

Canada - Africa
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada - Afrique

Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation on the bilateral visit to Egypt

Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association

**Cairo, Egypt
March 4 to 6, 2007**

Report

The Association was represented by the Honourable Raynell Andreychuk, Senator, Co-Chair of the Association; the Honourable Mauril Bélanger, P.C., M.P., Co-Chair of the Association; the Honourable Mobina Jaffer, Senator, Vice-Chair; Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, M.P., Director; Mr. James Bezan, M.P.; and Mr. David Christopherson, M.P. The delegation was assisted by Mr. Rémi Bourgault, Executive Secretary of the Association, and Ms. Allison Goody, Advisor to the Association.

OBJECTIVES

The Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association conducted a bilateral visit to the Arab Republic of Egypt from March 4 to 6, 2007. The purpose of the Association's visit was to further the relations with Africa. In addition, other purposes were to engage in dialogue with members of the Egyptian parliament; to strengthen the relationship between Canadian and Egyptian parliamentarians; to further the knowledge of Association members on a variety of subjects, including Egyptian politics and international relations, regional issues and human rights; the role of Egypt within Africa and Egypt's positions on African issues; the conflicts in nearby Sudan and Somalia; the role of regional institutions such as the Arab League and the Pan-African Parliament and the impact of these organizations on African affairs; and the role of civil society groups in Egypt's economic and social development. The Association's visit to Egypt was intended to foster mutual understanding of bilateral issues and work towards strengthening and furthering understanding of the role of national parliaments in ensuring good governance, sound public management, oversight and democratic accountability in Canada and Africa.

During the course of their meetings and briefings, members of the delegation were interested in discussing Egypt's relationship with neighbouring African countries, its role in shaping African affairs and its engagement with African institutions, including the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament. In turn, members of the delegation described the history and development of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association, as well as the Association's work with parliamentary networks in Africa and mechanisms through which to engage African parliamentarians. They outlined the Association's involvement with the Pan-African Parliament in South Africa, the development of that new continental parliamentary body and the importance of continuing to foster parliamentary exchanges between Canada and African countries. The members of the delegation also underlined the importance of increasing parliamentary oversight of the executive, a key objective of the Association and area of opportunity for the Association in its exchanges with African parliamentarians.

THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT: KEY ISSUES

In its international and regional relations, Egypt is both an African and a Middle Eastern state. In terms of its relations with Middle Eastern states, Egypt has traditionally been a key player in talks aimed at addressing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in the Middle East Peace Process and in managing regional tensions. Egypt is considered to have significant influence in the Palestinian territories and, as it signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, it holds a unique position as an Arab state in regional negotiations.

Within the African continent, Egypt played a significant role historically and continues to be a major regional player in East and northern Africa and in the African Union. However, Egypt's role in Africa has always been a complex one. Former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser articulated his strategic vision for Egyptian foreign policy and Egyptian national interests in the 1950s and 1960s as comprising three circles, one of which would focus on Africa. During its bilateral visit to Egypt, the delegation heard assessments suggesting that Egypt's influence and interest in the African continent and in African issues has declined and/or changed compared to the time of President Nasser.

Egypt has key strategic interests in Africa and is involved politically in certain issues, particularly those that pertain to neighbouring Sudan; the internal conflict and attempts at political reconciliation in Somalia; and, most significantly, Egypt has vital interests in the Nile Basin region, which leads it to promote stability in countries that border on the Nile. Egypt has supported the Nile Basin Initiative, which seeks to foster economic development and water security for those countries that share the Nile River. Egypt has been an active member in the African Union, contributing to the African Union Mission in Sudan (Darfur). On this issue, Egypt has gradually been increasing pressure on the Sudanese government to resolve the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. However, Egypt has been criticized by some members of the international community for not doing more. Egypt is one of five founding members of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was established in 2002. In 1980, Egypt established a fund for technical cooperation with Africa. Finally, Egypt is the home of the Arab League, a regional organization that has been involved in conflict resolution in the Darfur crisis and in the internal conflict embroiling Somalia.

Domestically, Egypt is experiencing challenges, economically, politically, and with governance issues.

Egypt is ranked 111th on the United Nations 2006 Human Development Index. The country's GDP grew by a rate of almost 5% in 2005, but the per capita income in the country is still approximately CAN \$1,500. Unemployment is officially measured at roughly 10-12% of the population, but unofficial estimates are higher.

Egypt has a total population of some 70-79 million people, a majority of whom are under the age of twenty-five. The country's economy is under pressure from this large and relatively young population, particularly in terms of employment,

educational opportunities and the provision of social services. Enrolment rates in Egypt's educational institutions are very high; however, the country does face some challenges in terms of skills development, employment of university graduates and the matching of graduate skills to the needs of the country's economic sectors. Egypt is in the process of transitioning from a highly centralized economy and is re-evaluating heavy state subsidies in various sectors, including food and housing. There are measures aimed at privatizing the economy and undertaking economic reforms, but diversification remains an issue. Egypt is not a significant destination for foreign direct investment. However, the tourism sector in the country remains strong.

Egypt has experienced several important political events over the past few years and has reached an important juncture. The country held its first multi-candidate presidential election in September 2005. The incumbent President, Hosni Mubarak, won a fifth term. While the holding of a multi-candidate presidential election was heralded as a significant step forward by many outside observers in terms of Egypt's democratization, the election was equally criticized for its perceived lack of fairness. Egypt also held parliamentary elections in November 2005. Notably, in those elections 88 Muslim Brotherhood MPs who are recognized as "independents" won seats, while the National Democratic Party (NDP) continues to dominate the People's Assembly (lower house) with a majority of 311 seats. International observers were not allowed to monitor the elections. In both the parliamentary and the presidential elections, voter turnout was low. Outside observers have expressed subsequent concerns over citizens' disengagement in Egypt and the onset of political apathy due to the slow pace of political and economic reforms in the country.

Egypt continues to be criticized by international non-governmental organizations for its human rights record and practices. There were allegations of arbitrary detentions, mistreatment by Egypt's security forces, and violations of political and civil liberties. Egypt's media and judiciary are seen to be relatively independent. Overall, Egypt's national military and security forces play a significant role in the country. The question remains as to who will succeed current President Hosni Mubarak and whether or not there will be true democratization in Egypt, questions that are being debated within that country.

Canada is perceived positively in Egypt because of Canada's non-colonial legacy, its multilateral approach to international relations and its support for economic and social development in Egypt and the African continent. There has also been an increase in bilateral trade in the last two years.

VISIT AND MEETINGS

Visit to Ismailia and Suez Canal to view community development projects – the Community Environment Action (CENACT) – supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

A. The Community Environment Action (CENACT) projects

On March 4, the delegation had an extremely positive full-day visit to the Ismailia and Suez Canal regions of Egypt, in a governorate east of Cairo, to view directly rural development in progress, which is being facilitated by the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and CIDA's implementing partners. The delegation was able to spend extensive time viewing key examples of CIDA's support for development in Egypt and to gain knowledge of innovative approaches to rural development that are being explored by local Community Development Associations (CDAs).

The Community Environment Action project (CENACT) is an effective approach to development and community engagement that is producing concrete results on the ground in multiple areas, including the areas visited by the delegation in Abou Halifa and Abou Attwa in the Ismailia Governorate. CENACT is a four-year (2004-2008) joint project of CIDA and the Egyptian Government, specifically the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs. It is implemented by COWATER International Inc., a Canadian development company that works in partnership with the NGO Unit of the Environmental Affairs Ministry. CIDA is providing \$5 million in funding over the project's four years, with 5 million LE [Egyptian pounds] in kind by the Government of Egypt. CENACT aims to strengthen and increase NGO participation in environmental management and community sustainability.

CENACT aims to achieve results in five areas: community action, capacity development of NGOs, capacity development of regional support systems, capacity development of Egypt's NGO Unit and gender equality. It supports community-based waste management initiatives, providing community development associations with grants and assistance to undertake initiatives, particularly those that are economically viable and self-sustaining, those that generate employment and those that facilitate an enhanced role for women. In addition, the project aims to increase the involvement of regional and governorate level governments in community projects, aiming to enhance regional support networks for such local initiatives and local NGOs. This includes building the capacity of the Ministry's NGO Unit so that it can take the lead in extending projects to other governorates, in replicating this project and generating other initiatives. It is hoped that CENACT can be a model for developing a national program. It was brought to the delegation's attention that the project's success will depend on ongoing governmental support.

The delegation witnessed CENACT's progress in achieving the project's goals and was able to have fruitful discussions with local stakeholders, development workers and members of the community. The delegation reviewed two

community projects: one in municipal waste management, the other in agricultural waste management.

- **Municipal Waste Management.** The delegation visited a solid waste management project in Abou Attwa. The project is cleaning up unsanitary accumulations of garbage, providing regular garbage collection services to local households and is generating employment and local revenue. It is also attempting to enhance the awareness of the role of women in decision-making and community initiatives. The delegation was able to observe that this Community Development Association is providing a range of social services, including training and skills development for community members and primary education (kindergarten).
- **Agricultural Waste Management.** Agricultural waste is traditionally burned in the fields, which contributes to high levels of air pollution. The overuse of chemical fertilizers and disposal of agricultural products are also harmful to ground water and crops. Therefore, these waste management projects focus heavily on the composting of agricultural waste. The delegation was informed that there has been a 50% decrease in air pollution in the local area. Beyond the positive environmental ramifications of the project, there are also positive economic outcomes. Agricultural waste products are being converted into marketable products, including compost, nutrient-enriched straw, organic products and even the production of charcoal that emits less air pollution than conventional methods. These initiatives have resulted in increased employment, skills development and local decision-making.

Members of the delegation were particularly interested in the involvement of women in the community development associations and in implementing these waste management projects. CENACT officials noted that the promotion of gender equality is one of the priorities of the project, along with economic viability and environmental sustainability. They noted that women are playing important roles in community outreach.

Overall, members of the delegation were impressed with the CENACT projects, because they are resulting in tangible improvements to the local community, they are based on the principles of economic sustainability (by setting up small businesses) and they are building capacity in civil society at the local level. The delegation also learned of the challenges facing the project, including the need to overcome resistance to the role of women in project implementation, the region's centralized decision-making and the limited capacity of local NGOs in a governorate that is relatively inexperienced in working with NGOs.

Meeting with General Abd El Galil Al Fakhary, Governor of Ismailia

Members of the delegation held a meeting with the Governor of Ismailia. They highlighted the importance of civil society and community-based projects in

regional development, using the example of the CENACT project that the group had witnessed in the morning. The delegation discussed the agricultural waste management project, its positive involvement of the community and women and its potential applications to the rest of the governorate and country. However, they also highlighted the need for high-level government involvement in supporting and encouraging such projects and supporting the capacity-building of local NGOs. The Governor reflected that the CIDA-supported projects were a model for the people and that the governorate is now considering NGOs and civil society as important elements in local development.

Meeting with Mr. Mohamed Bassiouni, Head of the International Relations Committee of the Shoura Council

The delegation met in the morning with representatives from the Shoura Council, the upper chamber of Egypt's parliament. The representatives from the Shoura Council were led by Mr. Mohamed Bassiouni, Head of the International Relations Committee. Mr. Bassiouni described the work of the committee, which covers national security, foreign affairs and Arab affairs. Members of the Pan-African Parliament also participated in the discussions.

Members of the delegation discussed with members of the Shoura Council how Canada might be of assistance to Egypt and the wider African continent, including engagement with the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament and in the implementation of NEPAD. The representatives from the Shoura Council stated that Egypt plays an essential role in Africa, that Egypt was a founding member of NEPAD and that members of Egypt's Shoura Council and People's Assembly (lower house) are members of the African Parliament. The members of the Shoura Council noted that Egypt's international relations focus on the states in East Africa, due to the overriding importance of the Nile's water resources to Egypt's interests. Consequently, Egypt is engaging in several economic development projects in the Nile Valley.

There was a discussion of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Members of the Canadian delegation expressed strong concerns over the persistence of the violence in the Darfur region, the limited access by humanitarian relief operations to that region and the delayed response of the Sudanese government in ameliorating the crisis or in allowing a greater United Nations presence in the region, specifically in the form of a peacekeeping force. Emphasis was placed on the need to stop the violence in Darfur immediately and it was underscored that a plan had already been agreed to transition from the initial African Union peacekeeping force to a larger UN mission, the implementation of which has been delayed by the Government of Sudan. Egypt's position is to strengthen and increase the role of the African Union and African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Members of the Shoura Council argued that any external assistance or intervention in Darfur must have the acceptance of the Sudanese government. Sudan is very important strategically to Egypt, particularly because the Nile flows through Sudan to Egypt. A question was asked concerning the African Union and its mission in Sudan and about how Canada might be of assistance. In

response, representatives of the Shoura Council noted that the AU requires financial assistance from western countries.

A discussion followed on the important role of international trade in Africa's development and the need for economic development to take hold in the African continent. During this discussion, the members of the Shoura Council expressed the need to encourage greater foreign direct investment in Egypt and on the African continent and their desire for Canada to play an even larger role in Africa's development. In this respect, they underlined the importance of Canada's reputation as a middle power and mediator in international relations. Finally, members of the delegation discussed the importance of the establishment of NEPAD and its mechanisms for increasing accountability, specifically the African peer review mechanism. The members of the Shoura Council stated that the Pan-African Parliament is the basis for development in Africa and that there is a need to increase the role of parliaments in Africa.

Meeting with Dr. Fathi Sorour, Speaker of the People's Assembly

The delegation met with Dr. Fathi Sorour, the Speaker of the People's Assembly, Egypt's lower parliamentary house. Dr. Sorour was accompanied by several members of People's Assembly, including those who are members of the Pan-African Parliament.

Members of the delegation discussed how Egypt might play a role in the economic development of Africa. Dr. Sorour attempted to counter perceptions that Egypt's presence in Africa has declined, arguing that Egypt is a part of Africa and describing Egypt's historical role in Africa's politics and economic development, and noting that Egypt supported the establishment of the Pan-African Parliament. Members of the delegation noted that Canada has been consistently engaged in the African continent and that half of the Canadian International Development Agency's annual budget is allocated to Africa. They also noted Canada's establishment of the \$500 million Canada Fund for Africa in 2002 following the G8 summit in Kananaskis in support of NEPAD. The Egyptian parliamentarians welcomed the presence of Canada in Africa and suggested the need for both countries to work together more bilaterally in Africa.

Finally, the parliamentarians raised the issue of the status of the detained Canadian-Egyptian dual national, Mr. El-Attar. Members of the delegation noted the Egyptian authorities' cooperation in allowing Canadian access to Mr. El-Attar and the efforts that have been made. They also cited international justice and humanitarian treaties and noted that it is in the best interest of both countries that he be treated in the manner and with the justice afforded to a human being. The parliamentarians continued their discussions over a working lunch and the members of the People's Assembly described the proposed amendments to Egypt's constitution that were being deliberated in the Egyptian parliament.

Meeting with Dr. Mostafa El-Feki, Head of the International Relations Committee of the People's Assembly

The delegation held a productive meeting with members of the International Relations Committee of the People's Assembly, which focused on Egypt's role in Africa and recent developments in Somalia and Sudan. Dr. El-Feki and his colleagues articulated that Egypt is supporting Africa's economic and political development through the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament. They described Egypt's strong engagement with the ten countries that border the Nile Basin and a recent meeting to discuss the development of an institutional framework for managing the Nile and ensuring water security for all the countries involved. Projects in the Nile Basin are being funded by the World Bank and CIDA, among other donors, and Dr. El-Feki expressed hope that this support would continue.

The discussion turned to Canada's support for practical training programs for employees of the Pan-African Parliament and Canada's consistent engagement with the African continent, which was most recently expressed through the visit of the Speaker of the House to West African countries. Finally, both sides agreed that Canada is a traditional supporter of human rights, the rule of law and multiculturalism, and that further Canadian cooperation in Egypt and Africa would be welcomed.

Meeting with Mr. Samir Hosni, Director of the African and Afro-Arab Cooperation Department, Arab League (League of Arab States)

The delegation held an extremely productive and interesting exchange of ideas with Egyptian representatives to the Arab League. The discussions focused primarily on the humanitarian crisis in Darfur and developments in Somalia. The Arab League, which was founded in 1945, is a regional association of 22 member states from North and East Africa and the Middle East. Egypt is an influential player in the Arab League, which is headquartered in Cairo. The League deliberates and passes resolutions on a range of issues affecting member states, including education and cultural affairs, international relations and international conflict and foreign and defence policy.

Mr. Hosni underlined that Darfur and Somalia are high on the agenda of the Arab League. He explained how until now, there has been no viable political solution to the Darfur crisis. Division among the groups in Darfur is a problem, as the Darfur Peace Agreement was not signed by two main rebel groups. Restarting the peace talks is of critical importance. He stressed that there must be real support for the African Union to provide security in Darfur and that the League is not against exerting pressure on the Government of Sudan to ameliorate the situation. However, he noted that any pressure must be balanced in order to contribute to reaching a sustainable peace agreement for Darfur. The conflict also has regional dimensions, as it has spilled over into neighbouring Chad.

The representatives of the Arab League outlined the Addis Ababa Agreement on Darfur that has been agreed to by the UN Security Council and the Peace and

Security Council of the African Union. The plan is to be implemented in three stages. There are no time frames attached to any of the phases.

1. A UN light support package to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), involving 200 UN personnel and logistical support.
2. A UN heavy support package involving 17,000 UN troops from African countries (if African cannot muster enough troops, they will come from other UN countries).
3. A UN-AU hybrid or mixed security operation. A joint representative of both the AU and the UN will report to each respective organization, with the chain of command reporting ultimately to the UN.

The Arab League representatives noted that Egypt supports the hybrid force, but that there are technical disagreements between the Government of Sudan and the UN regarding the source and amount of troops and the sequencing of any deployments. Overall, there is a strong desire for the proposed UN troops to come from African countries. The conclusion to these disagreements appears to be that the financing, organization, technical support and logistics will be supplied by the UN, while the troops will be supplied by African countries.

There was also a very fruitful discussion of the Canada's role in contributing to the resolution of the Darfur crisis. Canada has given significant financial support to AMIS. The Egyptian representative encouraged Canada to play a significant role in any upcoming peace talks in Darfur and for Canada to continue its financial and logistical support of AMIS. He also emphasized that Canada is needed to exert pressure on the parties to the conflict to complete peace talks and that Canada should be present at future discussions.

The delegation inquired after the status of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that was signed between the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese People's Army in the south of Sudan in January 2005. It was suggested that the CPA had been forgotten by the international community. Mr. Hosni responded that the League has provided \$200 million in support of the CPA. He also strongly encouraged further Canadian participation in peacebuilding efforts in southern Sudan and noted that there are strong possibilities for cooperation between Arab countries and Canada in southern Sudan. In two years time, the south of Sudan will hold a referendum to determine its political future – whether or not to become an independent country.

The delegation also engaged the Arab League representatives in an extensive discussion of recent developments in Somalia and both sides expressed a strong desire to see a resolution to the internal conflict in Somalia and for the peacebuilding process to begin. They noted that Somalia has been without a government for the last 16 years, that Somalia has been ruled in pieces by warlords and that the formation of a recognized government, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), in Nairobi in 2004 was a turning point. The Arab League representatives stated the League's complete support for the TFG. The

TFG, which was backed by a significant military intervention by Ethiopian troops, is now attempting to establish its authority throughout the various regions of the country. The representatives of the Arab League also touched on the complexity of the political and security situation in Somalia, but were adamant in their support of the need to rebuild the country.

Regarding Canada's role in Somalia, the Arab League representatives expressed their desire for Canada to become a member of the International Contact Group (ICG), a group of key countries supporting peace and reconciliation in Somalia. Importantly, on 16 April there will be a National Congress of Reconciliation in Somalia, with participants from a broad spectrum of Somali society. The League is urging international financial support for this Congress. Finally, the group discussed the recent announcement that the African Union would deploy a peacekeeping mission in Somalia. The mission requires international financial support.

Meeting with Mr. Hisham Kassem, Journalist/Publisher in Cairo

The delegation had a very engaging discussion with Mr. Kassem regarding the state of human rights and civil liberties in Egypt. Mr. Kassem ran the *Cairo Times* for seven years and established the first independent daily newspaper in Egypt in fifty years. Mr. Kassem provided a detailed overview of the history of Egyptian politics during the regimes of Presidents Nasser and Sadate and the tenure of the current President, Hosni Mubarak. He outlined the role of the military in Egyptian society and discussed political developments in the last twenty-five years that have affected Egypt's judiciary, legislature, executive and media.

In terms of the current situation facing Egypt, Mr. Kassem outlined Egypt's economic challenges, including the need to advance the privatization of state-run services. The group also engaged in an extensive discussion of the progress of democratization in Egypt and changes in the political environment since 2001. The delegation inquired after the fairness of Egypt's most recent parliamentary and presidential elections. Finally, the delegation discussed with Mr. Kassem Egypt's international relations and its relationship with other African countries.

Meeting with Mr. Mohamed Fayek, Secretary-General, Arab Organization for Human Rights

The delegation held a meeting with Mr. Fayek, Secretary-General of the Arab Organization for Human Rights. The discussions focused heavily on the human rights situation in Egypt and the African continent, political developments in Egypt and the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

The group had a very interesting discussion regarding the current situation in Sudan, both the crisis in Darfur and the long-running North-South civil war. Mr. Fayek made the interesting observation that, in dealing with internal conflicts and grievances, the Government of Sudan only negotiates with armed groups, a position that excludes other non-armed members of the society. In Darfur, the rebel groups do not represent a real political or societal movement. In addition,

the agreement between Khartoum and southern Sudan for instance is with the Southern People's Army (SPA). The government must reconcile with others, not just those carrying arms, in particular political parties and community groups. In regard to Darfur, the group discussed the recent decision by the International Criminal Court to indict two key individuals and it was acknowledged that the proposal to deploy UN troops in the Darfur region was partly opposed by the Government of Sudan due to its fear of UN troops arresting and transferring those indicted individuals to the ICC.

The group discussed the long-term peacebuilding issues in Darfur. The conflict has spilled over into neighbouring Chad, fuelled by scarce water and land rights issues that must be addressed. There are often more resources available now to the people in refugee camps than in their villages, which have been destroyed, making resettlement potentially problematic.

Briefing with Egyptian Council on Foreign Relations

The delegation concluded its visit in a briefing session with the Egyptian Council on Foreign Relations. In response to questions from the Council regarding Canada's policies in Africa, members of the delegation discussed Canada's engagement in Africa, including the \$500 million Canada Fund for Africa, which was established in 2002 at the G8 summit in Kananaskis and the 8% annual increases in Canada's official development assistance, half of which is earmarked for Africa. They also noted that Canada was trying to coordinate more with other donors in Africa to improve donor harmonization and was focusing on support for NGOs.

There was an extensive discussion concerning Egypt's role in Africa. Council members addressed perceptions that Egypt's role in Africa has diminished since the 1950s and 1960s, suggesting that oftentimes, Egypt's involvement in African affairs is lost in all the attention garnered by the large apparatus of Egypt's foreign relations with other countries, particularly the United States and states in the Middle East. Most importantly, the Council pointed to the Nile, the source of Egypt's wealth and prosperity, which flows from and through neighbouring countries in East Africa, including Ethiopia and Sudan. A significant proportion of Egypt's population resides in communities and cities along the Nile valley. There are 10 countries in the Nile Basin and Council members noted the potential for greater institutionalized cooperation among those countries on the management of the Nile. Egypt is beginning to place greater emphasis on the environmental management of the Nile in addressing sanitation and pollution, particularly as regards the increasing urbanization of Egypt, and hopes that these efforts can serve as a regional model.

Members of the delegation were interested in learning about the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa, which was highlighted by Council members as the cornerstone of Egypt's engagement with the continent. The Fund is supported by the Egyptian Foreign Ministry with an allocation of 12 million LE. The Fund is aimed at providing technical assistance and improving Egypt's bilateral cooperation with individual African countries and with regions in

Africa. For example, the Fund assisted with the training of midwives from Darfur in Cairo. The Council members expressed a desire for greater financial resources for the Fund and noted that Egypt partners with Japan and Norway in the Fund. Other examples of initiatives by the Fund include food aid to Niger to overcome recent natural disasters and drought, the organization in 2006 of a training course on desertification and modern agricultural technologies to improve agricultural production, scholarships for African students to study at Egyptian universities and the organization of a training course for the Liberian police force.

Finally, in discussing the recent situation in Somalia with the delegation, the Council members noted that Egypt supported the transitional charter and the recognized government in Somalia and expressed a desire for all political powers and actors to be invited to the upcoming National Reconciliation Congress.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On the first day of the visit, the delegation held a briefing with Mr. Philip MacKinnon, Canadian Ambassador to Egypt at the official residence. This briefing covered Egypt's domestic situation and its relations with the African continent and highlighted Canada's historical and current engagement with Egypt and the state of the bilateral relationship.

There was a discussion surrounding the importance of environmental sustainability in Egypt and the surrounding North-East African region, along with the importance of the Nile. The delegation had many questions regarding the political situation and quality of life in Egypt. The growth of the importance of religion in Egypt was discussed, as was the crisis in Darfur (western Sudan).

Finally, the delegation received an update from the Ambassador on the situation of Mr. El-Attar—a Canadian-Egyptian dual national who is currently imprisoned and facing charges in Egypt—his recent and upcoming trial, the Embassy's access to him and responses to the delegation's concerns over due process and fair treatment under the law.

At the end of their visit to the Ismailia and Suez Canal regions, the delegation participated in a working lunch with local stakeholders. The group discussed the Canadian-Egypt bilateral relationship and local business and development issues.

While in Cairo, the delegation had a productive exchange on bilateral and commercial relations between Canada and Egypt over dinner with the Canada-Egypt Business Council and with Egypt's Minister of Legal Affairs.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the delegation's bilateral visit to Egypt was a success in furthering the stated objectives of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association: improving relations and exchanges between Canadian and African parliamentarians, working to strengthen parliaments in Africa and the parliamentary role of oversight over the executive, fostering strong bilateral relations between Canada and African countries, promoting democracy and good governance in Africa and

furthering the knowledge and understanding of Canadian parliamentarians of important political, economic and security developments in the African continent.

To further the Association objectives of strengthening parliamentary relations at the national, regional and bilateral levels and also with the Pan-African Parliament and the regional assemblies of the African Union, the Association conducts bilateral visits to key countries in Africa. As a founding member of NEPAD and as a country with a large population and significant political and economic interests in Africa's development, Egypt offers an important opportunity for Association members to learn of Egypt's complex internal political environment; the history of Egypt's involvement in Africa; Egypt's involvement in the African Union, Pan-African Parliament and Arab League; its important relationship with African countries in the Nile Basin region; its financial support for development in Africa; and, developments in Somalia and Sudan.

The visit allowed the Canadian parliamentarians to build invaluable networks with Egyptian parliamentarians and members of Egypt's civil society. It also highlighted the important development role that Canada is playing in Egypt through the Canadian International Development Agency and the need for Canada to continue to support projects focusing on environmental sustainability, economic development and gender equality in Egypt. Finally, the Association's visit highlighted important issues concerning the uncertain status of human rights and democratization in Egypt that, in moving forward, can be assisted by further parliamentary exchanges with Canada.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The delegation would like to express its gratitude to staff at the Canadian Embassy in Egypt, for their assistance in arranging the visit and the meetings. The delegation is grateful to Mr. Philip MacKinnon, Canadian Ambassador to Egypt, Mr. Christopher Hull, Counsellor (Political), Ms. Eman Omran, SME Program Team Leader, and Ms. Nevine Osman, Political and Economic Officer, for their support and availability during their visit.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Raynell Andreychuk,
Senator

Co-Chair
Canada-Africa Parliamentary
Association

The Honourable Mauril Bélanger, C.P.,
Member of Parliament

Co-Chair
Canada-Africa Parliamentary
Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation on the bilateral visit to Egypt
DESTINATION	Cairo, Egypt
DATES	March 4 to 6, 2007
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Honourable Raynell Andreychuk, Senator, Co-Chair Honourable Mobina Jaffer, Senator, Vice-Chair
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. Mauril Bélanger, P.C., M.P., Co-Chair Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, M.P., Director Mr. James Bezan, M.P. Mr. David Christopherson, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Rémi Bourgault, Executive Secretary of the Association Ms. Allison Goody, Advisor to the Association
TRANSPORTATION	\$39,687.46
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 6,256.37
HOSPITALITY	\$ 51.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 2,692.28
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 703.17
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 116.06
TOTAL	\$49,506.34