

Canada – Africa
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada – Afrique

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation at the Bilateral Mission to the Republic of
Tunisia and the Arab Republic of Egypt**

Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association

**Tunis, Tunisia, and Cairo, Egypt
January 16 to 25, 2017**

REPORT

MEMBERS OF THE CANADIAN DELEGATION

The Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association (CAPA) (“the Association”) was represented by Robert Oliphant, MP, Co-Chair; the Honourable Jim Munson, Senator, Vice-Chair; Harold Albrecht, MP, Vice-Chair; David Christopherson, MP, Vice-Chair; and Joyce Murray, MP. The delegation was accompanied by the Association’s secretary, Josée Thérien, and its analyst, André Léonard.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

The Association made bilateral visits to Tunis, Tunisia, and Cairo, Egypt, from 16 to 25 January 2017. This was the Association’s second bilateral mission to Egypt and Tunisia, the first to those two countries having taken place in 2007 and 2009 respectively.

The objectives of CAPA’s mission to **Tunisia** were the following:

- to follow-up on its 2009 bilateral mission and to reinforce relations between Canadian and Tunisian parliamentarians;
- to strengthen Canada’s bilateral relations with Tunisia;
- to exchange views with parliamentarians from both the government and opposition on how they fulfil their roles as representatives, and in the business of Parliament, including in committees;
- to gain a parliamentary perspective on the situation in Tunisia over six years after the Arab Spring;
- to engage parliamentarians on issues of democracy, governance, the rule of law, and human rights;
- to discuss the regional security context;
- to look at Canadian activity in the country and the region, including the work of civil society organizations and businesses.

The objectives of CAPA’s mission to Egypt were the following:

- to follow-up on its 2007 bilateral visit mission and to strengthen relations with between Canadian and Egyptian parliamentarians;
- to strengthen Canada’s bilateral relations with Egypt;
- to exchange views with parliamentarians from both the government and opposition on how they fulfil their roles as representatives, and in the business of Parliament, including in committees;

- to gain a parliamentary perspective on the current political situation in Egypt;
- to study Egypt's relations with other African countries as well as with countries in the Middle East, and to look at the role that Egypt plays in regional organizations;
- to engage parliamentarians on issues of democracy, governance, the rule of law, and human rights;
- to discuss the regional security context;
- to acquaint parliamentarians – both Canadian and African – with Canada's involvement in North Africa, including its development support and business activity.

REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA

Located in North Africa, along the Mediterranean Sea, Tunisia is part of the Maghreb region. Its neighbours are Algeria to the west and Libya to the southeast. It has a surface area of 163,610 km², which is 28% more than the combined area of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The capital, Tunis, had a population of close to two million in 2015. It is also one of the country's 24 governorates (provinces).¹

Tunisia has about 11.1 million inhabitants, 98% of whom are of Arab or Berber origin. The remaining 2% are mainly Europeans. The population, like that of most African countries, is relatively young, with 38% of the population aged 24 and under. The official religion is Islam (99% of the population), and minority religions include Christianity (1% of the population) and Judaism. Arabic is the official language, but French is also widely spoken, especially in commerce, and Berber is spoken in certain regions.²

A. Recent political history

From December 2010 to January 2011, Tunisia experienced a turning point in its history, a revolution that challenged the country's economic disparities and social and democratic values. The revolution, commonly called the Jasmine Revolution (or the Dignity Revolution) led to the departure on 14 January 2011 of President Ben Ali, who had been in power since 1987. The Constitutional Council then appointed the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Fouad Mebazâa, as interim President of the Republic. Mr. Mebazâa eventually appointed his transition government, led by Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi. The new government was tasked with holding the national elections of the National Constituent Assembly, which replaced the Chamber of Deputies and Advisors, and was responsible for drafting and adopting the new constitution.

Legislative elections were held on 23 October 2011 and were considered the country's first free and fair elections because they allowed the participation of more than 90

¹ Calculations made by the author are based on data from Statistics Canada, [Land and freshwater area, by province and territory](#); and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "Geography" and "Government" in [Africa: Tunisia](#), The World Factbook.

² CIA, "People and Society" in [Africa: Tunisia](#), The World Factbook.

parties that had previously been prohibited. With a voter turnout of 90%, the Islamic Ennahda Party won 89 of the 217 seats. It formed a coalition government with the Congress for the Republic (CPR), considered a centre-left party, which won 29 seats, and Ettakatol, a social democratic party, which won 20 seats. Under the new government, Moncef Marzouki of the CPR became President of the Republic, Hamadi Jebali of Ennahda Head of Government and Prime Minister, and Mustapha Ben Jaafar of Ettakatol President of the National Constituent Assembly. The government, in addition to representing three parties, included independent ministers. The new government was sworn in on 23 December 2011.

The Nidaa Tounes (Call of Tunisia) party was founded in June 2012 by Béji Caïd Essebsi and approved in July 2012. Its goal was to rally opposition forces.

A new Constitution was adopted in January 2014. At the legislative elections on 26 October 2014, the National Constituent Assembly was replaced by the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP), which is a unicameral assembly of 217 members. The candidate lists from the various parties must include an equal number of men and women, except in constituencies with an uneven number of seats³. Nidaa Tounes won 38% of the vote and 86 of the 217 seats, as compared to 28% of the vote and 69 seats for Ennahda. Without an absolute majority, Nidaa Tounes had to form a coalition with other parties. Habib Essid became prime minister in February 2015. On 30 July 2016, his government lost a confidence vote and Youssef Chahed (Nidaa Tounes) became prime minister in August 2016.

The president is elected by absolute majority, with two rounds if necessary, for a five-year term. During the second round of the presidential elections, on 21 December 2014, Beji Caïd Essebsi (Nidaa Tounes) was elected with 56% of the vote, compared to 44% for Moncef Marzouki (CPR).

B. Economic and social development

In 2015, Tunisia's gross domestic product (GDP) was US\$126.6 billion, equal to about US\$11,400 per capita.⁴ In 2014, services accounted for 61.9% of Tunisia's GDP, compared to 44.4% in 1985; industry represented 29.3% of GDP, versus 38.4% in 1984. Lastly, agriculture represented 8.8% of Tunisia's GDP, compared to 24.6% in 1972.⁵

Between 2006 and 2010, Tunisia welcomed between 6.5 million and 7 million international tourists annually. That number fell to 4.8 million in 2011 and 6 million in 2014. While tourism represented the equivalent of 16% to 19% of the country's total exports between 2005 and 2010, it accounted for only 11.2% in 2011 and 14.1% in 2014.⁶

On 18 March 2015, 22 people, including 21 tourists, were killed in an attack at the Bardo Museum in Tunis. Another attack, on 26 May 2015, left 38 people dead at a

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union, [Tunisia: Electoral System](#).

⁴ Library of Parliament, Trade and Investment Series, Canada–Tunisia (forthcoming).

⁵ World Bank Group, [Countries: Tunisia](#).

⁶ Ibid.

beach in Sousse. On 24 November 2015, a presidential guard bus exploded, killing 12 people. A state of emergency was declared and extended on several occasions, most recently for three months until 16 May 2017.⁷ This series of terrorist attacks probably contributed to the 33.4% drop in tourism revenues from 2014 to 2015. Revenues in the third quarter of 2016 rose again, however, by 42.1% compared to the third quarter of 2015.⁸

The business environment in Tunisia is relatively good: the country stood 77th out of 190 countries in the World Bank's 2016 ease of doing business rankings, and 5th out of 20 countries in the Middle East and North Africa.⁹

In 2013, the International Labour Organization reported a 25.6% labour participation rate for women in Tunisia versus 70% for men. The unemployment rate was 15.9%, 23% for women and 13.3% for men. In 2012, the youth unemployment rate (15 to 24 years) was 35.2%. In 2013, public spending on social protection accounted for 10.4% of Tunisia's GDP.¹⁰

In 2014, life expectancy at birth was 74.1 years.¹¹ The incidence of AIDS is very low, less than 0.1% of the population aged 15 to 49, compared to 0.4% in Italy and Spain.¹² That same year, Tunisia ranked 96th out of 188 countries on the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index.¹³

C. Governance and human rights

According to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Tunisia ranked 7th among 54 African countries on overall governance in 2016.¹⁴ That same year, it ranked 69th out of 167 countries on the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index¹⁵ and 75th out of 176 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.¹⁶

In 2016, Freedom House classified Tunisia as a free country. On a scale of 1 to 7, 1 being the highest possible score, it was rated 1 for political rights and 3 for civil liberties.¹⁷

D. Canada-Tunisia relations

Diplomatic relations between Canada and Tunisia date back to 1957. Both countries are members of the Francophonie and also signatories to the UN Convention against Corruption and the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. There are

⁷ Le Figaro.fr, « [Tunisie : l'état d'urgence prolongé de trois mois](#) », 16 February 2017.

⁸ Calculations based on data from the Central Bank of Tunisia, Development of main flows and balance of external payments (receipts).

⁹ World Bank Group, [Economy Rankings](#), 2017.

¹⁰ International Labour Organization, [ILOSTAT](#). (Select: Country Profiles, then Tunisia.)

¹¹ World Bank, [Countries: Tunisia](#).

¹² UNAIDS, [AidsInfo](#).

¹³ United Nations Development Programme, [Human Development Data \(1980-2015\)](#).

¹⁴ Mo Ibrahim Foundation, [A Decade of African Governance: 2006-2015](#).

¹⁵ Economist Intelligence Unit, [Democracy Index 2016: Revenge of the "deplorables."](#)

¹⁶ Transparency International, [Corruption Perceptions Index 2016](#).

¹⁷ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2016](#).

between 15,000 and 20,000 Canadians of Tunisian origin; they reside primarily in the province of Quebec. As one of the most popular destinations for foreign students, Canada attracts close to 2,000 Tunisian students every year.¹⁸

In 2015, Canadian exports to Tunisia totalled \$127.1 million, a 38.4% increase over 2014, accounting for just 0.02% of all Canadian exports. The items exported were primarily wheat and worn clothing. Canadian imports from Tunisia, on the other hand, totalled \$85.3 million, a 14.5% increase over 2014. The items imported were primarily olive oil based and piping. In 2015, Canada's direct investment in Tunisia was valued at \$32 million, a 10.3% increase over 2014. Tunisia ranked 74th as a location for Canadian direct foreign investment among the 102 countries for which data is available.¹⁹

On 29 and 30 November 2016, the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, travelled to Tunis to co-chair the international conference in support of Tunisia's economic, social and sustainable development, also known as Tunisia 2020.²⁰ At the conference, the federal government announced \$24 million in assistance to Tunisia over four years, including \$20 million for development, with a focus on projects providing socio-economic support for vulnerable populations including women, economic growth and governance. The remaining \$4 million will be allocated to security, with projects focusing on border security to limit movements of foreign fighters, combating the funding of terrorism and boosting resilience among the affected populations.²¹

MEETINGS IN TUNISIA

1. Briefing presented by Ms. Carol McQueen, Ambassador of Canada to Tunisia, Ms. Carla Castaneda, Security Advisor to the Canadian Embassy to Tunisia, and Ms. Marie-Ève Bilodeau, Tunisia Country Director of the National Democratic Institute

The delegation was extensively briefed by the Embassy of Canada and the National Democratic Institute²² on the current situation in Tunisia. The focus of the meeting was to inform members about important issues facing Tunisia ahead of meetings with NGO representatives, members of civil society and members of the ARP and the Tunisian government. Discussions focused on the political situation, governance and democracy, the social, cultural and economic situation and security issues.

2. Meeting with the Canada-Tunisia Parliamentary Friendship Group and members of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People of Tunisia

¹⁸ Embassy of Canada to Tunisia, [Canada-Tunisia Relations](#), May 2016.

¹⁹ Library of Parliament, Trade and Investment Series, Canada-Tunisia (forthcoming).

²⁰ Government of Canada, [Minister Bibeau to travel to Tunis to co-chair international conference in support of Tunisia's economic, social and sustainable development](#), News Release, 28 November 2016.

²¹ Government of Canada, [Funding for Canada's integrated support to Tunisia](#), News Release, 29 November 2016.

²² The National Democratic Institute is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization that supports the efforts of democratic institutions in 70 countries. Ms. Bilodeau is the organization's country director in Tunisia and organized some of the delegation's meetings.

This was the first opportunity for this Tunisian parliamentary friendship group, which was founded in 2014, to meet with a Canadian delegation visiting Tunisia. The group strives to promote cultural, social and economic relations between the two countries, and its goal in Tunisia is to further development and establish equality among Tunisian individuals and regions. The group's members are also members of the ARP, some of whom are parliamentary committee chairs.

The group's members addressed several themes. Terrorism was stated to be the main threat to Tunisia and a major challenge because considerable financial resources are needed to address and fight it. Since Tunisia has historically been a peaceful country, its armed forces have not traditionally been highly developed. However, the Association was told that the country successfully countered a significant terrorist threat in 2016 following the devastating attacks the previous year. The delegation was told that terrorism also requires effective international cooperation because of its global nature. The Tunisian people are currently concerned about the so-called jihadists and others who could be potentially involved in terrorism who are returning to Tunisia.

The friendship group appreciates Canada's support and hopes this relationship will grow stronger. For example, the members noted Canada's recent financial support for development projects, which was announced at the Tunisia 2020 conference. Speakers at this meeting had hoped Canada would provide additional support for Tunisian democracy. They also advocated on behalf of Tunisian students living and studying in Canada who need more support, such as acquiring the right to work outside their university environment.

The theme of governance was also addressed. Tunisia's parliament conducts audits that are reviewed by committees. Once again, the Association was told that the parliament lacks the resources to examine public finances thoroughly to ensure accountability.

Other speakers noted that the media are playing an increased role in monitoring public policy, legislative processes, government activities and politicians' actions. The need for improved communications between the ARP and the public was acknowledged by members of the friendship group citing the need for better use of social media and other on-line applications to inform the public about parliamentary activities, government policies and legislation.

3. Meeting with His Excellency Mohamed Ennaceur, President of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People of Tunisia

This brief courtesy call was an opportunity to strengthen existing parliamentary ties between the two countries. Members of the Association invited Tunisian representatives to visit Canada. The President of the ARP spoke of the difficulties involved in encouraging the many Tunisian political parties to work together. The President discussed the legislative processes in their new parliament indicating that bills, which may originate with the government or with representatives, are referred to committees. The legislative committees meet almost daily, whereas special committees do so once a week. The President expressed optimism about Tunisia's emerging democracy and new parliamentary processes.

4. Meeting with interns at the Assembly of the Representatives of the People of Tunisia, organized by the National Democratic Institute

This meeting was an opportunity for the delegation to speak with parliamentary interns, the vast majority of whom are young women, and who do an enormous amount of work on legislation, analysis, communications and relations with civil society. The internship program is a project organized and supported by the National Democratic Institute. Interns work for the caucus of the party of their choice or in supporting the broader communications functions of the ARP itself. The interns are not paid and generally complete two four-month internships each. All are recent university graduates, some with graduate degrees and many planning on continuing their studies before entering employment.

The interns expressed a great interest in the workings of the Parliament of Canada, Canada itself and the relations among individuals and groups of various origins in Canada. Delegation members offered a picture of Canadian society and broadly explained how Canada's parliamentary system works.

In addition, the interns enthusiastically explained their interest in the emerging Tunisian democracy, how they wanted to get involved in civil society, their role in explaining the importance of democracy to older generations. Citing the extremely high unemployment rate among youth in Tunisia, they also had ideas about how to improve the situation of young people in their country. For example, they spoke of the need to have better information about the labour market so that young people could be aware of increased opportunities in the trades and the current surplus of university graduates. It was noted that, because of high youth unemployment, this internship program was extremely popular and well-sought after among their peers. Tunisia has had a long and noble history of formal higher education and, as such, many young people do not enter the trades. Additionally, it was expressed that young people could also be offered financial incentives to start up their own businesses. They expressed that, overall, training for young people must also more closely match skills that are in demand, and youth must be more flexible in accepting jobs in fields that may not be exactly the ones they studied in because that at least enables them to acquire workplace experience.

5. Meeting with parliamentary journalists, organized by the National Democratic Institute

The delegation met with parliamentary journalists, most of whom were relatively new to the profession or had previously worked in sports or arts and culture journalism. With the emerging democracy has come new opportunities in journalism and there is a shift of resources taking place and a growing interest in political journalism.

The discussion focused mainly on relations between journalists and parliamentarians. The discussion centred on professionalization of journalism in the emerging democracy. Members of the Association reflected on the need to maintain journalistic objectivity and to have clear lines between politicians, government officials and the media. Mutual respect was cited as the basis of the best objective reporting and transparency in the political process.

Delegation members used their experience to explain to the journalists that most politicians have two motivations: a sincere desire to initiate and implement policies to serve the public and to improve the lives of their citizens; and at the same time, the desire first to acquire power and then to retain it. Consequently, politicians need journalists to help convey their message. But it was also noted that journalists need politicians to write a story, satisfy editors and to meet deadlines. While governments often focus on national news media, backbench politicians also need local and regional journalists to convey their messages to constituents.

The important role that Tunisian journalists are now able to play as models for journalists from other Middle Eastern countries, where the press is less free, was also mentioned.

One Tunisian journalist suggested that it would be helpful to have seminars involving Tunisian and Canadian journalists to discuss, share and learn best practices in recognition of the important role that journalists play in strengthening democracy.

6. Meeting with Ms. Naziha Laabidi, Minister of Women, the Family and Childhood, and senior officials from that department

The delegation met Ms. Laabidi, who stressed the importance of the friendship between Canada and Tunisia. The Minister also outlined her department's major areas of work, which include the well-being of women, the family, children and the elderly.

The department's priorities with respect to women are to empower them through microcredit (Pioneer program) to foster entrepreneurial activity and the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises owned and operated by women; to combat violence against women by creating help lines and crisis centres; and to provide training within government to incorporate gender-based analysis in all public policies. A bill to combat violence against women was to be debated soon.

With respect to families, the delegation was told that young Tunisians are marrying less as a result of the high cost of weddings, which is considered a burden in difficult economic times. Additionally, there is a high rate of marriage breakdown and divorce. The department aims to reduce the divorce rate by organizing marriage counselling training for young Tunisians. Parental training courses are also offered. The Association heard that living conditions in rural areas are being improved through education programs for women and enhanced transportation networks.

A child protection code was adopted in 1995, but not all Tunisian statutes have been changed to comply with it. One of the department's priorities is the prevention of sexual abuse and violence against children. The Minister suggested that Tunisia could draw inspiration from the European convention on children's rights. Tunisia has ratified the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

The Minister and her officials also said that the creation of a public day care program, managed by the municipalities, was being considered. Cultural and sports activities and "citizenship clubs" are being organized for young people. The children's strategy is currently being evaluated with the help of UNICEF's SABER Programme. The Minister also noted that Tunisia has 450 children's centres, although the goal is to reduce that

number so that children are directed to foster families and to provide services to those families.

It was noted that approximately 10% of Tunisia's population consists of older persons, who are experienced, educated and healthy, and that the country is attempting to learn how to take advantage of their experience. Tunisia also has legislation to protect older persons.

Lastly, the discussion turned to foreign aid. The Minister recognized that, in order to build confidence among donor countries, aid funding must be properly used, there must be accountability, and corruption must be reduced.

7. Meeting with Mr. Chafik Sarsar, President of the Supreme Independent Elections Authority (ISIE)

This meeting was an opportunity for the delegation to gain a clearer understanding of the governance of the ISIE, which consists of a council of eight members elected by parliament for a renewable six-year term. No one may run for election to public office for five years after leaving the ISIE. The ISIE is responsible for presidential, legislative, regional and municipal elections, and elections to the judicial council. The next challenge will be to organize municipal elections in 2017. Mr. Sarsar noted that there are many similarities between the ISIE and Canada's Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

The financing of political parties, election campaigns and televised debates were also discussed at length. The latter is more the responsibility of the Haute autorité indépendante de la communication audiovisuelle (HAICA), the independent audiovisual communications authority equivalent to Canada's CRTC, which will be replaced by the Audiovisual Regulation Authority.

There is a public financing system for candidates, under which the government provides 20% of financing and the candidate 40%, while the remaining 40% comes from other sources (donations), to a ceiling of approximately \$40,000. Formal complaints respecting breaches of election rules may be filed with administrative tribunals or the courts.

Access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities was also discussed. For example, ballots are available in braille, and sign language is used in advertising. All polling stations that did not provide wheelchair access during the first elections have now been renovated to ensure accessibility.

8. Meeting with Mr. Abdellatif Kharrat, First President of the Cour des Comptes

The mandate of the Cour des Comptes was explained to delegation members at this meeting. As provided by the Constitution, that mandate is to conduct financial, compliance and performance audits of Tunisia's government institutions. Examples of recent audits included an audit of hazardous waste management and a compliance audit of election campaigns. Approximately 30 departments are reviewed every year, and audit reports are submitted to the ARP. Many criteria, such as current

developments and perceived problems, are taken into consideration in conducting an investigation.

The court has 155 judges and four regional chambers. The main court, which is located in Tunis, has nine chambers whose mandates vary by theme, such as human resources and agriculture. A number of mandates will be added in the near future.

9. Luncheon meeting with representatives of non-governmental organizations

The delegation met with representatives of several Tunisian NGOs. Sana Ghenima, of Femmes et Leadership, an organization that promotes leadership by women, noted that the revolution had succeeded but that Tunisia is still in an early development stage in several respects. In her view, the disappointment caused by the lack of improvement in economic conditions may lead some individuals to turn to terrorism. She also noted that there was too much control over international NGOs by the government. It was suggested that Canadian aid could take the form of supporting best practices regarding transparency, the strengthening of the role of women and a focus on the creation of youth employment.

Maya Ben Khaled, from the Arab Human Rights Institute, focused on the essential role of education in retaining youth in Tunisia. She also noted that a lack of civic education might be a problem and emphasized that any future assistance from Canada should focus on education.

Gabriele Reiter, from the World Organization against Torture, also drew attention to the problem of corruption and the impunity associated with it. She spoke in favour of greater participation by civil society in democratic processes and pleaded for assistance in education.

Ali Zeddini, from the Tunisian Human Rights League, said that the revolution had been successful because of the general pre-existing strength of Tunisian civil society. However, the Association heard that there is still a significant economic and social imbalance among Tunisia's regions and among Tunisians. It was acknowledged that the government and civil society need to work together to develop a plan for social improvement and to combat corruption.

10. Meeting with Mr. Khémaies Jhinaoui, Minister of Foreign Affairs

This meeting focused on three main themes: relations between Tunisia and Canada, Tunisia's general problems and certain international challenges.

The Minister noted that relations between Canada and Tunisia have always been important and he is pleased that they appear to be expanding. He was pleased to meet Ms. Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, at the Tunisia 2020 conference. He noted the importance of parliamentary relations and said that Canadian assistance with best parliamentary and governance practices would be welcome.

The Minister talked about Tunisia's challenges in the areas of the economy and security. The country's economic growth is weaker than it used to be and

unemployment is high. There are disparities among the regions. Until 2015, the army and security were not a priority, but terrorist attacks have forced the government to reset priorities and redirect resources to deal with this new threat.

The delegation was told that Tunisia's neighbour, Libya, has three unofficial governments and the situation is very fluid. A large segment of the Libyan population lives in western Libya near the Tunisian border. Consequently, there could be an influx of refugees in the event of a civil war.

Lastly, the government's current domestic priority is to provide good employment opportunities for Tunisian youth, in an effort to ensure future civil harmony and continued democratic success. At the present time, there is little direct foreign investment to address those needs. Again, it was suggested that Tunisia's education system may be failing its young people, as the education programs they are receiving are too general in nature and not directed to current labour market needs. According to the Minister, Canadian assistance would be welcomed in adapting the Tunisian education system to promote youth employment and to further civil cohesion.

11. Dinner meeting on parliamentary communications with staff and interns of the Department of Communications and the Civil Society Office of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People of Tunisia, organized by the National Democratic Institute

This meeting gave an opportunity for participants to discuss strategies aimed at improving communication between the ARP and civil society. It was acknowledged by ARP staff that they as a body could do a better job at communicating the work of parliament and of parliamentarians with the public. According to some participants, civil society does not always understand the role of government or its practices. Additionally, it was suggested that there is a lack of interest in political issues among many Tunisians.

There has been an increase in the number of requests for communication products from the ARP as a result of the revolution and the ensuing freedom of the press. Once again, however, the lack of capacity in this regard was noted. Given the lack of resources, the current strategy is to focus more on the use of social media because of its low cost. For example, the results of the proceedings of parliamentary committees are now published on the Internet.

Members of the delegation asked about the availability of parliamentary committees to the broader public. It was also noted that travel by such committees, in Canada, has proven to be somewhat helpful, and it was suggested that parliamentary committees in Tunisia might consider travelling more across the country so they can reach out to civil society. As there are many associations, few of them are able to appear before committees. The delegates also suggested that they might consider allowing civil society to submit written briefs to committees.

12. Meeting with Mr. Chawki Tebib, President of the Anti-Corruption Authority

The Anti-Corruption Authority is a government organization. Its president, Mr. Tebib, explained to the delegation that systemic corruption prevailed in Tunisia prior to the revolution. Examples of corruption in the former regime were offered to the Association members.

Mr. Tebib acknowledged that corruption has continued since the revolution and that structures to combat it are still not yet fully in place, though some success has been achieved in this regard. Mr. Tebib outlined three broad types of corruption in their context minor bribes to government officials including police officers and others; larger amounts being paid to senior officials to secure construction contracts or other procurement opportunities; and bribes or inappropriate political contributions to elected office holders and political parties.

The new coalition government has recently made combating corruption one of its key priorities. A roadmap has been established to reduce corruption. The Anti-Corruption Authority budget has been multiplied by a factor of approximately six. Its powers have also been expanded, and it can now prosecute individuals who are suspected of corruption. Public awareness has also been increased. Public campaigns at a local level are also being developed, such as the distribution of stickers to be placed on windshields bearing telephone numbers that people can call to report corruption attempts by local officials including police officers who may have stopped a vehicle.

The delegation was told that the police sector has created “islands of integrity,” police stations with very high transparency and integrity that are becoming examples for others. This concept could be extended to other sectors such as agriculture and transportation.

Mr. Tebib suggested that the fight against political corruption requires legislative reform. Election financing laws, donations and spending limits are unhelpful in discouraging unethical behavior. A bill has been introduced that would require representatives, judges and government officials to disclose their assets. He also suggested that penalties should be higher to eliminate the sense of impunity. Civil society must also get involved to help change attitudes.

Mr. Tebib noted that Tunisia would like to improve its ranking on the Corruption Perceptions Index prepared by the Transparency International organization from its current 76th position out of 160 countries to better than 50th.

13. Working luncheon on parliamentary oversight of government with representatives from each parliamentary group in the Assembly of the Representatives of the People of Tunisia

This meeting was mainly an opportunity for Tunisian parliamentarians to learn more about the various parliamentary mechanisms in Canada. Delegation members spoke at length about the role of the Auditor General of Canada and the various parliamentary committees of the Senate and House of Commons, particularly the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which analyzes the reports of the Office of the Auditor General. The role of the other Officers of Parliament and of the Parliamentary Budget Officer was also briefly addressed.

14. Visit of the TWIZA Association for Democracy and Good Governance

This association, which is funded in part by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, consists of a team of young Tunisians who produce radio programs designed to increase public awareness of political accountability and governance issues.

The delegation was pleased to see the efforts the association had made to inform the public and promote the importance of participating actively in local democracy. Delegates learned about such recent program topics as parliamentarians' presence in their electoral districts, or in some instances the lack thereof, and access to information legislation.

15. Meeting with representatives of civil society

This was an opportunity to meet representatives of international NGOs with a presence in Tunisia: Search for Common Ground, International Crisis Group, Centre for the Study of Islam and Democracy, Forum of Federations (Tunisia), International Foundation for Electoral Systems, EQUITAS – International Centre for Human Rights Education, and Youth Decides.

The main theme of the meeting was radicalization to violence or extremism. The Canadian delegation heard that the reasons for radicalization are numerous and that more research must be conducted on the subject. There was a variety of opinions in this small group with respect to both causes of radicalization and the best measures to counter it. It was agreed that there must also be more communication and collaboration among researchers in order to understand the many factors contributing to radicalization. According to several speakers, young people facing tough economic conditions are easy prey for people seeking to teach them a version of Islam that is inconsistent with the “true” Islam. One problem that was raised was the training of Imams: not all actually study theology but all may proclaim themselves an Imam and promote ideas that are not consistent with Islam.

Some of the participants discussed other possible scenarios; very well-educated young people radicalize as well. Some youth lack a sense of belonging to a community, and terrorist groups use that to attract them to their “community.” The role of the family is very important in preventing radicalization and, as has been noted above, family breakdown is on the increase in Tunisia.

Some NGOs offer alternatives to radicalization, such as sports or cultural programs and activities for young people, and education for imams on democracy and human rights, however, they are often under-resourced to have significant impact.

Another theme addressed was the respect for the rights of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community, which are virtually non-existent in Tunisia. Homosexuality continues to be illegal, which some argue is contrary to the Constitution, but at this time, no political group is willing to change the law because homosexuality continues to be socially unacceptable. According to the speakers, attitudes take time to change, and as of now there is not a significant movement towards LGBT rights in Tunisia.

16. Dinner meeting organized by the Ennahda Party

This dinner was a chance for the delegation to meet representatives and members of the Ennahda Party, which has been included in the coalition government since August 2016. Discussions on Tunisian politics took place at every table. ARP representative Meherzia Laabidi delivered a moving speech on the compatibility of Islam with democratic values. The Association's meeting with Ennahda Party does not indicate an endorsement of the party, as the Association obviously does not endorse any political party, but the delegation was pleased to accept the opportunity to speak with more Tunisian parliamentarians, and the Ennahda Party, which has the largest number of seats in the ARP, afforded the delegation that opportunity.

ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT ²³

The Arab Republic of Egypt is located in northeast Africa. It is bordered to the north by the Mediterranean Sea, to the west by Libya, to the south by Sudan, and to the east by Israel (Gaza Strip) and the Red Sea, which separates it from Saudi Arabia. The country occupies about one million square kilometres, roughly the size of Ontario.²⁴ The Nile flows through Egypt from the south to the north, and many large cities, including the capital, are found along the waterway. The population of Cairo was 18.8 million in 2015, and the country's total population is close to 95 million (2016 figure). Alexandria, located on the Mediterranean Sea, is the second-largest city with close to 4.8 million residents. Egypt is composed of 27 governorates (provinces).

Arabic is the country's official language, but English or French are understood by most educated people. About 90% of the population is Muslim (predominantly Sunni) and 10% is Christian (mostly Coptic Orthodox). Egypt has a very young population: 52% of Egyptians were under 25 in 2016. In 2015, 43.1% of the population lived in urban centres. The annual population growth rate is 2.5%.

A. Recent political history

The declining popularity of President Mubarak, who had been in office since 1981, was hastened by revelations of corruption, including in his own family. Demonstrations in January 2011 seem to have been sparked as well by unemployment, the housing shortage, increased prices for essential goods and the lack of freedom of expression. On 11 February 2011, Mubarak left office and handed power over to the military.

On 24 June 2012, Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi was elected president of Egypt over his opponent Ahmed Shafik with 51.7% of the vote. After attempting to work with the military, Morsi dismissed the head of the army and took on greater legislative powers. In November 2012, he issued a constitutional declaration giving himself power to legislate by decree and nullified existing court challenges.

The economy collapsed during the Morsi presidency. Challenged by a large segment of the population, Morsi was overthrown on 3 July 2013, following a 48-hour ultimatum

²³ Central Intelligence Agency, "[Egypt](#)," The World Factbook.

²⁴ Statistics Canada, [Land and freshwater area, by province and territory](#).

issued by the army in response to massive protests.²⁵ He was arrested by the army the next day, and warrants were issued for the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Adly Mansour, Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, was sworn in as interim president. A new constitution was passed in a referendum on 15 January 2014 (supported by 98.1% of voters), that replaced the 2012 Constitution, which had been suspended by the army when President Morsi was ousted.

Field Marshal Abdel Fattah el-Sissi has been Egypt's new president since 8 June 2014, when he was elected to a four-year term, renewable once, receiving 96% of the vote in an election in which voter turnout was less than 50%.

Voter turnout in the most recent legislative elections held in November and December 2015 was a low 28.3%.²⁶ This was a mixed-member vote held to fill 568 seats in the House of Representatives for five-year terms: 448 were elected by an individual candidacy system, 120 in party-list constituencies, and 28 were selected by the President, for a total of 596 representatives. The majority of representatives support el-Sissi.

Article 2 of the 2014 Constitution states that "Islam is the religion of the state and Arabic its official language. The principles of Islamic Sharia are the principle source of legislation."²⁷

B. Economic and social development

In 2015, Egypt's gross domestic product (GDP) was US\$996.6 billion at purchasing power parity, or about US\$10,900 per capita.²⁸ The country is classified as a lower middle income country. GDP growth was 4.2% in 2015, and inflation was 10.4% in the same year. The consumer price index rose 28.1% from January 2016 to January 2017.²⁹

Faced with budget deficits, the Egyptian government has endeavoured to restore public finances by taking steps to increase tax revenues, control the public service payroll and eliminate universal subsidies in favour of targeted transfers and infrastructure funding. Egypt is also facing lower oil prices and a sluggish recovery in Europe, one of its main trading partners.³⁰

The economy is concentrated in the following sectors: 52.5% services, 36.3% industry and 11.2% agriculture. The Egyptian government's budget deficit represented 11.7% of GDP in 2015 and the public debt accounted for 90.2% of GDP. Exports consist mainly of oil as well as fruits and vegetables, cotton and textiles.³¹

²⁵ New York Times, "[Morsi Defies Egypt Army's Ultimatum to Bend to Protest](#)," 2 July 2013.

²⁶ AFP, "[Égypte: élection sans engouement d'un Parlement entièrement acquis au président Sissi](#)," Jeune Afrique, 5 December 2015.

²⁷ Information in this section is taken primarily from Laval University, Chaire pour le développement de la recherche sur la culture d'expression française en Amérique du Nord, [Égypte](#).

²⁸ Library of Parliament, Canada–Egypt trade and investment series (forthcoming).

²⁹ Trading Economics, [Egypt Inflation Rate](#).

³⁰ World Bank Group, [Egypt – Overview – Context](#).

³¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "[Egypt](#)," The World Factbook.

Egypt's foreign currency reserves decreased from US\$36 billion in 2010 to US\$19.6 billion in September 2016. The Egyptian government had wanted support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) from 2011.³² In November 2016, the IMF announced US\$12 billion in aid over three years but insisted that the Central Bank of Egypt float its currency, which it did in November 2016.³³ Until that point, the central bank had artificially maintained an exchange rate of 8.8 Egyptian pounds for US\$1. A black market has developed due to the lack of foreign currency: 18 Egyptian pounds bought US\$1 at the end of 2016. Devaluation of the pound may also drive up inflation as imports become more expensive. To receive IMF funding, Egypt must also obtain \$6 billion in loans from other countries, which could include China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.³⁴ An additional condition is the introduction of a value-added tax of 13% in 2016–2017 and 14% in 2017–2018; parliament passed this measure in August 2016.³⁵

Egypt's business environment is slightly below the global average; the country ranked 122nd out of 190 according to the World Bank's 2017 ease of doing business ranking, and 12th out of 20 countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The main areas of difficulty related to the payment of taxes (162nd), the enforcement of contracts (162nd) and cross-border trade (168th). The country did much better in terms of starting a business (39th) and dealing with construction permits (64th).³⁶

According to the International Labour Organization, 22.5% of women participated in the labour market in 2015, compared with 70.5% of men. The unemployment rate for 2015 was 12.9%; the rate was 24.2% for women and 9.4% for men. The youth unemployment rate (people aged 15 to 24) was 31.3%. In 2011, public social protection expenditures accounted for 13.2% of Egypt's GDP.³⁷

In 2014, life expectancy at birth was 71.1 years.³⁸ In 2015, the prevalence of AIDS was very low – less than 0.1% of the population between the ages of 15 and 49, compared with 0.4% in Italy and Spain.³⁹ Also in 2014, Egypt ranked 108th out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme.⁴⁰

C. Governance and human rights

According to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Egypt ranked 24th out of 54 African countries in terms of overall governance in 2015. Within the categories that make up this overall ranking, the country placed 9th for sustainable economic

³² Daily News Egypt, "[IMF loan negotiations: Will Egypt make it work this time?](#)", 13 April 2016.

³³ International Monetary Fund, "[IMF Executive Board Approves US\\$12 billion Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility for Egypt](#)", 11 November 2016.

³⁴ Marie de Vergès, "[Au bord de l'asphyxie, l'Égypte laisse flotter sa devise.](#)" Le Monde, 4 November 2016.

³⁵ Lefigaro.fr, "L'Égypte se dote d'une TVA," 29 August 2016.

³⁶ World Bank, "[Economy Rankings](#)," 2017.

³⁷ International Labour Organization, "[ILOSTAT](#)," (Select: "Country Profiles," then "Egypt").

³⁸ World Bank, "[Egypt, Arab Rep.](#)," Data.

³⁹ UNAIDS, "[AidsInfo](#)."

⁴⁰ United Nations Development Programme, "[Human Development Data \(1980-2015\)](#)."

opportunity, 14th for human development, 34th for safety and rule of law, and 46th for participation and human rights.⁴¹

In its 2016 Democracy Index, The Economist ranked Egypt 133th out of 167 countries.⁴² It was categorized as being ruled by an authoritarian regime. Transparency International ranked Egypt 108th out of 176 on its 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index,⁴³ which rates countries based on their perceived level of public sector corruption.

In 2016, Freedom House categorized Egypt as “not free.” On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being the best mark), the country received a score of 6 for political rights and 5 for civil liberties.⁴⁴

In the northern Sinai Peninsula, fighting between the government and an affiliate of the armed extremist group Daesh (the Arabic acronym of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) escalated, despite Egypt’s commitment of significant additional forces. The government claimed that the army had killed thousands of “terrorists” in the Sinai but allowed no independent observers into the conflict area, and residents said the army had killed an unknown number of civilians.⁴⁵ At the time of the delegation’s visit to Egypt, a Coptic church situated near Saint Mark’s Cathedral in Cairo had been bombed a month earlier, resulting in at least 25 dead. More than two months after the delegation’s visit, on 9 April 2017, two attacks claimed by Daesh, near two Coptic churches, one in Alexandria and the other in Tanta, killed at least 47 people and injured more than 100 others. Following these events, Egypt declared a three-month state of emergency.⁴⁶

D. Canada-Egypt Relations ⁴⁷

Canada and Egypt established embassies in their respective capitals in 1954. Their relationship still extends into new areas of cooperation. International trade relations, disarmament issues, the Francophonie, cultural exchanges and education are only a few of the areas of common interest to both countries.

During former foreign Minister John Baird’s visit to Cairo in January 2015, Canada and Egypt reiterated their mutual interest in strengthening bilateral relations, which were further reinforced by Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan’s visit to Egypt in December 2015.

The Canada–Africa Parliamentary Association last visited Egypt in March 2007. During that mission, delegates met with many officials, including Dr. Fathi Sorour, speaker of the lower house of the Egyptian parliament. Delegates also visited the Ismailia and the Suez Canal regions to view community development projects.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Mo Ibrahim Foundation, [A Decade of African Governance: 2006-2015](#).

⁴² Economist Intelligence Unit, [Democracy Index 2016: Revenge of the “deplorables.”](#)

⁴³ Transparency International, [Corruption Perceptions Index 2016](#).

⁴⁴ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2016](#).

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2016: Egypt](#).

⁴⁶ The New York Times, [“Egypt Declares State of Emergency, as Attacks Undercut Promise of Security,”](#) 9 April 2017.

⁴⁷ Embassy of Canada to Egypt, Canada-Egypt Relations.

⁴⁸ Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association, [Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation on the bilateral visit to Egypt, Cairo, Egypt, March 4 to 6, 2007](#).

In 2015, Canadian exports to Egypt accounted for 0.1% of all Canadian exports and were worth \$428.8 million, down 7.8% from 2014. Exports consisted mainly of lentils and aircraft. Canada imported goods from Egypt worth \$741.2 million, an increase of 19.8% over 2014. Imports consisted primarily of gold and, to a lesser extent, carpets. In 2015, Canada had negative foreign direct investment stock of \$27 million in Egypt. In 2013, Egypt had \$3 billion in foreign direct investment stock in Canada.⁴⁹

MEETINGS IN EGYPT

1. Dinner and briefing presented by Mr. Troy Lulashnyk, Canadian Ambassador to Egypt, and Isabelle Savard and Solveig Schuster of the Canadian Embassy in Egypt

The ambassador and his staff provided a snapshot of the current economic, political and social situation in Egypt.

Egypt is facing several problems:

- an extremely difficult economic situation, with a sharply decreased tourism sector, a staggering inflation rate and continued low oil prices, which is reducing activity in the Suez Canal;
- security problems, with attacks on Christian churches and other terrorist activities particularly in the north of the country, in addition to the imminent return of so-called jihadists who previously left Egypt to fight in Syria and Iraq;
- corruption, as well as challenges related to human rights and freedom of the press;
- a very low level of education, a weak health system and a rapidly growing population.

However, certain solutions being implemented by the government were noted:

- a desire to unify Egyptians, regardless of their religion, by immediately rebuilding destroyed churches and the visit of President el-Sissi to Saint Mark's Coptic Christian Cathedral in Cairo on several occasions;
- the development of major economic projects such as the expansion of the Suez Canal and the construction of new cities, including a new administrative capital.

2. Meeting with Mr. Abdel Fattah el Sissi, President of Egypt

The delegation had an opportunity to meet with the President of Egypt, Mr. el-Sissi, in a lengthy meeting of approximately 90 minutes, three times longer than was originally planned. President el-Sissi was welcoming of Canada's engagement with Egypt and

⁴⁹ Library of Parliament, Canada–Egypt trade and investment series (forthcoming).

was forthcoming about Egypt's challenges. The President and the delegation had a frank and open discussion about Egypt's problems.

The delegation raised issues of human rights and freedom of the press with the President. President el-Sissi indicated that, in his opinion, the press was almost too free, by which he meant that it lacked professionalism as would be understood in the West, was generally not well trained, and that freedom of the press was becoming "anarchy of the press" without accountability or transparency. As for human rights, the president said he understood the Canadian values related to human rights, but also said that, at this time, his priority was ensuring basic economic rights for Egyptians and safety and security for Egypt. Both of these, he argued were necessary to ensure the country's stability. After stabilizing the economy and fighting terrorism, his next two goals related to education and health care. He emphasized that the country's level of education had to be raised so that Egyptians could acquire a clear understanding of human rights issues.

President el-Sissi said that terrorism, and its variety of manifestations, is having a strong, negative impact on the economy, in large part as a result of its effect on tourism. It is also influencing perceptions of the country's stability and, to a lesser degree, direct foreign investment. He further acknowledged that inflation and unemployment are both very high, and strong population growth is exacerbating those problems. Egypt has a low level of education and few natural resources.

The President noted some of his government's achievements:

- sustained attention to freedom of religion and the unification of Egyptians, regardless of religion, by, for example, taking quick action to rebuild destroyed churches and by visiting the Coptic Cathedral in Cairo on three occasions;
- enhanced security measures, particularly around tourist sites and airports;
- major economic projects to stimulate the economy, such as work on the Suez Canal, other infrastructure work and the construction, over the next few years, of new cities, including one that will serve as the country's administrative capital, another on the Red Sea, two on the Mediterranean and five in the Upper Nile (southern Egypt); this will also have the effect of responding to the country's population growth and diversifying population distribution, which is concentrated along the Nile;
- certain measures to attract investment, including financial assistance from the IMF and, at its insistence, the introduction of a value-added tax and devaluation of Egypt's currency.

President el-Sissi also addressed what he views as foreign misperceptions of his government, particularly the idea that the second revolution (2013), which removed the Muslim Brotherhood from power, was an army coup d'état. In fact, he said, the demonstrations against the Morsi government were so extensive that the army had to choose either to fire on the demonstrators or to ask former President Morsi to leave office.

President el-Sissi said he intended to serve out his first four-year term and perhaps run for a second and final term (in accordance with the Constitution).

3. Luncheon with the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs

The delegation met with members of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, however, discussions focused mainly on Egypt's internal affairs and the country's parliament.

Since President el-Sissi came to power, parliament has been very busy ratifying decrees by the executive branch, introducing the value-added tax, adopting a floating exchange rate and addressing Egypt's economic problems. Some members noted that, at the start of Mr. el-Sissi's presidency, the executive branch dictated the work of parliament, but that that relationship now is beginning to work two ways. Parliament is beginning to initiate some work and legislation.

Committee members suggested that progress has been made on promoting women's rights. For example, 90 of the 594 representatives in parliament are women. Human rights were also addressed. Once again, the low level of education in Egypt is viewed as a barrier to an understanding of human rights and to economic development. Some committee members suggested that basic economic rights must be provided for first of all.

The security issue was also addressed. According to committee members, the 2011 revolution was started by young people, but extremists took advantage of the situation and the ensuing power vacuum to take control of the government.

4. Luncheon with members of non-governmental organizations and the International Development Research Centre

The delegation met with the following representatives of international NGOs with branches in Egypt: CARE Canada, Save the Children and Plan International, as well as the International Development Research Centre (a Canadian Crown corporation).

Those in attendance discussed a statute that governs Egyptian and international NGOs working in Egypt and that, according to the representatives, affords the government unfair access to data on the various research projects conducted by those organizations as well as the ability to render the agencies ineffective. It also grants the government authority to fire NGO managers. The government is perceived as highly distrustful of NGOs, particularly foreign ones, because, in its view, they may be aiming to destabilize the country. The government prefers that foreign aid be granted directly to the Egyptian government rather than to NGOs. And if the aid is not directly given to the government, they would prefer it to come with no conditions attached by the donors. Relations, however, are not universally bad and some are finding ways to work creatively in this context.

Several other insights were offered by agencies working in social development. Women have a very low labour market participation rate. They, however, work extensively in the informal sector and agriculture and are paid little or nothing at all yet still contribute to the economy. Female genital excision is still widespread and is more a cultural than a

religious practice as it is engaged in by both Christians and Muslims. Legislation was passed to prohibit it in August 2016, but it is not widely enforced.

Public education as provided is very poor. The student-teacher ratio is 60 to 1 in some cases. Children sometimes attend school only two or three hours a day and then go to work. The health system is also extremely deficient.

Lastly, some NGO representatives believe that the government devotes too much energy to developing major projects (Suez Canal and the construction of new cities) and not enough to education and small projects such as microcredit which could be of direct and immediate benefit to the population.

5. Meeting with Sheikh Ahmed Al Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque

The delegation met with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque, who is one of the most influential Sunni Muslim authorities in the world.

The Grand Imam condemned terrorism, which he said stems from misinterpretations of Islamic writings. In his view, no religious text may serve as grounds for such killings. He also noted the massacres under way in Libya and many countries in the region and the difficult geo-political situation that Egypt finds itself in.

The Grand Imam welcomes improved inter-faith relations in recent years, and pointed out that there were many common points between Christians and Muslims. In his view, the Coptic Christians should not be considered a minority. All citizens are Egyptians, regardless of their faith and exercise the same rights. He strives by various means to bring the two communities together, particularly through education, through the creation of interfaith programming and through efforts such as the creation of youth sports teams consisting of Christians and Muslims.

6. Meeting with Pope Tawadros II, 118th Primate of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria

The delegation was also fortunate to meet with Pope Tawadros II, Primate of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt. The Pope said that the Coptic Church had good relations with the current Egyptian government, which was striving to combat terrorism and has committed to the rebuilding of all destroyed churches. President el-Sissi has visited Saint Mark's Cathedral in Cairo on three occasions, a first for an Egyptian President, and this has been viewed as a desire to unify the country across faiths. According to the Pope, another positive sign was the election of approximately 40 Christian representatives in the Egyptian Parliament.

Echoing previous meetings, the Pope emphasized that there is a lack of education in Egypt. In rural areas, religious education is in some instances the only education people receive.

The role of women in religion was also addressed. The Pope acknowledged that his religion was traditional and that only men could be priests but that women played an essential role within the Church and he seeks ways to be more inclusive.

7. Visit to Al-Azhar Park with representatives of the Aga Khan Foundation

Al-Azhar Park, which was built by the Aga Khan Foundation with assistance from Canada through the former Canadian International Development Agency, was constructed on a former landfill site and is now the largest park in Cairo. The delegation visited the magnificent park, which contains restored ancient walls, large green spaces, a cultural centre and a store selling handicrafts from rural villages also funded, in part, through Canadian foreign aid. During construction, the Foundation also took the opportunity to restore several Sunni mosques adjacent to the park creating goodwill in the neighbourhoods surrounding the park.

Discussions ensued with representatives of the Aga Khan Foundation. Once again, reference was made to the lack of education in Egypt. According to Foundation representatives, Egypt's leadership role in the region is partly due to the presence of the Grand Imam, who is highly respected and whose moderate tone carries considerable influence. The importance of development aid and Canada's increased contributions to that were stressed.

8. Meeting with Mr. Ali Abdel Aal, Speaker of the House of Representatives

Mr. Ali Abdel Aal, Speaker of the Chamber of Representatives, welcomed the Canadian delegation and repeated his request that a Canada-Egypt parliamentary friendship group be established to strengthen ties between the two countries and to help increase Canadian investment in Egypt. Delegation members explained that the Association has responsibility for parliamentary relationships with all African countries and has more influence than most of the inter-parliamentary friendship groups which are generally not that active. However, Association members agreed that it is important to work bilaterally as well and that it could be a good idea to have a smaller number of Association members who are knowledgeable about Egypt focus specifically on this relationship.

The Speaker said that terrorism was the cause of many problems in Egypt and strongly condemned the practice in all its forms, noting that there are no moderate terrorists.

In Mr. Abdel Aal's view, the new Constitution restores democracy. Parliament is largely representative of Egypt, and includes many women, Christians and political parties.

The Speaker said that freedom of the press was total and that anyone wishing to establish a media outlet (newspaper, television station, etc.) had only to publish a notice to that effect. He added that the President of Egypt and the entire government were constantly subject to media questions and criticism.

The lack of education in Egypt was, once again, described as a problem. Public education is free up to the university level, and university tuition fees are very low. However, the quality of the education received is not always high, and the government is reviewing education programs. Mr. Abdel Aal suggested that Canada could help in that area.

9. Meeting with Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs

The delegation met the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who spoke at length about Egypt's domestic challenges, which have an impact on the country's foreign affairs and international investment and trade.

Terrorism and perceptions of a lack of security make matters difficult for the Egyptian economy. There is a growing sense that civil society plays an essential role. Some economic reforms have been undertaken, such as the introduction of a floating exchange rate. Egypt's high ranking on successful business creation should attract more investment.

Corruption was also addressed. In the Minister's view, it is a governance, moral and economic issue. The salaries of government employees have been increased to combat corruption.

The Minister added that human rights are a concern for the government because they are the rights of the Egyptian people. The basic rights of being able to feed and house one's self must also be addressed. Education problems are a major concern because education affords better opportunities, but the resources required to improve the quality of education are lacking, and this creates a vicious circle.

On the international front, the Minister mentioned free trade agreements with certain African trading blocks and said that agreements with Canada and Europe were possible but that they had to benefit the two parties concerned.

The Minister emphasized that a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was critical to achieving peace and security in the region.

10. Political-economic dinner with representatives of civil society

This dinner offered the opportunity for delegates to speak with representatives of civil society, former journalists and NGO members.

Some representatives criticized the economic management and infrastructure project development advocated by the government, which mainly handles major projects rather than develop social projects in education or community development. It was suggested that the approach currently taken is more similar to a military operation than to social development. According to the representatives, civil war in Egypt is unlikely, even though the economic situation is very difficult. Population is extremely concentrated, with only 7% of the land inhabited making it relatively easy for social and political control.

The informal economy represents approximately one half of the total economy, making tax burdens and other fiscal policy uneven and often inefficient. The rule of law is often not enforced, and so government institutions cannot play fully effective roles. The public service does not want to cooperate with the government. The level of corruption is high, and there is no specific plan to stop it. Some speakers mentioned that journalism was hard to practice and that some journalists had been imprisoned. A different understanding of freedom of the press was expressed from that heard from government leaders.

Participants told the delegation that Canadian aid could perhaps be more effective if it was combined multilaterally with other countries, thus increasing the possibility that it would be accepted, even with conditions regarding such things as human rights or independence of NGO's. A multilateral approach to foreign aid as such might be

beneficial. Canada is respected, and assistance in institutional governance might be appreciated.

11. Meeting with the African Committee of the House of Representatives

The delegation met with members of the African Committee. It was indicated that former President Nasser was very much attached to Africa, and many demonstrators displayed portraits of him during the 2011 revolution, which could also indicate Egyptians' desire for a greater attachment to Africa rather than the Middle East. The Committee has a working plan for the next four years. Concern about terrorism is very much at the forefront. Terrorism is not limited to Egypt: some Committee members compared Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood to the Boko Haram organization, which operates mainly in Nigeria and Chad.

The Committee is also interested in all matters pertaining to Africa and Egypt, such as human rights, the impact of climate change and the challenges women face. It also wants more African history to be taught in schools. The Committee wishes to establish partnerships with other African countries. Concern was expressed about projects on the Nile south of Egypt which could affect Egypt greatly.

Committee members also emphasized that any future aid to improve education in Egypt that Canada might offer would be welcome.

12. Meeting with a representative of a human rights organization

Delegation members concluded their mission to Egypt by meeting with an individual who directs a human rights organization. Several others had been invited but declined the invitation. The individual the delegation was able to meet with is under very close surveillance, the organization in question has virtually no resources, and the individual is prevented from doing their work, which is not seditious in any way and does not have a destabilizing effect on Egypt. The delegation was sincerely moved by this individual's courage and determination.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In addition to building relations with parliamentarians and members of civil society in Tunisia and Egypt, the purpose of the Canadian delegation's visit was to study the progress that has been achieved with respect to governance and democracy in those two countries since the Arab Spring in 2011. Although some of the changes that occurred in 2011, as well as economic and security challenges, are common to both countries, it is difficult to compare the two given their relative sizes, influence in the region and geopolitical situations. The following observations therefore concern each country independently and, in view of the specific situation of each country, do not include comparisons.

A. Republic of Tunisia

The purpose of the Canadian delegation's visit to Tunisia was to respond to previous requests on behalf of Tunisia to engage at the parliamentary level and to observe the

progress that has been made since the 2011 revolution, in which former President Ben Ali was deposed. Since then, a new constitution has been adopted, legislative and presidential elections have been held, and a national coalition government was formed in August 2016.

The delegation observed that genuine progress has been made in the parliament, institutions and society of Tunisia. However, the achievements of the revolution remain fragile as a result of several factors that have impeded the country's economic and social development.

Tunisia is experiencing difficult economic conditions, and the unemployment rate is high. Many young university graduates are unemployed. Some young people have been radicalized and have joined terrorist groups. As a result of the 2015 terrorist attacks, revenues from tourism, which are essential to Tunisia's economy, have fallen dramatically. Tunisians fear the return from Syria and Iraq of combatants involved in Daesh.

There is corruption in Tunisian society. Certain rights, such as those associated with sexual orientation, are not respected, and homosexuality is a criminal offence. Women, while gaining rights and prominence, still face challenges and discrimination.

With respect to the functioning of parliament, very little in the way of financial resources are available to parliamentarians. Representatives have little money with which to hire staff so that they can perform their responsibilities both in the capital and in their electoral districts. Communicating with constituents and fostering civil engagement remains difficult.

However, the delegation was delighted to see the strength of Tunisian civil society, particularly among its youth who, despite their difficulties, continue to fight enthusiastically to preserve the progress achieved during the revolution and to move society forward. That feeling was particularly present when the delegation met with parliamentary interns, whose dedication and hope in the future made that meeting one of the highlights of the visit to Tunisia. The government, parliament and civil society are making significant strides in combating corruption and radicalization and reducing the poverty that rages in many regions of Tunisia.

Canada generally appears to be very well perceived by Tunisians. The work of the current Ambassador and the embassy staff needs to be acknowledged for its significant contribution to Canada-Tunisia relations.

According to many of the individuals and organizations that the Association met, Canada could provide assistance mainly in the following fields:

1. the reinforcement of and support for democratic institutions, particularly the ARP, where representatives are working hard to perform their obligations despite a lack of financial resources; financial assistance in this area, or exchanges, internships and seminars organized by the Parliament of Canada for Tunisian staff, are forms of assistance that could help strengthen Tunisian democracy;

2. economic development and the reinforcement of productive capacity, particularly in the poorest, more agricultural regions of Tunisia that need many small projects in order to develop;
3. support for exchanges with Canadian colleges or trade schools, their associations, or through the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, as well as technical assistance in developing a better labour market information system which would both help achieve a better match between the fields of study selected by young Tunisians and industry demand and increase the social acceptance of the trades as a profession.

The Association congratulates Tunisia on the progress it has made and encourages it to continue its efforts to develop and strengthen democracy for the good of its people. Tunisia is a strong model of freedom and democracy in the Maghreb region and North Africa. The delegation is very hopeful for its future in the coming decades and would welcome a return visit to Canada by Tunisian parliamentarians.

B. Arab Republic of Egypt

Egypt is a large country with a history that stretches back millennia. It has experienced numerous crises, colonialism, dictatorship and difficult economic conditions. The delegation was able to gain a window into Egypt's rich culture and heard about the ability of its people to persevere through difficult socio-economic and political conditions. Egyptians have experienced two revolutions in three years and are reconnecting with democratic institutions that must be rebuilt, something that may take time.

The country's most pressing challenges include a difficult economic climate and high unemployment, particularly among youth. Over the course of several meetings, the delegation also heard about other challenges that the country is experiencing, including with respect to the economy, security, education and health care all in the context of a ballooning population due to a very high birth rate. Corruption, human rights and freedom of the press were also cited as challenges in several meetings. The government's mistrust and poor treatment of foreign NGOs was also reported.

However, the Association heard that the Government of Egypt is undertaking efforts to address these challenges. Major projects to build infrastructure and new cities are under way in an attempt to spur economic growth. Policy decisions have also been made to accept financial aid from the IMF, such as to impose the required value-added tax and devalue of Egypt's currency.

The delegation was particularly moved by the government's desire to make Egypt a united country across all faiths. To this end, the government has undertaken projects to rebuild churches destroyed by bombings. Security measures are also very much in place at tourist sites.

That said, the Association also heard that additional efforts need to be made to address corruption, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the treatment of NGOs. As the Association was told, civil society organizations are working in Egypt to support the country in its economic development and democratization efforts. The support of the

Canadian Ambassador and his staff in promoting civil society was noted by many who spoke with the delegation and is greatly appreciated.

The Association nevertheless congratulates Egypt for seeking to build a more united and pluralistic country, and for its initial democratization efforts. While much work remains to be done, the Association believes Canada can support Egypt, through both bilateral and multilateral channels, in its efforts to develop its economy, improve its education system and strengthen its institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the delegation would like to express their gratitude to the staff of the Embassy of Canada to Tunisia. In particular, the Association would like to thank Ambassador Carol McQueen, who participated in all the delegation's meetings, and all Embassy staff, in particular Ms. Carla Castañeda, head of security, and the interpreters, as well as the drivers and members of the security staff, who afforded the delegation a sense of security. A debt of gratitude is also owed to Ms. Marie-Ève Bilodeau, of the National Democratic Institute, for her impeccable organization of the many meetings the delegation attended.

In Egypt, the delegation wishes to thank Ambassador Troy Lulashnyk and his entire staff, in particular Isabelle Savard, Sloveig Schuster, Nevine Osman for their devoted work in organizing meetings at all levels, including those with the President of Egypt and Muslim and Coptic religious leaders. The Association also thanks all of the interpreters, drivers and security staff for all of their efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Raynell Andreychuk,
Senator
Co-Chair, Canada-Africa Parliamentary
Association

Robert Oliphant, M.P.
Co-Chair, Canada-Africa Parliamentary
Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Bilateral mission to the Republic of Tunisia and the Arab Republic of Egypt
DESTINATION	Tunis, Tunisia, and Cairo, Egypt
DATES	16 to 25 January 2017
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Honourable Jim Munson, Senator, Vice-Chair
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Robert Oliphant, Co-Chair Mr. Harold Albrecht, M.P., Vice-Chair Mr. David Christopherson, M.P., Vice-Chair Ms. Joyce Murray, M.P., Member
STAFF	Ms. Josée Thérien, Association secretary Mr. André Léonard, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 57,001.26
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 13,421.77
HOSPITALITY	\$ 925.17
PER DIEMS	\$ 3,244.81
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 897.53
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 2,090.00
TOTAL	\$ 77,580.54