



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the
APF**

**Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie (APF)***

**Sofia, Bulgaria
May 22-24, 2007**

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) that attended the APF Parliamentary Affairs Committee held in Sofia (Bulgaria) from May 22 to 24, 2007, has the honor to present its Report. The delegation was made up of the Honorable Pierre De Bané, Senator and Committee Chair; he was accompanied by Mr. Jean Michel Roy, Executive Secretary of the Branch.

The following branches were represented: Andorra, Bulgaria, Canada, France, the French Community of Belgium, Gabon, Jura, Macedonia, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Romania, Switzerland and Valle D'Aosta.

Tuesday, May 22, 2007

Prior to the commencement of the Committee's work, the Deputy Chairman of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Younal Lyoutfi, welcomed the participants.

Statement by the Committee Chair

Senator Pierre De Bané, Chair of the Committee, presented a brief summary of the Committee's mandate and of its activities. The Parliamentary Affairs Committee has a distinctive feature, in comparison with the three other APF committees. In addition to substantive reports, it examines the status reports of the interparliamentary cooperation programs. The APF indeed implements interparliamentary cooperation programs in collaboration with the *Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie*.

Among these is the Noria program, which seeks to meet the need to develop capacity in producing, managing and disseminating internal legislative information in certain southern hemisphere francophone parliaments. In addition, a program to support the creation of the assemblies' Internet sites was conducted in 1999-2000. Although limited by a specific timeframe, the program resulted in the launch of the new websites of the assemblies of Gabon, Cameroon, Guinea, Mali and Niger and the training of their webmasters.

Moreover, there are two different training programs: parliamentary seminars based on the principle of the exchange of experience between senior parliamentary lecturers and parliamentarians in their first mandate, as legislative elections in southern hemisphere countries often entail a wide-scale turnover of parliamentarians; and the training sessions intended for parliamentary officials.

Finally, there is the *Parlement francophone des jeunes*, held every two years during the session, and a new program to support the *Parlements nationaux des jeunes* which was set up during the 2004-2005 biennium.

The Committee also monitors the electoral observation missions of *La Francophonie* in which APF parliamentarians participate, and created an internal working group tasked with reflecting on the participation of the APF in these missions.

The following reports were then presented:

International refugee protection

Ms. Martine Bondo (Gabon) presented the report. She stated that in order to consolidate peace in a world in constant flux, parliamentarians had to play the role which is incumbent upon them, i.e. that of submitting arguments to their respective parliaments within *La Francophonie* in order to anticipate and prevent massive population movements in the world's trouble spots. In order to achieve this, an early warning system should be put in place and a team of international observers should be deployed to detect potential problems and attempt to resolve them before they degenerate into conflict.

Ms. Bondo was of the opinion that these efforts would be useful, but that it is incumbent upon governments and national and international political authorities to be responsible for making appropriate political decisions in order to find solutions to these problems.

In conclusion, Ms. Bondo made the following statement: "It is very important that we take this concern to heart, because today's neighbour may well become tomorrow's refugee."

Electoral observation missions

Ms. Françoise Schepmans (French Community of Belgium) presented the electoral observation missions status report, which monitored the missions the APF took part in since the last session in July 2006. This document reported on the observation missions of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) in the following countries:

- Democratic Republic of the Congo. First ballot of the presidential election and legislative ballot held on July 30, 2006; second ballot of the presidential election and provincial elections held on October 29, 2006; experts from Canada were in attendance.
- Mauritania. Legislative and municipal elections held on November 19, 2006; first ballot of the March 11, 2007 presidential election and second ballot of the March 25, 2007 presidential election.
- Senegal. February 25, 2007 presidential election, also with the participation of Canadian experts.

Ms. Michèle André (France) presented the report of the Review Panel on Electoral Observation Missions. The report took the form of an assessment and set out the main criticisms expressed on the participation of the APF in the observation missions organized by the OIF.

- The APF repeatedly deplores that it is informed too late to be able to send observers.
- The OIF determines the number of parliamentarians who will participate in the various missions, thus depriving the APF of the possibility of choosing the missions it wishes to participate in.

- The visibility of *La Francophonie* as compared to the large contingents deployed by the European Union or the OSCE, who are more selective but send larger missions.
- The francophone observation missions are based on the principle of responding to the invitation of the country concerned.
- The observation missions are not prohibitive but do entail considerable expenses.
- The concrete observation modalities should be updated in light of the experience of the past 15 years.
- The observation is generally limited to the conditions in which the balloting takes place.

In reply to these criticisms, Ms. André proposed the following recommendations which could be implemented with the OIF :

- Promote synergy. Since the APF cannot be present at every steps of the electoral process, it would be good to promote synergy. Thus, the reports of the experts sent by the OIF before the election could be conveyed to the APF secretariat, which could distribute them to the members of the mission.
- Plan the missions. The APF could participate in selecting the elections to be observed, which could result in the real planning of the missions being considered for the year.
- Reaffirm the paramount role played by parliamentarians in observing elections. Indeed, determining whether an election was reliable and transparent cannot be limited to observing whether electors voted or not. A judgment must be brought to bear on an evolving process which is a material step, albeit an imperfect one, toward democracy. The unique competency and expertise that parliamentarians contribute give them considerable moral authority in this area.
- Give *La Francophonie* greater visibility. The status of electoral observation should be enhanced and given increased media attention.
- Improve follow-up through better-targeted sanctions or cooperation measures.
- Strengthen the support mechanisms and devote greater attention to the logistical organization of these missions.

In addition, the following recommendations conducive to the adoption of a rigorous methodology could be implemented with the APF itself.

- Make a prior selection of the missions the APF wishes to participate in in light of several criteria (political situation, credibility of the electoral process, etc.).

- Make rules to govern the designation of candidates: rigorously select observers by giving preference to those who have a good knowledge of the country, and provide them with the necessary information to accomplish their mission.
- Prepare a short observation guide for parliamentarians.
- Prepare a biennial calendar of elections with the observers selected.

Parliamentary seminars and training sessions

Ms. Ramatou Rahimou (Niger) presented the report. Since its last meeting in Rabat (Morocco) in July 2006, the APF held two parliamentary seminars, one in the Central African Republic and one in Haiti, and organized a training session for parliamentary officials.

In October 2006, in Bangui (Central African Republic), a parliamentary seminar was held on the main theme “The Powers of Parliament”. This seminar was organized in cooperation with the Central African Parliament for that country’s parliamentarians.

The seminar dealt more specifically with the following themes: the legislative power of Parliament; parliamentary control; and the role of the majority and of the opposition in parliamentary work.

In March 2007 in Port-au-Prince, in the Republic of Haiti, a seminar on the main theme of “Democracy and Good Governance” was held. That seminar was organized in cooperation with the Parliament of Haiti for that country’s parliamentarians.

The seminar dealt more specifically with the following themes: the legislative function of Parliament; the parliamentary control function; the mechanisms of government stability, and parliamentary political groups.

Wednesday, May 23, 2007

The life of assemblies in the francophone world: A compilation of parliamentary procedures and practices

Ms. Michèle André (France) presented the synthesis report of Chapter II, which deals with the parliamentary mandate.

This chapter groups the information found in the Branch contributions that describe the main characteristics of the parliamentary mandate as conceived in francophone parliaments. It is a compendium of heterogeneous data on an array of topics from electoral regimes, to the duration of mandates or the immunities that parliamentarians enjoy in fulfilling their roles, whether they be members of Parliament, or, in bicameral parliaments, senators.

The Canadian Branch has already sent in its contribution to chapters 1 to 4.

The *Parlement francophone des jeunes* (PFJ) and youth national parliaments

Ms. Martine Bondo (Gabon) presented the report. Thus, in keeping with the APF Bureau decision, young participants in the fourth PFJ session which will take place in Libreville (Gabon) in July will break up into four committees with responsibilities identical to those

of the APF committees, each one tasked with working on a text in its relevant field of jurisdiction. The themes selected are the following:

- Political Committee: Youth and the prevention of conflicts.
- Education, Communications and Cultural Affairs Committee: Francophone youth, migratory problems, and HIV/AIDS.
- Parliamentary Affairs Committee: Getting young people onto voters' lists.
- Cooperation and Development Committee: In the face of many migratory movements, what immigration policies should be defined for the future? The point of view of francophone youth.

In addition, Ms. Bondo informed the Committee that the new OIF budget programming has meant that the APF programs dedicated to youth have been considerably reduced. These programs are thus affected by the budgetary stringency imposed on the OIF. However, the OIF wants to see those programs maintained.

In conclusion, Ms. Bondo indicated that for the next PFJ, 26 branches had confirmed their participation, and among them were Canada, New Brunswick and Quebec.

The Noria Program

Senator Pierre De Bané and Ms. Mireille Eza, Director of the Noria Program, presented the report.

The Noria program was created in July 2002 at the meeting of the APF Bureau in Bern (Switzerland) for the purpose of meeting the needs of certain francophone parliaments of the southern hemisphere by developing capacity in the area of the management of legislative information. The program is funded by the *Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie*. Today, the Noria program has been implemented in nine parliaments, four of which are bicameral, for a total of 13 chambers altogether.

Three types of support are proposed:

- "General support" to improve the management of parliamentary information by putting legislative information services online. The implementation of that initiative has begun in Benin, Burkina Faso, in the Congo (National Assembly and Senate) and in Madagascar (National Assembly and Senate).
- "Special support" intended for parliaments that make only moderate use of French. The objective of that support is to facilitate the dissemination of French-language legislative production through the translation of the Internet sites, endowment for French language documentation and the funding of French-language training for parliamentarians and administrative personnel. This support has been extended to the Assemblies of Cap-Verde, Cambodia, Macedonia, Tunisia and Vietnam.

- “Network support” dedicated to the development of professional interparliamentary networks through the use of information and communication technologies.

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on July 4 in the context of the proceedings of the XXXIII Session of the APF in Libreville (Gabon).

Respectfully submitted,

Pierre De Bané, Senator
Member of the Canadian Branch of the APF

Travel Cost

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)</i>
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee
DESTINATION	Sofia, Bulgaria
DATES	May 22-24, 2007
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Pierre De Bané, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Mr. Jean-Michel Roy
TRANSPORTATION	\$12,542.62
ACCOMMODATION	\$2,266.78
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$543.27
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$112.50
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$52.33
TOTAL	\$15,517.40