will not have a financial impact in response to a question from Senator **Éric Forest**, the Bureau decided to apply as an observer.

Political debate

Bruno Fuchs (France), Delegate General (DG), began the political debate around the role of the Francophonie amid disruptions to the world order. He said that the goal was to analyze the Francophonie's current international position, find the francophone world's strengths and the potential actions it could take in response to global issues and suggest possible solutions to expand its influence and actions.

A number of branch representatives took the floor, and the debate reaffirmed the APF's commitment to a multilateral world that safeguards the rule of law and civil liberties. Senator **Éric Forest** (Canada) said that recent political changes, specifically those in the U.S., must be seen as an opportunity to consolidate the movement for francophone parliaments to engage and cooperate. He urged the APF to press ahead with its application for observer status at the United Nations in order to broaden its influence and bolster its diplomatic efforts.

Speech from the OIF Administrator

The delegates heard from Caroline St-Hilaire, OIF Administrator, who said that closer ties between the OIF and the APF are helping build a new kind of multilateralism based on solidarity. She announced that it will keep its 2025 grant to the APF to the same amount as it was in 2024, with the aim of continuing to work together on education, gender equality, peace and cultural diversity.

The administrator noted that the APF stood out in particular during its participation at the Summit of La Francophonie (Summit) in October 2024, notably for its opinion on facilitating citizen mobility to promote creation, innovation and entrepreneurship in the Francophonie. She also acknowledged the APF's key contributions to OIF projects, specifically mentioning the parliamentarians' participation in election observation missions.

Her speech was followed by a question period for parliamentarians. These questions were on the effects of (a) the OIF's policy on preventing all forms of harassment, and how the organization will help the APF to implement a similar policy; (b) the importance of gender equality in the OIF's commitments and actions and the results of the La Francophonie avec elles fund; (c) OIF youth actions and projects that focus on the 2024 Summit of La Francophonie theme of creating, innovating and doing business in French, and fostering the participation of young spokespersons from the APF francophone Youth Parliament in future summits; (d) coordination of the two institutions' efforts to promote and advance the French language and the possibility of greater support from the OIF for

French classes for parliamentarians and civil servants; (e) the need for greater francophone representation in international organizations to have a hand in addressing major global political issues; and (f) closer collaboration between the OIF and the APF in election observation missions and the criteria that should be used to choose the parliamentarians taking part in these missions.

The Delegate General's 2024 activity report

The DG said that in 2024, the APF supported Gabon and Guinea, which are experiencing democratic crises; that APF parliamentarians have been involved in 10 OIF electoral observation missions; that a first legislative corpus on the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement had been adopted, and that two others on whistle-blowing and gender-based budgeting were under development; that the APF strengthened the case for multilateralism at the 49th Session of the APF in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, and that a resolution on the situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was unanimously adopted at that time.

The report was adopted without amendments.

Review of the political situation in francophone countries

Christophe-André Frassa, Chair of the Political Committee, presented an overview of the political developments in the Francophonie, including how crises in which countries with suspended parliaments (Syria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Haiti and Niger), countries in transition (Gabon, Guinea, Chad), and countries on alert (Central African Republic) are evolving; the dissolution of the National Assembly in France in June 2024 and its ramifications on the country's political situation; tensions following the Georgian parliamentary elections in September; the clash between Lebanon and Israel caused by the Israeli–Palestinian conflict; the political crisis in New Caledonia following the proposed constitutional reform to expand the electorate; the escalating violence and worsening humanitarian crisis in eastern DRC; the aftermath of the elections in Romania and Senegal; and the situation in Ukraine.

Lastly, Mr. Frassa recalled that, at its meeting on July 5, 2024, in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, the Bureau had asked the APF to organize a goodwill mission to Luanda, Angola; Kinshasa, DRC; and Kigali, Rwanda. He added that the APF was still determined to follow up on the Montreal resolution by organizing a goodwill mission to the African Great Lakes region and to an Angolan facilitator.

A number of parliamentarians then spoke during the question period to bring up other themes that the APF should focus on, such as the rise of populism through the lens of fake news; online hate and election tampering; interference; the role of parliaments in tackling terrorism in the Sahel; assessing public policies and drafting a guide on a reconciliation process that the APF could use post-crisis; and continuing advocacy to abolish the death penalty.

The DG then presented the proposed plan for the 2025 parliamentary diplomacy missions. This plan is split into three categories: goodwill missions (DRC, Rwanda, Angola, Mali, Haiti), outreach missions (Costa Rica, Gambia, Portugal, Thailand) and

follow-up missions (Gabon, Tunisia, African Union). He said the APF had some latitude to carry out any other mission that the Bureau deemed a priority.

Bureau members unanimously adopted the report on complex political situations in the francophone world. They approved implementing a support measure in response to the crisis in eastern DRC in May 2025. On this point, they tasked the APF president and the DG with appointing a parliamentary facilitator chosen from senior figures in the Central African subregion. Lastly, they approved the provisional parliamentary mission plan for 2025.

Gender-based budgeting legislative corpus

Viviane Teitelbaum (France), President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians (Network), presented the draft legislative corpus on gender-based budgeting (GBB) developed by the Network made possible by a grant from Global Affairs Canada. She spoke about the goals of the corpus and defined GBB. Latifa Lablih (Morocco) then presented the structure of the corpus, divided into two parts, an overview of where parliaments are involved in GBB and fact sheets meant to serve as a technical legal guide for APF member parliaments to help them incorporate GBB into their parliamentary oversight of laws, policies and budgets.

The legislative corpus was adopted.

Parliamentary cooperation program

Senator Éric Forest (Canada), substituting for **Joël Godin** (Canada), Chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, presented the 30 or so parliamentary cooperation measures chosen for 2025 from the 60 requests received from 23 different branches.

The APF 2025 Parliamentary Cooperation Program was adopted by the Bureau.

Strategic framework action plan

The DG presented the action plan for tracking progress toward the five objectives of the 2023–2030 Strategic Framework using concrete, objective and measurable criteria. The Secretary General thanked Canadian advisor Philippe Méla for his help in developing this plan and monitoring its implementation during his mandate.

Senator Éric Forest (Canada) asked about the scope of the changes that the APF could make to the Action Plan before 2030. The DG said that the APF is willing to change this plan based on priorities, saying that they want this plan to reflect current and future concerns, and to remain relevant to all stakeholders.

The amended Action Plan was adopted.

Relationship with the Association des secrétaires généraux des parlements francophones

Siegfried Peters, Secretary General of the Quebec National Assembly and President of the Association des secrétaires généraux des parlements francophones (ASGPF),

outlined the Association's activities and cooperation activities with the APF. He praised the excellent relationship between the two organizations and reiterated the ASGPF's willingness to continue supporting parliamentarians based on the APF's needs.

2025 draft budget

Mars Di Bartolomeo (Luxembourg), Treasurer, said that the APF was in a healthy financial position for the financial year ending on December 31, 2024, and tabled the 2025 draft budget.

Senator Éric Forest (Canada) reiterated that it is important that Bureau members have transparent access to the organization's financial data. He asked for more details on the balance of the Parliamentary Cooperation Support Fund. The treasurer confirmed that as of December 31, 2024, the balance of the Support Fund was €338,650, and said that the balance would no longer appear in draft budgets as it was considered a reserve.

- the closing of the accounts for the financial year ending December 31, 2024;
- adoption of the treasurer's report and draft budget, as amended, for 2025;
- an increase of 1.8% in contributions;

Adoption of reports on the work of committees, networks and regional delegates

Each group presented an overview of its activities in 2024.

Mame Diarra Beye (Senegal), Chair, spoke on behalf of the Economic, Social and Environmental Affairs Committee, and Laurent Wherli (Switzerland), Chair, spoke on behalf of the Education, Culture and Communications Committee. The Parliamentary Affairs Committee, through its Chair, **Joël Godin** (Canada), reported on the year's highlights, summarized the Committee's work and stressed the importance of the APF's various cooperation programs.

As for the networks, Viviane Teitelbaum (France), Chair, spoke on behalf of the Network of Women Parliamentarians, and Yves Moundélé Ngollo (Congo), First Vice-Chair, spoke on behalf of the Youth Network.

As for regional delegates, Vaimu'a Muliava (New Caledonia), spoke for the Asia and Pacific Region, Anne Lambelin (Belgium) for the European Region, Francine Landry (New Brunswick) for the Americas Region and Daouda Sidibe (Côte d'Ivoire) for the African Region.

The reports were unanimously adopted.

Honours awarded by the APF

Jean-Paul Whahl (Belgium) told the story behind the creation of the Prix Geoffrey-Dieudonné and announced that Élodie Lemaire, administrator at the Assembly of French Polynesia, was the ninth recipient. Ms. Lemaire will complete her internship with the Parliament of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. During this internship, the Belgian Parliament will be holding a ceremony to commemorate Geoffroy-Dieudonné's commitment to francophone cooperation. Norbert Tankoano, an official from the Transitional Legislative Assembly of Burkina Faso and 2020 award recipient, was tasked

with hosting the previous recipients. The goal is to raise awareness of the award and pay tribute to its namesake.

This agenda item ended with a discussion on the Ordre de la Pléiade. In addition to the Secretariat General, nine branches submitted nominations and promotions (Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels, Benin, Cameroon, Canada, Jura, Ontario, Puducherry, Quebec and Chad). The Ordre de la Pléiade Investigative Committee, made up of four external personalities and three members of the Secretariat General, met on January 7 to carefully review each nomination.

The Bureau reiterated the importance of respecting parity, as required by the new version of the Pléiade Code, when making nominations.

The amended list of Ordre de la Pléiade recipients was adopted by the Bureau.

Institutional activities

President Étong (Cameroon) spoke briefly about the planned event schedule for 2025. Bureau members then heard from Yaël Braun-Pivet, President of the French National Assembly, and Gérard Larcher, President of the French Senate, about the 50th Session of the APF to be held in Paris, France, from July 9 to 13, 2025. Nathalie Roy (Quebec) also invited APF women parliamentarians to the 2nd Sommet des femmes présidentes d'Assemblée de chambres basses, to be held after the Women Parliamentarian and Youth Network meetings in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, in May 2025.

The event schedule was adopted as presented.

Other business

The Bureau adopted the Can Tho Declaration, which combines commitments for closer francophone cooperation on sustainable agriculture, food security and adaptation to climate change.

Mars di Bartolomeo (Luxembourg), Treasurer, introduced a motion to thank the National Assembly of Vietnam and the Vietnamese Branch of the APF.

The minutes of the Bureau's decisions were adopted.

PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

On January 21, 2025, the Bureau meeting was preceded by a parliamentary conference on francophone cooperation in sustainable agriculture, food security and climate change response. The conference brought together parliamentary leaders, APF and OIF representatives, delegates from international, regional and French-speaking organizations based in Vietnam, and special guests from the National Assembly of Vietnam.

The first workshop focused on francophone cooperation in the field of sustainable agriculture. Speakers included Rémi Nono Wondim, Vietnam representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Le Minh Hoan, Vietnamese Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Audrey Bogemans, Member (Quebec). This

workshop examined the specific challenges of developing sustainable agriculture in the French-speaking world, and ways to strengthen cooperation between the public and private sectors and example of successful public-private, South-South, tripartite and quadripartite partnerships were presented.

The second workshop was on the francophone community and food security. Speakers included Bùi Bá Bông, president of rice-growing associations in Vietnam, and Ang Vong Vathana, Chair of the Committee for Legislation and Justice of the National Assembly of Cambodia. The discussions focused on policies and solutions to guarantee food security, the role of francophone institutions, parliamentary support for climate change adaptation plans and innovation in developing sustainable agricultural systems.

The final workshop was on knowledge-sharing to tackle climate change. Speakers included Damien Cesselin, APF Secretary General, Nguyen Tuan Anh, Vice-Chair of the Science, Technology and Environment Committee of the National Assembly of Vietnam, Hervé Conan, Director of the French Development Agency's Vietnam office, Jeremie Adomaho, M.P. (Benin), and Jake Brunner, representative of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in Vietnam. This workshop focused on solutions and best practices implemented by francophone countries and parliaments to address the impacts of climate change. There was also a discussion on what the OIF, APF and other institutions could do to help access climate finance and green funds.

The conference ended with the adoption of the Can Tho Declaration on francophone cooperation in sustainable agriculture, food security and climate change response.

SITE VISITS

On January 22, 2025, participants visited project sites in Can Tho province, capital of the Mekong Delta region. These projects demonstrated the efforts to adapt to climate change and to develop sustainable agriculture in this particularly vulnerable part of the world.

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, M.P.

Chair, Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie