



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation in the meeting of the Political Committee of
the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF)**

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

**Yerevan, Armenia
March 19 to 21, 2018**

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch that attended the meeting of the Political Committee (the Committee) of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) held at the Parliament of Armenia in Yerevan, March 19 to 21, 2018, is honoured to present its report. The delegation was composed of the Honourable **Dennis Dawson**, Senator and member of the Canadian Branch, Mr. **Paul Lefebvre**, M.P. and Vice-President of the Canadian Branch, and Ms. Nadia Faucher, analyst.

Some 40 parliamentarians from 25 branches representing four regions of the francophone world (Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe) took part in this meeting. In addition to the Canadian Branch, the following branches were represented at the meeting: Armenia, Belgium/French Community/Wallonia-Brussels, Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Catalonia, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Jura, Lebanon, Mali, Moldavia, Morocco, Niger, Quebec, Romania, Senegal, Switzerland, and Togo.

The meeting was convened by Mr. Christophe-André Frassa, Committee Chair and Senator (France). At the beginning of the meeting, the Committee adopted an amended agenda and the record of decisions and corrected minutes from the Committee's previous meeting, held in Luxembourg, Luxembourg, on July 9, 2017, during the 43rd Plenary Assembly of the APF.

Political developments

The Chair invited the members from the various branches to participate in a round table and summarize the political issues in their respective legislatures. In his presentation, Mr. **Paul Lefebvre**, M.P. (Canada) noted that Canada had recently made a commitment to send 250 Blue Helmets and supply helicopters to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Mr. **Lefebvre** stated that Canada was chair of the G7 in 2018 and would be hosting the G7 Summit in June 2018. He pointed out that the Sergei Magnitsky Law, which allows Canada to impose sanctions on individuals and States that commit serious human rights violations, had **received Royal Assent**. He also provided an overview of other issues of current interest to Canadian parliamentarians, such as the signing of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and (the commencement of negotiations for the renewal) the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico and the United States. In addition, he noted that Canada would be hosting a number of parliamentary events in 2018, including the Annual Meeting of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly.

Report and declarations on political situations

The Committee then considered the draft report reviewing the political situations in the francophone world submitted by the representative of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Branch. The report addressed the situation in Syria, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo and the Sahel region. Following

the study of the political situations discussed in the report, the Committee adopted the following declarations:

- A declaration on the political situation in Cambodia, the [Déclaration sur la situation politique au Cambodge](#), expressing concern about the shrinking of democratic space in Cambodia, denouncing the arrest of the leader of the official opposition, and recommending that the Cambodian Branch be placed under warning in accordance with the APF's democratic vigilance mechanisms;
- A declaration on the political situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the [Déclaration sur la situation politique en République démocratique du Congo](#), encouraging all parties involved to respect the electoral calendar, under which elections are scheduled for December 23, 2018, and recalling the APF's support for that process. The declaration also condemns the use of violence in all its forms and expresses concern about the situation of civilian populations experiencing physical and food insecurity;
- A declaration on the political situation in Lebanon, the [Déclaration sur la situation politique au Liban](#), welcoming the decision of Lebanese authorities to hold legislative elections in May 2018 and encouraging attendance at the April 2018 conferences in Paris and Brussels to help Lebanon modernize its infrastructure;
- A declaration on La Francophonie's commitments respecting the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, the [Déclaration sur les engagements de la Francophonie quant au conflit du Haut-Karabakh](#), recalling the resolutions adopted at various Francophone Summits concerning the settlement of conflicts, and encouraging the parties involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to carry on negotiations under the auspices of the Minsk Group.

In the discussion on Burundi, the DRC delegate presented the results of the visit that the APF delegation made to Burundi from November 20 to 22, 2017. The APF delegation was composed of the President of the APF, the President of the National Assembly of Madagascar, the President of the APF Network of Parliamentarian Women and Member for Cameroon, and the Rapporteur of the Political Committee and Member for the DRC. The delegation met with the presidents and vice-presidents of the National Assembly and the Senate of Burundi, members of the Government of Burundi, representatives of the Episcopate, former heads of State of Burundi, and representatives of the United Nations (UN) and civil society. The delegation also travelled to Brussels, Belgium, to meet with members of the Burundian opposition. The RDC delegate stated that the APF delegation recommended in its report that the Burundian Branch remain under observation, but that the suspension of institutional cooperation be lifted. She also pointed out that the members of the Bureau adopted a declaration to that effect at the January 2018 meeting. She planned to reassess the political situation in Burundi in July 2018 and submit a draft resolution to the Plenary Assembly.

The parliamentarians (of the Committee subsequently) shared their respective views on the political situations. The parliamentarian from the Central African Republic stated that resource sharing is a source of tension in his country. He also noted that there were

armed actors from other countries in the Central African Republic. The parliamentarian from Switzerland asked why the Central African Republic was not under warning in view of the current tensions. The Committee Chair reminded the parliamentarians present that placement under warning is a democratic vigilance mechanism used when there is an attack on democracy or violence is perpetuated by the government.

The parliamentarian from the Lebanese Branch questioned the fact that the political situation in Lebanon was not one of the situations studied by the Committee. He also submitted a draft declaration concerning Lebanon to the parliamentarians present at the meeting. The Committee adopted the declaration, but a number of parliamentarians questioned the fact that they had to hastily study a declaration that they had not had the opportunity to examine in advance.

Following the discussions, the Committee adopted the amended report on political situations.

Discussion on the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Sahel Alliance

The French Branch presented to the Committee its plan to hold an interparliamentary meeting to discuss the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Sahel Alliance. The French delegate recalled the creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force by the governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger in July 2017. The mandate of this joint military force of 5,000 soldiers is to combat terrorism, cross-border organized crime and human trafficking. At the same time, France and Germany established the Sahel Alliance to coordinate the work of international funding providers in the Sahel region.

The French delegate stated that an interparliamentary meeting on the situation in the Sahel was scheduled for late 2018 and would be organized by the National Assembly of France. The President of the National Assembly will invite parliamentarians from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, members of civil society, and non-governmental organizations to attend the meeting.

Following the French delegate's presentation, parliamentarians from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger took the floor to express their concerns about the current situation in the Sahel region. According to those parliamentarians, the situation is critical for the people living in the region, and insecurity could expand farther south. The parliamentarians also noted that armed groups regularly move from one country to another and that MINUSMA's mandate is restrictive in that the mission's Blue Helmets are not allowed to leave Malian territory.

Following the discussion, a declaration on the Sahel Alliance, the [Déclaration sur l'Alliance Sahel](#), proposed by the French Branch, was adopted.

Combating religious radicalism

The Quebec Branch submitted its final report on combating religious radicalism. The Quebec delegate thanked the 15 branches that contributed to the Quebec Branch's report by completing the questionnaire. According to Quebec's report, religious radicalism leading to violence is a global phenomenon that has affected the countries of La Francophonie more acutely in the last few years. The Quebec delegate noted that the

report examines the concept of radicalization and its determinants. The report also provided an overview of international actions to combat radicalization and violent extremism.

Discussions about the report on religious radicalism were followed by exchanges on a declaration on combating religious radicalism, the [Déclaration sur la lutte contre le radicalisme religieux](#), submitted by the Quebec Branch. Amendments were suggested by the French Branch, and the amended declaration was adopted, as was the report in its entirety.

The Quebec delegate subsequently proposed a new report topic, digital governance. The new report topic was adopted.

United Nations peace mission

The Committee discussed the first draft of the report on UN peace missions prepared by the Belgium/French Community/Wallonia-Brussels Branch. The Belgian delegate presented the contents of the first draft, which included a historical overview of peacekeeping operations; the operations' normative framework, including the role of the Security Council; and the changing role of peacekeeping operations. The report also describes the essential functions of peacekeeping operations, such as enforcing cease-fires and demilitarized zones, creating conditions conducive to the negotiation of peace agreements, and providing a framework to help international actors coordinate their actions. In addition, the report sets out the basic principles required to ensure the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. The issue of the costs of peace missions and how they are divided between the member countries of the United Nations was also documented in the report's initial draft.

Parliamentarians from the DRC, Mali, Lebanon, the Central African Republic and France spoke about their countries' experiences with UN peace missions. Delegates from other branches disputed the effectiveness of those missions and the UN Security Council's resolutions. The parliamentarians also raised the issue of the high cost of those operations.

Mr. **Lefebvre** thanked the rapporteur for his report and mentioned Canada's historical role in the UN. He noted that Canada would like to be involved in the next phases of the report.

Branches wishing to collaborate on this draft report were invited to write to the Committee's Advisor. A working group will be formed in July 2018 at the next session of the Plenary Assembly.

The rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

Mr. **Dennis Dawson**, Senator (Canada) and Rapporteur of the APF's Canadian Branch for the Committee, requested input from the branches present on Canada's next report topic. Senator **Dawson** suggested that Canada prepare a report on protecting and promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights. He noted that since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the international community had adopted a number of conventions to eliminate discrimination based on

factors such as gender, race and religion. He also noted that the international community had concerned itself with violations of the human rights of a number of vulnerable groups and that deliberations had taken place to reach the necessary consensus to protect everyone's rights.

Senator **Dawson** stated that the APF had played and continued to play a role in promoting human rights, particularly in the francophone world. LGBTI people are subject to violence and discrimination and are denied certain rights in many countries. He said that international human rights law establishes clear obligations for States with respect to safeguarding LGBTI rights.

Canada proposed to prepare a first draft of a report on international human rights instruments that would describe the evolution of LGBTI rights on the international scene and document the obligations that States have regarding protection of the rights of LGBTI people identified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Following Senator **Dawson's** presentation, the LGBTI rights report topic was approved.

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Death penalty in the francophone world

The Committee discussed the Swiss Branch's final report on the death penalty in the francophone world. The Swiss delegate thanked the 15 branches that responded to the questionnaire on the death penalty. She noted that respondents included countries that had abolished the death penalty by legislation or de facto and countries that still applied the death penalty. The responses were used to prepare an overview of the status of the death penalty in the francophone world.

She also stated that 106 countries around the world had abolished the death penalty, 56 of which were members of La Francophonie. There were 38 countries that continued to apply the death penalty, six of them in the francophone world. In addition, 48 countries, including 17 francophone countries, had abolished the death penalty de facto but had not amended their laws.

The Swiss delegate noted that parliamentarians played a very important role in ensuring that the death penalty was abolished by legislation and not reintroduced. The Swiss report cited research showing that the death penalty was no more of a deterrent than imprisonment for life for people who commit terrorist acts and other crimes. The report also presented examples of countries that had abolished the death penalty de facto, countries that had done so by legislation, and countries that had not abolished the death penalty.

The Swiss Branch will present a resolution on the death penalty at the Committee's next meeting in Québec in July. Following the presentation, the Committee adopted the report on the death penalty in the francophone world.

Other business

The parliamentarians at the meeting discussed four other agenda items: applications from countries wishing to join the APF, the draft by-laws of the Network of Young Parliamentarians, regulatory amendments, and the APF's opinion for the Francophone Summit.

With regard to the first item, the parliamentarians at the meeting were informed that, at its January 2018 meeting, the Bureau had expressed support for New Caledonia's application to become a member of the APF and Kosovo's application for observer status in the APF. The Committee was also informed that Mexico had submitted an application to join the APF as an observer, but that the application had been received after the Bureau's meeting. As the Committee has the power to express preliminary opinions, it decided to express support for Mexico's application. All applications to join the APF will be approved at the July 2018 Plenary Assembly.

With regard to the second item, the parliamentarians at the meeting also discussed and adopted the amended draft by-laws of the APF Network of Young Parliamentarians. The Senegalese delegate presented the Network's draft by-laws to the parliamentarians present. He expressed gratitude to the APF for creating the Network and thanked the young parliamentarians who had participated in the Network's creation at the four sessions held in Cambodia, Canada, Senegal and France. The assistance provided by the APF Secretariat was also acknowledged.

Under the draft by-laws, the Network of Young Parliamentarians is to be composed of parliamentarians no older than 40 years of age, and its bureau is to be gender-neutral. Some delegates at the meeting expressed concern that some branches would be excluded from the Network of Young Parliamentarians if they had no parliamentarians under the age of 40. The Senegalese representative stated that parliamentarians over 40 would be able to attend meetings of the Network of Young Parliamentarians but would not have a vote.

With regard to the third item, the Committee adopted regulatory amendments to the APF by-laws to incorporate clauses associated with the Network of Young Parliamentarians and an amendment to an article on the budget.

With regard to the fourth item, the Committee was informed that the APF Secretariat would prepare the APF's opinion for the Francophone Summit to be held in Yerevan in October 2018. The Secretariat sent a questionnaire to all branches and will use the responses in preparing the opinion.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Samson, M.P.

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (CAPF)
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Political Committee of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)
DESTINATION	Yerevan, Armenia
DATES	March 19 to 21, 2018
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Dennis Dawson, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Paul Lefebvre, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. Nadia Faucher, analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 19,295.95
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 1,774.56
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,477.22
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 187.86
TOTAL	\$ 22,735.59