



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the  
International Parliamentary Conference on the  
Millennium Development Goals**

**Canadian Branch of the  
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)**

**London, United Kingdom  
November 28 – December 2, 2011**

# Report

Members of Parliament Joe Daniel and Raymond Côté represented the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association at the International Parliamentary Conference on the Millennium Development Goals (“the Conference”).

The Conference took place in London, United Kingdom, from November 28 to December 2, 2011. Work sessions were held at Portcullis House of the House of Commons.

The Conference was attended by 61 delegates from 33 parliaments and legislatures of Commonwealth and non-commonwealth nations.

The Conference theme, “Reaching for 2015: Governance, Accountability and the Role of the Parliamentarian,” focussed our attention on achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality rates
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

The purpose of the Conference was to review progress toward the MDGs, identify the mechanisms required to achieve the 2015 targets and look forward post-2015.

Specifically, we were to consider our role as parliamentarians: promoting, supporting, overseeing and accomplishing the MDGs.

## **Current status**

At the outset, the MDGs were criticized as having been developed and defined by developed countries and imposed on developing ones. The goals were often described as vague and unrealistic. The gap between expectations and the action taken appeared to be too wide to leave much hope that the MDGs would be achieved.

That said, a number of developing countries have taken concrete steps to achieve certain goals and have accomplished significant, encouraging results. Furthermore, the significant shift seen in the provision of development aid by Northern countries and the arrival of new donors, emerging countries and independent agencies provide developing countries with greater control and more effective tools in achieving their objectives.

Initiatives for achieving the MDGs have been greatly facilitated by new democratic structures in developing countries, particularly Africa. Enacting a constitution,

establishing democratic institutions and engaging citizens appear to be the necessary ingredients for successful development.

### **The role of parliamentarians: Expectations and concerns**

Parliamentarians were urged to play a key role in achieving the MDGs. As legislators, stakeholders in oversight and accountability, and representatives of their constituents, parliamentarians need to be involved in the process to identify objectives, take the necessary action to achieve them, and review outcomes.

However, several parliamentarians and stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds complained about and criticized the many difficulties and barriers in the way of achieving the MDGs. The following is a non-exhaustive list of the problems encountered on the ground:

- Feeling of powerlessness when faced with the sheer magnitude of the task
- Feeling of being abandoned by developed countries and major international organizations
- Lack of common instruments and rules for action
- Enormous disparities between the countries covered by the MDGs
- Uneven, fragmented support for the MDGs
- Lack of information to work on achieving the MDGs
- Lack of an international authority to govern, arbitrate and achieve the MDGs
- Sense of urgency given the looming 2015 deadline

Parliamentarians easily feel overwhelmed by the challenge. They expressed frustration about the lack of tools and the impression of not having control over projects. A frequent theme that came up was Western countries' real or perceived ultimate control over development projects.

### **Conclusion**

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association should play a major role in achieving the MDGs. The delegates agreed that the Association held interesting and important potential as a discussion and coordinating forum for achieving substantial, realistic and more equal results.

A country's legislative framework is a powerful tool for achieving the MDGs. We can provide two examples:

- Women's access to property has enormous potential for improving their financial status and consequently the overall living conditions for women and their families.
- The criminalization of homosexuality poses a major, dramatic barrier in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Russia, which passed repressive legislation a few years ago, has seen infection rates jump 60%, contrary to global trends.

It appears obvious that parliamentarians have a responsibility for achieving the MDGs. The vast majority of parliamentarians in attendance agreed that they have the most

significant tools, the best position and the most critical role to act, monitor outcomes, seek accountability and engage citizens in achieving the MDGs.

Respectfully submitted,

Russ Hiebert, M.P., Chair  
Canadian Branch of the  
Commonwealth Parliamentary  
Association

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference on Millennium Development Goals
<b>DESTINATION</b>	London, UK
<b>DATES</b>	November 28 – December 2, 2011
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Joe Daniel, M.P. Mr. Raymond Côté, M.P.
STAFF	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$2 146.16</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$0.00
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$295.55</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$0.00
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	<b>\$256.74</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2 698.45</b>