



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the
Meeting of the Political Committee of the Assemblée
parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)**

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

**Strasbourg, France
April 10 and 11, 2008**

Report

The Canadian Branch Parliamentary Delegation of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) that attended the meeting of the Political Committee of the APF held in Strasbourg (France) on April 10 and 11, 2008, has the honour to present its report. The delegation consisted of Ms. Vivian Barbot, M.P., and was accompanied by Mr. Jean Michel Roy, the Branch Administrative Secretary.

The following branches were represented: Albania, Aosta Valley, Belgium / French Community / Wallonia-Brussels, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Gabon, Jura, Macedonia, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Ontario, Quebec, Romania, Senegal, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia.

Thursday, April 10, 2008

Before work began, the Chair of the Committee, Mr. André Schneider (France), welcomed the Committee members. Following these words of welcome, the President of the APF and the President of the National Assembly of Gabon, Mr. Guy Nzouba Ndama, addressed the delegates. Then, the delegated President of the French Branch, Ms. Henriette Martinez, Deputy, read a message from the Secretary of State to the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs responsible for Cooperation and the Francophonie, Mr. Alain Joyandet. In his message, the Secretary of State referred to the comments made by the President of the Republic, Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, on the International Day of la Francophonie, stating that “*The Francophonie is and remains a priority of French diplomacy.*”

Afterwards, the following topics were addressed by the Committee:

Monitoring of the application of the Bamako Declaration

Ms. Amina Derbaki Sbaï (Belgium / French Community / Wallonia-Brussels) presented the report. Ms. Sbaï recalled that the ministers and heads of delegation of the States and governments of countries using French as a common language, which met on November 3, 2000 in Bamako, on the occasion of the international symposium to take stock of democratic practices, rights and freedoms in the Francophonie, had adopted an important declaration that constituted a step forward in the history of the Francophonie.

The Political Committee played a role in the Democracy and Human Rights Observatory provided in the Bamako Declaration. In addition to attending meetings of francophone institutional networks and having close relationships with the Peace, Democracy and Human Rights Delegation (DDHDP), the Committee submits to the Francophonie its report on political crises within the Francophonie. This report and the APF resolutions contribute to a degree to the ongoing observation and evaluation mechanisms. The Committee also undertook various processes that would further contribute to this Observatory. The report on political crises in the Francophonie is sent to those branches deemed to be in a crisis with a view to obtaining a written contribution from them. This procedure allows for the expression or even confrontation of the various points of view, as part of a review process that involves due hearing of the parties.

Furthermore, since July 2007, the APF has participated in two missions. The first was to send a fact-finding mission in connection with the legislative elections to be held in Madagascar. The second mission was during the Togo legislative elections held on October 14, 2007.

Lastly, the writing and forwarding by the APF to each branch of an exhaustive questionnaire on legislative power, together with the answers to the questionnaire, now give us a better understanding of how the various Parliaments function and the problems facing them. The Canadian Branch responded to the questionnaire.

International and regional human rights conventions

Ms. Vivian Barbot (Canada) presented the report. Ms. Barbot said that the ratification of international human rights treaties was not only part of the mandate of the Charter of the Francophonie, but that it complemented and strengthened this mandate.

One of the primary objectives of the Francophonie is to become a viable player in the international system – and to be able to promote and strengthen multilateral dialogue. One of the most effective ways of achieving this is to strengthen the system by signing, ratifying and abiding by the instruments articulating this dialogue. The Bamako Declaration, which states that the Francophonie and democracy are inseparable, supports these objectives.

Signing and ratifying international human rights treaties strengthens the international institutional system of which the Francophonie is a part. Thus ratification promotes the needs and objectives of the Francophonie itself while highlighting the legitimacy of the international instrument and institutions that represent the Francophonie.

By ratifying treaties, members of the Francophonie help to create links, common ground and exchanges of information between countries, all of which foster international understanding and collaboration both within and beyond the Francophonie. Furthermore, through the principles of reciprocity and legitimacy, the international system in turn becomes more inclined to support countries that are members of the Francophonie when needed, whether in terms of development, support for a national system of law or otherwise.

The end result is that ratifying international human rights treaties can increase the legitimacy of the Francophonie in general and of the individual signatories in particular. Ratification brings a sense of responsibility to member States both nationally and internationally. It then becomes easier for the Francophonie and its members to make themselves heard, to promote their principles internationally and to play a potentially more influential role in international decision-making. Ratification engenders community respect for the member States of the APF and the whole Francophonie, as champions of human rights and democratic values on the world stage.

The ratification of international human rights treaties also serves to defend the values of the Francophonie in the context of globalization, because it tends to reduce the risk of an international legal system that is inconsistent with the values defended by the Francophonie. By ratifying these treaties, the member countries of the Francophonie can earn a place at the negotiation table not only to make themselves heard in the march towards globalization, but also to play a role in the direction globalization will

take. The APF is a forceful body, because it represents a group of countries that not only speak the same language, but that also advocate common cultural values that are conducive to solidarity. These countries also share a political ambition that is based on these values and whose fundamental principle is respect for international law.

Seen from this standpoint, the ratification of international human rights treaties enables the member States of the Francophonie to help strengthen the enviable role played by French as the traditional language of diplomacy, while protecting the cultural standards that are so dear to the Francophonie. Ratification can only improve the capacity of member States of the Francophonie to guide the course of globalization and international law by imposing respect for cultural diversity and pluralism, and by being a faultless incarnation of organized pluralism within the international community.

As the Francophonie is made up of a wide diversity of countries from every part of the globe, united by a common language and culture, the Francophonie, by ratifying international human rights instruments, can help give a voice to the developing world and at the same time begin to have an influence on the course of international issues.

In addition to giving specific benefits to members of the Francophonie, the ratification of international treaties also accelerates the development of human rights standards, both nationally and internationally.

In conclusion, the human rights regime is a constantly evolving phenomenon that requires the support of all international partners if it is to prosper. From this standpoint, members of the Francophonie can play a powerful role in creating an international system based on justice, equity and human rights. In doing so, they can only strengthen the values that have been adopted and that are advocated by the Francophonie, and encourage the rest of the world to do likewise.

Political situations in the Francophonie

Mr. Bongnessan Arsène Yé (Burkina Faso) presented the report. Mr. Yé said that the APF is an attentive observer of democratic practices, rights and freedoms in the Francophonie. The APF plays an active role as a “democratic watchdog” and puts forward measures to guide the Parliaments and governments of countries in a crisis.

The rapporteur noted that with respect to article 5.6 of the by-laws of the Assembly concerning the suspension of a branch in which the constitutional order of the State has been overturned and the Parliament of this State has been dissolved or deprived of its powers, no member branch had officially had such a measure imposed.

This preliminary report is devoted to branches whose political situations are under observation: Haiti, Mauritania and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It also considers recent political events in Ivory Coast, Lebanon and Darfur, where the crisis is having repercussions for two member branches – namely the Central African Republic and Chad.

Lastly, a number of situations are being investigated, including those in Burundi, Comoros, and Guinea, as well as demonstrations against the high cost of living and the Touareg issue in Mali and Niger.

Friday, April 11, 2008

Declaration on political situations in the Francophonie

The Committee took a position on the following situations that have raised concerns within the parliamentary world:

- **Burundi** – A resolution condemning assassination attempts against parliamentarians and calling for continued political dialogue.
- **Ivory Coast** – A resolution demanding the organization of elections as quickly as possible.
- **Lebanon** – A resolution condemning political assassination attempts and calling for the continuation of dialogue.
- **Darfur crisis** – A resolution urging the international community and regional organizations to move forward quickly with the organization of a regional political dialogue.
- **The situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo** – A resolution on the intensification of disarmament and demobilization of the belligerents.

In addition, the Political Committee adopted the declaration made by the Steering Committee of the Network of Women Parliamentarians concerning violence against the civilian population in the eastern part of the Republic of Congo.

Monitoring of the ten-year strategic framework

Mr. Henri-François Gautrin (Quebec) presented the report. Mr. Gautrin mentioned that during the XXIIIrd Session held in Libreville in July 2007, on a motion by the Political Committee, the Assembly had adopted a resolution on institutional and administrative reform of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

This resolution expressed the Assembly's satisfaction with the reform under way and urged the OIF to continue its efforts to introduce more rigour in program implementation, including through the implementation and validation of performance indicators. However, the Assembly expressed a number of concerns about the proportion of the budget spent on operating expenses and programs, on statutory contributions by the States and on late payment of membership dues.

Migratory policies

Mr. Jérôme Lavou (Central African Republic) presented the report. Mr. Lavou noted that the problem of migratory flows clearly highlighted the inequality between rich and poor, and between those who have peace and security and those who do not.

According to the rapporteur, the causes of migratory flows are numerous and varied. For Africans, migration is, generally speaking, the answer to a complex set of factors: poverty, a growing population, wars or armed conflicts, political instability, poor governance, nepotism and corruption, poor working conditions, unemployment, low wages and occupational isolation, and lastly, immigration sustained by a number of rich countries.

The consequences of migratory movements are many, both for international relations and the African continent. On the level of international relations, the traditional functions of the State (security, legislation, solidarity) are called into question. On the African continent, the brain drain is the most significant cost of migration for the African countries.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on July 6 as part of the work in connection with the XXXIVth Session of the APF in Quebec City.

Respectfully submitted,

Vivian Barbot, M.P.
Member of the Canadian Branch of the
Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)

Travel Cost

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the APF Political Committee
DESTINATION	Strasbourg, France
DATES	April 10 and 11, 2008
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Vivian Barbot
STAFF	Jean Michel Roy
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 8,329.52
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 1,270.11
PER DIEMS	\$ 596.62
TOTAL	\$ 10,196.25
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