



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the Meeting of the
Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the *Assemblée
parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)*
Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie (APF)*
Balaclava, Mauritius
March 14 to 16, 2013**

Report

The Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) held in Balaclava, Mauritius, from March 14 to 16, 2013, has the honour to present its report.

Composed of the Hon. **Pierre De Bané**, Senator and Chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, and **Robert Aubin**, Member, the delegation was accompanied by François Michaud, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

The following branches were represented: Belgium / Federation Wallonia-Brussels, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Jura, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger and Quebec.

The Hon. Senator **Pierre De Bané**, Chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the APF, opened the meeting by warmly thanking the Mauritius Branch and the entire Mauritius team who worked hard to ensure the meeting's success.

The members of the Committee present, the Committee unanimously adopted the agenda and the minutes of the last Committee meeting in Brussels in June 2012.

Senator **De Bané** then presented the Chair's report and gave members a vivid and comprehensive overview of the Francophonie.

Political party financing

Carole Poirier, Member (Quebec), and **Gérard Bila Segda**, Member (Burkina Faso), presented their draft report on political party financing, a follow-up report to the one on political nomadism. The report describes the situation in the following nine countries/states: Canada (federal), Federation Wallonia-Brussels, France, Greece, Moldova, Monaco, Quebec, Romania and the Aosta Valley.

Robert Aubin, Member, congratulated the rapporteurs and asked whether any consideration was given to a multi-party system vs. a two-party system, for example with respect to the role of financing.

Civil status and democracy

Michèle André, Senator (France), presented her report on civil status and democracy. The report argues that if a birth is not registered an individual cannot exist.

Decentralized cooperation in the francophone world

Martine Bondo, Senator (Gabon), and **Martin Nyonyo Balikwisha**, Senator (Democratic Republic of Congo), presented their report, which deals with this new area of international relations. Senator **Nyonyo** spoke, among other things, about the donations from Vancouver firefighters.

Life of assemblies in the francophone world: parliamentary procedure and practice

Michèle André, Senator (France), presented the final report on parliamentary procedure and practice, which will be officially presented at the annual session in Abidjan in July 2013.

Presentation by Jean Claude Gervais Raoul de L'Estrac, Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission

Jean Claude Gervais Raoul de L'Estrac, Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), presented his commission, which represents Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros and France (Reunion). Twenty million people live in this area, which includes five million square kilometres of ocean. The European Union, which has development programs for regional economic cooperation organizations, funds 70% of the IOC.

Robert Aubin, Member, asked a question concerning rising sea levels following global warming and its impact on the region.

Statement by the Hon. Pierre de Bané (Canada), Chair, on the follow-up to the brief to better understand the OIF, its missions, its programs, its funding and its cooperation with the APF

Senator **De Bané** discussed the Canadian Branch's initiative, as well as the history and highlights of the OIF within the Parliamentary Affairs Committee and the General Committee of the APF.

The Parliamentary Affairs Committee unanimously called for this point to be added to the General Committee meeting in Abidjan in July, with the brief and the report of Richard Flageole to be distributed beforehand.

Parliamentary seminars and training courses

Louis Vlavonou, Member (Benin), presented the follow-up report. He gave a brief background on parliamentary seminars and spoke about the 2012 seminars. The report highlights the importance of interparliamentary cooperation as a specific approach to contribute to strengthening the rule of law and the proper functioning of democratic institutions through the improvement of parliamentary business.

Parliamentary Forum of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

Michel Mweza presented the Parliamentary Forum of the SADC, which brings together 14 parliaments (Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and over 3,000 parliamentarians.

Initiative multilatérale de coopération interparlementaire francophone (IMCIF)

Michèle André, Senator (France) and Vice-Chair of the Committee, presided over this part of the meeting.

The Hon. **Pierre De Bané**, Senator (Canada), discussed this initiative, which was presented for the first time to the General Committee in Paris in February 2013. He expressed his opinion on the project, which has been underway for some time without input from the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, which is responsible for interparliamentary cooperation according to the APF statutes.

The Committee unanimously expressed strong reservations about the implementation of the Initiative multilatérale de coopération interparlementaire francophone (IMCIF).

Presentation by Issa Asgarraly, co-founder of the Fondation pour l'interculturel et la paix

Issa Asgarraly, co-founder with Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, who has won a Nobel Prize in Literature, spoke about the Fondation pour l'interculturel et la paix, which aims to promote world peace through the understanding of world cultures.

Noria program

The Hon. **Pierre De Bané** presented the program and gave a brief background.

Mireille Eza, director of Noria (Secretariat General of the APF), gave a report on the program's activities.

The francophone youth parliament (PFJ) and national youth parliaments (PNJ)

Senator **Martine Bondo** (Gabon) reported on the PFJ.

Election observation missions

Monsieur **Jean-Claude Maene** (Belgium / Federation Wallonia-Brussels) reported on election observation missions and OIF funding. He told the Committee that a mission took place in 2012 but because no report was provided he was unable to discuss it.

Date and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place in July 2013 as part of the XXXII Session of the APF in Abidjan (Ivory Coast).

Other business

The Hon. **Pierre De Bané** told members of the Committee that the Canadian Branch had chosen **Robert Aubin** to succeed him as Chair of the Committee.

Michèle André paid tribute to Senator **De Bané** and a special motion of thanks was adopted unanimously.

For more information on this meeting, please see <http://www.apf.francophonie.org/spip.php?article443> [in French only].

Thanks to its participation in this meeting, the Canadian Branch achieved its objectives to meet its international commitments, present reports that support the exchange of information, strengthen international ties and defend its interests.

Respectfully submitted,

Honourable Pierre De Bané, Senator
Member of the Canadian Branch of the
Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)

Travel Cost

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
DESTINATION	Balaclava, Mauritius
DATES	March 14 to 16, 2013
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Pierre De Bané
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Robert Aubin
STAFF	François Michaud
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 26,105.22
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 2,609.93
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,909.71
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 153.74
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 266.40
TOTAL	\$ 31,045.00

Appendix A

We are all deeply affected by the tragedies that have struck the Ivory Coast over a number of years. That is why we are pleased that several parliaments and international organizations want to work together to strengthen the Ivorian Parliament and express our strong francophone solidarity.

1. We applaud the initiative of several parliaments to work together to help the parliament of a country in crisis.
2. We at the APF must make all our cooperation programs available to the Ivory Coast.

I would now like to explain why the APF should not sponsor or attach the name of our Parliamentary Assembly, the APF, to cooperation programs that are not under the aegis of the APF—like all cooperation programs we review in our committee.

At the meeting of the APF executive in Paris last month:

- This initiative was presented for the first time.
- None of the regular members of the APF had heard of it before, including the chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee.
- Surprised by this announcement that I only recently learned of, I would now like to share the results of my study of this initiative.

I begin with some excerpts from a document signed by Mr. Lala, Executive Secretary of the APF, respecting this initiative, which he asked me to present and which has been distributed:

QUOTATIONS

1. *"It seems important to me to note that the multilateral cooperation initiative is not a parliamentary cooperation program of the APF.*
2. *One of the basic rules is strict equality between participants and respect for the autonomy of each partner.*
3. *This program was launched in **the fall of 2012** at the behest of several parliaments.*
4. *Parliaments are free to join the initiatives they want.*
5. *By partnering with the IMCIF, parliaments remain free to choose which actions they wish to participate in as well as the budgets and staff they wish to allocate.*
6. *The APF (partner) has no authority over the actions, budgets or staff provided by member parliaments.*
7. *The Secretariat General of the APF plays a facilitating role and coordinates the actions undertaken by various parliaments.*
8. *The mission of the APF Secretariat is to*
 - a. *centralize requests for cooperation;*

- b. *strengthen relations with parliaments;*
 - c. *coordinate interventions; and*
 - d. *facilitate the follow-up and monitoring of any action taken.*
9. *The APF does not comment on the nature or amount of contributions made by parliaments under this program.*
10. *Each participant retains its identity and visibility.” (End of quotations)*

I believe that adopting this initiative will have unfortunate consequences on the multilateral nature of the APF for several reasons:

1- Procedural problems

- a. The IMCIF has been worked on for months in secret.
- b. At meetings of our committee and the Bureau in July in Brussels, not one word was said about this program.
- c. At the launch “in the fall of 2012” by the parliaments mentioned in the document in front of you, great pains were taken to hide it from our committee.
- d. We have never been informed of the institution that spearheaded it or how long it has been worked on. September 2012? September 2011?
- e. It was presented to the Bureau only in February 2013 in Paris.
- f. I have had the honour of chairing the Parliamentary Affairs Committee for 20 years. This seriously flouts our committee’s mission.

2- Basic problems

- a. The plan of some parliaments to work together to help another parliament is obviously desirable as well as noble.
- b. However, as the APF is a “partner” with no authority over what these parliaments decide to do, it does not add any value.
- c. Every parliament that wants to coordinate its cooperation programs can appoint a member of its parliament to be responsible for that coordination. We work differently now that we can send emails to 15 people all at the same time.
- d. The APF Secretariat has a very small staff in relation to the number of member parliaments, to the point that first France, and then other sections, has seconded staff to work under the authority of the Secretary General. THE OFFICIALS WHO HAVE BEEN SECONDED FROM THEIR PARLIAMENT ARE NOT PROXIES OF THEIR PARLIAMENT BUT SERVE ALL APF PARLIAMENTS.
- e. The only programs that the APF will provide under the IMCIF are already existing programs that fall under the Parliamentary Affairs Committee (parliamentary seminars, work placements, NORIA, etc.).

- f. Some APF member states have large budgets dedicated to international cooperation. A large part of these budgets is spent through international organizations (e.g., World Bank, European Union, Banque africaine de développement, etc.). In contrast to the IMCIF, states that make these contributions do not retain their identity and visibility.
- g. The most serious breach in adopting the model adopted by the Bureau in questionable conditions is to inevitably destroy the foundation on which the APF is built: all branches are equal. If this plan is approved as is, we will have two classes of members, first class and economy; the VIP “partners” of the APF—and the rest.

Given the foregoing, the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, at its meeting in Mauritius from March 14 to 16, 2013, called on the Bureau of the APF to:

- 1- take note of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee’s reservations respecting the APF’s “partnership” with, in practice, a small number of APF member parliaments;
- 2- direct its cooperation programs to the parliaments of countries in crisis; and
- 3- encourage its member parliaments to take concerted bilateral cooperative action on countries in crisis.

Pierre De Bané, Senator

Chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the APF