



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the Bureau Meeting and XXXIII Session of the *Assemblée
parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)***

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

**Libreville, Gabon
July 2 to 6, 2007**

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) which attended the APF Bureau meeting held in Libreville, Gabon on July 2 and the XXXIIIrd Session of the APF also held in Libreville, Gabon from July 3 to 6, 2007 has the honour to present its report. The delegation was led by Mr. Bernard Patry, MP and President of the APF, and included the following parliamentarians: the Honourable Pierre De Bané, Senator, the Honourable Rose-Marie Losier-Cool, Senator, Ms. Vivian Barbot, MP and Ms. Nicole Demers, MP. Accompanying the delegation was Mr. Jean-Michel Roy, Branch Association Secretary.

The following branches were represented at the XXXIIIrd session : Andora, Bénin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central Africa, the Comores, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, France, the Francophone Community of Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels), Gabon, Hungary, Jersey, Jura, Laos, Lebanon, Luxemburg, Macedonia, Madagascar, Moldova, Monaco, Morocco, New Brunswick, Niger, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, Romania, Senegal, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Valais, Val D'Aoste, Vietnam.

Monday July 2, 2007

Mr. Bernard Patry chaired the APF **Bureau** meeting. Senator Pierre De Bané, Chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, also attended the meeting.

In his opening address, Mr. Patry recalled that 2007 marked two important anniversaries for the APF: the 40th anniversary of the organization's founding and the 10th anniversary of the APF being recognized by the Heads of State and Government as the consultative assembly of *La Francophonie* at the Hanoi Summit. Mr. Patry also underscored the importance of holding this meeting in Libreville, given Gabon's status as a founding member of the APF.

Following Mr. Patry's address, the assembled delegates heard from Mr. Guy Nzouba Ndama, President of the National Assembly of Gabon and Chair of the Gabonese Branch of the APF.

The following agenda items were discussed at the Bureau meeting:

Granting of permanent observer status : the request of the Pan-African Parliament to be granted permanent observer status was approved and submitted to the plenary session.

Lifting of branch suspensions: motions to lift the suspensions imposed on the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mauritania branches were approved and submitted to the plenary session.

Committees' work : Senator De Bané, Chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, reported on the work of the committee which last met in Sofia, Bulgaria in May 2007. On that occasion, the Committee examined the following reports: *La protection internationale des réfugiés* ; *La vie des assemblées dans l'espace francophone : recueil des procédures et des pratiques parlementaires* ; *Le projet Noria* ; *Les missions*

d'observation des élections ; Les séminaires parlementaires et les stages de formation ; Le Parlement francophone des jeunes (International refugee protection; Assemblies in the Francophone world: compendium of parliamentary procedure and practices; the Noria Project; Election observer missions; Parliamentary seminars and professional training programs; Francophone Youth Parliament).

Reports from regional chargés de mission: Mr. Michel P. Samson (Nova Scotia), chargé de mission for the American Region, reported on the activities of the Region. In his report, Mr. Samson noted that at the XXIIIrd session of the APF American Regional Assembly held in Toronto from August 23 to August 27, 2006, those members in attendance had studied a report presented by Senator Andrée Champagne (Canada) focusing on the legal recourse available to linguistic minorities under the *Official Languages Act*.

Mr. Samson went on to note that at the Conference of Branch Chairs of the American Region held in Lafayette, Louisiana on March 29, 2007, the Canadian Branch, represented by Senator Andrée Champagne, had been selected to chair the Conference from July 2007 to July 2008.

Follow up on the work of the Women's Parliamentary Network:

The Chair of the Network, Ms. Nimon Baloukina Eza (Togo) reported on a seminar held in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on May 3 and 4, 2007 on the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The forum was chaired by the Vice-Chair of the Network, Senator Losier-Cool.

Tuesday, July 3, 2007

In her capacity of Vice-Chair of the **Women's Parliamentary Network**, Senator Losier-Cool took part in the first meeting of the **Steering Committee**. Following this meeting, Senator Losier-Cool was joined by Ms. Barbot and Ms. Demers for a meeting of the full Network.

At the meeting, Senator Losier-Cool reported to Network members on the work of the Cooperation and Development Committee.

Network members also adopted the text of a motion tabled by the Political Committee to the plenary session seeking its support for the women and children of Darfur and neighbouring countries.

Lastly, the Network elected a new Steering Committee. Senator Losier-Cool was selected to serve as Chair of the Committee.

Also on July 3, Mr. Patry attended the opening session of the **IVth Francophone Youth Parliament**. The themes selected for discussion corresponded to the work undertaken by the APF committees, specifically:

- **Political Committee:** youth and conflict prevention.
- **Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee:** Francophone youth, migration problems and HIV/AIDS.
- **Parliamentary Affairs Committee:** getting young people to register to vote.

- **Cooperation and Development Committee:** what kind of migration policy is needed in the future to deal with large movements of immigrants?

Wednesday, July 4, 2007

The various committees met simultaneously on Wednesday, July 4. Ms. Vivian Barbot presented to the **Political Committee** a report entitled: *Les ratifications des traités internationaux et régionaux sur les droits de la personne (Ratification of international and regional human rights treaties)*.

Ms. Barbot pointed out how one of the primary objectives of *La Francophonie* was to become a viable component of the international system, one that promotes and strengthens multilateral dialogue. One of the most effective ways of achieving this goal is to strengthen the system by signing, ratifying and upholding the terms of the instruments that underlie the system.

Beyond the APF's specific mandate, the ratification of international human rights treaties is also critical to the process of creating order in relations between States and their citizens. Ratification leads to greater respect for international treaties and their broad application in that it provides a framework of legitimacy, a basic component of the international rule of law.

It is important to remember that the international system rests on principles of reciprocity. By ratifying treaties, members of *La Francophonie* help to forge ties, to establish a common ground and to allow for the exchange of information between countries, all of which promote understanding and international cooperation within and beyond *La Francophonie*.

In the last part of her report, Ms. Barbot presented the highlights of the second report, released in late 2006, of the Secretary General of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) respecting democratic practices, rights and freedoms in *La Francophonie*. Chapter 4 of this important 700-page report gives a quantitative and qualitative overview of the ratification of major human rights treaties by OIF member states. Ms. Barbot stressed the need for *La Francophonie*, working together with the APF, to focus its efforts on raising awareness of those major instruments which have yet to be ratified by a sufficient number of countries. These include the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers or the Rome Statute or the Second Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights respecting the abolition of the death penalty. Ms. Barbot further pointed out that the OIF and its member states should work to promote and protect fundamental public freedoms, in particular freedom of expression and opinion and freedom of association, conditions that are essential to the development of a democratic society. These should be developed through the efforts of associative networks, unions, political parties and the media, both independent and pluralistic. Lastly, with respect to education, it is important for *La Francophonie* to support universal basic education as this represents a means of fighting discrimination between the sexes and social exclusion in general.

Senator Rose-Marie Losier-Cool presented to the **Cooperation and Development Committee** a report entitled: *Le suivi du Sommet de Ouagadougou : La contribution de la Francophonie à l'adoption de stratégies de développement durable et à la formulation*

de politiques de gestion des écosystèmes et des ressources naturelles (Followup to the Ouagadougou Summit : The Contribution of La Francophonie to the adoption of sustainable development strategies and the development of policies for managing ecosystems and natural resources).

The Senator made the following comments in her report:

Francophone parliamentarians are not sustainable development « operators ». Conversely, emerging global awareness of the consequences of global warming, combined with the escalating cost of non-renewable energy sources, have led to increased public pressure on governments and lawmakers, with parliamentarians being the focus of increasingly urgent appeals. Therefore, the latter have a responsibility, in their respective parliaments as well as within organizations like the APF and the UN, to ensure that the public's voice is being heard and that actions taken are in line with the public's expectations.

In addition, the senator reiterated that as representatives of the people, Francophone parliamentarians have a right and an obligation to be aware of what governments are doing to promote sustainable development. They also have the right and the duty to criticize these actions, to make changes and to propose new initiatives. Heads of State and Government, for their part, as well as organizations like the OIF and the *Institut de l'énergie et de l'environnement de la Francophonie*, need the support of parliamentarians and the public to carry out these actions and initiatives.

Lastly, the Committee agreed to hold its next meeting in Ottawa in the spring of 2008.

Senator Pierre De Bané chaired the meeting of the **Parliamentary Affairs Committee**. In his opening address, he recalled the mission and mandate of the committee, which is to examine reports on legal issues, rights and freedoms and democratic development. The committee is also responsible for examining reports that address the concerns of parliamentarians and that can serve as a basis for national legislation on a given subject.

Also as part of its mandate, the committee examines follow up reports on interparliamentary cooperation programs. The APF implements interparliamentary cooperation programs initiated jointly with the *Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie*. One such program is the Noria Program which supports the development of assembly websites. Finally, two training programs provide for parliamentary seminars and training sessions for parliamentary officers.

Regarding young people, the APF has established the Francophone Youth Parliament and a new program to support national youth parliaments.

Finally, the committee is also monitoring *Francophonie* election observer missions in which APF parliamentarians are participating. To that end, it has set up a working group to reflect upon the APF's participation in such missions.

Elsewhere, Ms. Nicole Demers sat on the **Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee**. Among other things, the committee examined the Quebec Branch's report on the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Thursday, July 5 and Friday, July 6, 2007

The proceedings of the **XXXIIIrd Annual Session** of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* formally got under way on **Thursday, July 5**.

The following people delivered speeches on this occasion: Mr. Bernard Patry, President of the l'APF, Mr. Guy Nzouba Ndama, President of the National Assembly of Gabon and Chair of the Gabonese Branch of the APF, Mr. Abdou Diouf, Secretary General of *La Francophonie* and Mr. El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon.

After addressing the gathering, Mr. Diouf fielded questions from participants. Senator Losier-Cool put the following question to the Secretary General on behalf of the Canadian delegation:

« Algeria attended the 11th Francophonie Summit held in Bucharest last September as an observer. This marked the first time in many years that this country had attended a summit meeting. Are discussions under way to have Algeria once again become a full member of *La Francophonie*?

In response to the question, Mr. Diouf stated that efforts were being made to bring Algeria back into the fold, as the country's absence was unquestionably felt by *La Francophonie*.

A general debate ensued on the theme of migration movements within the Francophone world. On behalf of the Canadian Branch, Ms. Vivian Barbot presented a report on the issues and challenges associated with Canada's immigration policy.

Pursuant to the agenda, parliamentarians proceeded to adopt the reports and the resolutions put forward by the various committees.

On motion of the Political Committee, the Assembly agreed to adopt:

- A resolution calling for the institutional and administrative reform of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*.
- A statement on the political situation in countries of *La Francophonie*, and more specifically on the situation in:

Ivory Coast: statement calling for elections to be held as soon as possible.

Guinea: statement calling for a negotiated end to the crisis with respect to human rights and, for multi-party democracy to prevail.

Lebanon: statement condemning political attacks and calling for renewed dialogue.

Mauritania: statement calling for a lifting of the suspension.

Central African Republic, Chad and Darfur: statement requiring for regional political dialogue.

Democratic Republic of Congo: statement in support of further consolidation of democratic institutions.

- A resolution on Palestine.
- A motion in support of the women and children of Darfur and neighbouring countries.

On motion of the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee, the Assembly adopted the following:

- A recommendation calling for the co-existence of freedoms, cultures and religions.
- A resolution on Francophone book policy.

On motion of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, the Assembly adopted the following:

- A resolution on the status of refugees.

On Friday, July 6, Senator Losier-Cool took part in the second meeting of the **Women's Parliamentary Network Steering Committee**. A decision was reached at the meeting to have Committee Chair, Senator Losier-Cool, draft the Network's position on OIF programming.

Following the Steering Committee meeting, the **Assembly** moved on to other business and appointed a new Bureau. It should be noted that Senator Andrée Champagne, Chair of the Canadian Branch, was elected Vice-President of the APF *in absentia*, while Senator Pierre De Bané was re-elected Chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee and Senator Rose-Marie Losier-Cool was elected Chair of the Women's Parliamentary Network. All were elected to serve two-year terms.

At the close of the session, it was agreed that the next annual session of the APF would be held in Quebec City in July 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrée Champagne, Senator
Chair 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 (APF)</i>
ACTIVITY	Bureau Meeting and XXXIII Ordinary Session
DESTINATION	Libreville, Gabon
DATES	July 2 to 6, 2007
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Pierre De Bané, Hon. Rose-Marie Losier-Cool
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Bernard Patry, Vivian Barbot, Nicole Demers
STAFF	Jean-Michel Roy
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 45,564.50
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 6,052.07
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,971.43
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 120.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 132.35
TOTAL	\$ 53,840.35