

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

Meeting of the Political Committee of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Dakar, Senegal

From April 28 to 30, 2025

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) in Dakar, Senegal, from April 28 to 30, 2025, is honoured to present its report.

The delegation was led by the **Honourable Marie-Françoise Mégie**, Senator. She was accompanied by the **Honourable Suze Youance**, Senator, and Julie Pelletier, Executive Secretary of the Canadian branch.

In addition to Canada, parliamentarians from the following 17 branches of the APF participated in the meeting of the PC: Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Benin, Cambodia, Cameroon, Catalonia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, France, Gabon, Luxembourg, Morocco, Mauritania, Quebec, Romania, Senegal and Switzerland. The four regions of the APF, namely, Africa, the Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe, were therefore represented.

WORKING GROUP ON THE REVISION OF THE STATUTES OF THE ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE AND THE DEMOCRATIC OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The **Honourable Suze Youance**, Senator, participated in the Working Group on the Revision of the Statutes of the APF and the Democratic Oversight Committee on April 28, 2025, which was chaired by Mr. André Reichardt, Senator (France). In addition to the Canadian Branch, the following branches were also represented: Benin, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Luxembourg, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Quebec, and Switzerland.

Revision of the Draft APF General Secretariat's Charter of Ethics

This Working Group is mandated to examine and propose amendments to the APF Statutes and to other related administrative and financial documents. It studied the initial draft of the Service Code as stipulated in article 9.2 of the internal regulations of the APF that prescribes the rights, obligations and duties of the APF staff. This Service Code originated from an application that the Canadian branch made during the Working Group's meeting in November 2023. Senator **Youance** highlighted the work that the APF had done in conjunction with the Réseau francophone d'éthique et de déontologie parlementaires on this initial draft. However, she pointed out that the provisions that deal with harassment and discrimination would be drafted based on the policy framework adopted by the APF's Network of Women Parliamentarian in July 2022. The Working Group agreed to pursue revisions to the proposed draft in 2025, address issues of harassment and discrimination in a separate document and submit the Code to the Bureau during its meeting in January 2025.

Discussions on Political Situation

Members discussed the steps to be taken following applications by Mali and Burkina Faso to withdraw from the Francophonie and the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo in its conflict with Rwanda.

Discussions on Applications for Membership (Ghana, São Tomé and Príncipe, Landtag of Saarland and AP-COI)

The meeting agreed to issue a favourable opinion on applications for membership from Ghana, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Landtag of Saarland; it was also agreed to accept an application for observer status from the Association des Parlements des États membres de la Commission de l'océan Indien (AP-COI) [parliamentarians from the Indian Ocean Commission countries]. The applications will be submitted for the Committee's approval.

POLITICAL COMMITTEE

The Canadian delegation participated in the proceedings of the APF Political Committee (PC) on April 29 and 30, 2025. 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 Statutes and to how they are revised and applied.

The session began with opening remarks by the chairman of the PC, Mr. André Reichardt, Senator (France), the president of the APF, Mr. Hilarion Étong, Member of Parliament (Cameroon), and by the speaker of the parliament of Senegal, His Excellency El Malik N'Diaye.

Review of the Political Situation in the Francophone Community

Mr. André Mbata Betukumeso, Member of Parliament (the Democratic Republic of Congo) and rapporteur, presented his report on the political situation in the francophone community. The report focused on the situation in the suspended branches of the APF (Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mali, Niger and Syria), the branches in transition (Gabon, Guinea and Chad) and the branch placed on alert (Central African Republic). Mr. Mbata Betumesko also provided an overview of the political situation in the DRC, Lebanon and Ukraine.

Mr. Nicolas Walder, National Advisor (Switzerland) and rapporteur, then presented a report on the death penalty in the francophone community. He noted that more than three quarters of APF branches have abolished the death penalty and added that while the death penalty is still legal in ten of these countries, they have not carried it out in the last ten years; six branches have not abolished it. He concluded his report by noting that it was important to mobilize the APF to press for the practice to be abolished and expressed his desire for the organization to establish an action plan aimed at supporting branches where the practice remains legal, with the ultimate goal of achieving complete abolition across all member branches. He planned to submit his action plan during the plenary session in Paris in July 2025.

Lastly, Mr. Nicolas Guinard, Director, Political Affairs and Democratic Governance, International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF), provided an overview of OIF's activities in countries experiencing political turmoil or transition: Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Gabon, Guinea, Lebanon, Mali and Niger. He also highlighted the objectives and the support that the OIF provided during his most recent

francophone electoral missions to the Comoros, Gabon, Moldavia and Rwanda. He closed by stating that the OIF deemed the role of parliamentarians essential in these missions and that in this regard a guide was created in conjunction with the APF in December 2024 to maximize their involvement.

Representatives from each branch commented on the political issues that were brought up.

Round Table on Political News in Individual Branches

The PC held a round table during which participants addressed their countries' current political developments. Senator **Youance** (Canada) gave an overview of the latest parliamentary news and touched on the results of the April 28 general elections that brought the Liberal government led by the Right Honourable Mark Carney into power. The Senator referred to the trade tensions with the United States as a result of trade tariffs put in place by President Donald Trump and highlighted the measures the Canadian government has put in place to support affected businesses and workers.

Current Political News in Suspended Branches and Political Developments

Following the amendment of its mechanisms for democratic oversight that promotes the maintenance of dialogue, the Political Committee now invites suspended branches to participate in some of its proceedings to present progress on the democratic transition processes.

Committee members heard the presentation of Mr. Jerry Tardieu, a member of Haiti's parliament from 2016 to 2020. Mr. Tardieu provided a brief background of the latest political developments in his country and gave an assessment on the first year of the Transitional Presidential Council that was established in accordance with the Accord politique pour une transition pacifique et ordonnée [Political agreement for a peaceful and orderly transition] signed on April 3, 2024. He reiterated that restoring security ought to be his country's priority and emphasized the need for support from the international community, particularly through a United Nations (UN) peace-keeping force.

A question and answer session followed. Senator **Youance** asked Mr. Tardieu if he agreed with the Haitian diaspora who feel that the term "armed gangs" ought to be dropped and replaced with situation of "non-international armed conflicts", a concept that is recognized in international humanitarian law, in order to facilitate UN intervention.

This point of the meeting agenda concluded with members agreeing that the Committee should adopt a resolution on Haiti by the end of its meeting in Dakar.

Political Debate: Discussions and Views on the Mandates of the Political Committee

Participants in the PC then had a chance to share their views on how the APF can reassert its influence on the international stage in relation to the security situation in the Sahel region and in the francophone community, and noted that this should be a priority in order to strengthen parliamentary diplomacy.

It was decided to:

- take priority action to resolve the crisis in the Great Lakes region, the Sahel, Lebanon, Haiti and Ukraine;
- undertake a Good Offices Mission to the Great Lakes region from May 26 to 30, 2025; and
- establish contact with the members of the Alliance of the Sahel countries as soon as possible.

Presentation of Draft Reports

Through its work, the PC also examined the draft report by Senator **Éric Forest (Canada)** 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, which looks at how traditional media have adapted to new funding models and how these affect the work of journalists and the quality of available information, was presented by Senator **Marie-Françoise Mégie (Canada)**. The presentation was thought-provoking, and it was agreed that experts should be invited to the PC meetings to be held in Montreal, Canada, in July 2024.

The presentation was followed by a presentation by Mr. Martin Faye, a retired Senegalese journalist who used to work with the Hironnelle Foundation, a Swiss non-profit organization that provides access to reliable local and independent information to populations in crisis situations. Mr. Faye has represented the Foundation in several African francophone countries, including Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is also an important personality in Senegalese radio and television. He elaborated on how disinformation in Senegal distorts public opinion, heightens social tensions and jeopardizes the integrity of free elections. He underscored several initiatives undertaken by public media to address this issue, notably the creation of fact-checking tools to swiftly counter circulating misinformation and educational programs and information campaigns designed to cultivate analytical analysis and to bolster trust in public media.

Mr. Gaëtan Van Goidsenhoven (Belgium, Wallonia-Brussels) presented a report on l’État numérique et les droits humains [Digital mindset and human rights]. Ms. Maryline Picard (Quebec) presented on national reconciliation processes and transitional justice.

Follow-up on the Working Group on the Revision of the Statutes and of the Oversight Committee

Chairman Reichardt (France) summarized the work of the Working Group on the Revision of the Statutes, which met in Dakar on April 28, 2025 in relation to the drafting of the Charter of Ethics of the APF’s General Secretariat.

Application for Membership and Change of Status

The PC issued a favourable opinion on applications for membership from the parliaments of Ghana, the Landtag of Saarland, São Tomé and Príncipe (member branch), and joint membership from the Association des Parlements des États membres de la Commission de l’océan Indien (AP-COI) [parliamentarians from the Indian Ocean Commission countries] (observer).

Draft question to the Secretary General of the International Organization of the Francophonie During the 50th session (Paris)

Members discussed and amended the draft question concerning the attractiveness of the francophone community in the context of multilateralism crises and the rejection of Francophonie by certain member states, which was presented by the Committee Chair.

Draft Declaration

A draft declaration on the situation in Haiti was adopted. It was presented by Senator **Marie-Françoise Mégie** (Canada) and calls for restoring a security situation that is conducive to the conduct of free and democratic elections and recommends a United Nations peace mission, combined with a component to support for justice.

Dates and Venues for the Next Meetings of the Political Committee

The Chair of the PC concluded the meeting by stating that the next meeting of the PC would be held in Paris, France, on July 11, 2025, and that the Benin Branch had offered to host the intersessional meeting of the PC in 2026.

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