



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the
Seminar of the United Nations Development Programme
(UNDP) and the Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs
Committee of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie* (APF)**

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

**Fribourg, Switzerland
March 23–25, 2009**

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) that attended the seminar of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the APF in Fribourg, Switzerland, on March 23–25, 2009, has the honour to present its report.

Composed of the Hon. Pierre De Bané, Senator and Chair of the Committee, the delegation was accompanied by Mr. Jean Michel Roy, Executive Secretary to the Branch.

The following branches were represented: Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, the French Community of Belgium, France, Gabon, Jersey, Jura, Macedonia, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Quebec, Switzerland, Syria and Valle d'Aosta.

Monday, March 23, 2009 – UNDP seminar

Guest speakers: Mr. Christian Daubie, Secretary-General, Parliament of the French Community of Belgium, and representative of the Association of Secretaries-General of Francophone Parliaments; Mr. Claudio Fischer, Head, International Relations, Parliamentary Services, Parliament of Switzerland; Mr. Louis Massicotte, Professor, Laval University, Quebec; and Mr. Jean-Philippe Roy, Lecturer, François Rabelais University, Tours.

The UNDP was represented by Mr. François Duluc, Advisor. The Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CÉMAC) was represented by Mr. Laurent Gomina Pampali, President; Mr. Sidick Amine Abba, Secretary-General; and Mr. Parfait Etoung Abena, Executive Secretary.

The seminar on the democracy of parliaments and criteria for its evaluation was chaired by the Hon. Pierre De Bané.

The seminar covered three themes:

- Elections and the status of parliamentarians, Mr. Louis Massicotte, presenter.
- Prerogatives of parliament, Mr. Jean-Philippe Roy, presenter on the subthemes of the organization of parliamentary business, the legislative function, the parliamentary oversight and the parliamentary committee.

Mr. Claudio Fischer, presenter on the subthemes of international relations, accessibility of parliament and the dissemination of parliamentary information.

- Organization of parliaments, Mr. Christian Daubie, presenter.

Before the speakers' presentations, **Senator De Bané** discussed the seminar and its goals. The seminar is the result of a new partnership between the UNDP and the APF. It aims to create a document laying out best practices for parliamentary democracy in the francophone world. In doing so, the APF joins with the international community in debating the criteria for evaluating parliamentary democracy.

The larger goal of the APF background paper is the adoption of a universal declaration on parliamentary democracy by the United Nations General Assembly.

Senator De Bané said that establishing criteria for the functioning of parliaments has several advantages. It will not only help parliaments in their own modernization efforts but also help establish clearer and more objective intervention criteria for international parliamentary development programs. This initiative includes a number of challenges: each state has its own social, political and historical context that influences the characteristics and practices of its parliament. However, every parliament must strive toward a number of universal values, hence the importance of this seminar.

Senator De Bané added that it was equally important that the APF's steps promote the characteristics of the francophone world while defending those of francophone parliaments.

The document entitled "*La réalité démocratique des Parlements : Quels critères d'évaluation ?*" takes into account the comments and contributions of a number of APF branches on the report titled "*La démocratisation des Parlements*". The report was presented to the branches at the APF Bureau meeting on January 21–22, 2009, at the United Nations headquarters in New York and was also debated at the Steering Committee meeting of the APF Network of Women Parliamentarians in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The report will be studied by the Political Committee at the APF-UNDP seminar on April 8, 2009, in Luang Prabang, Laos.

The findings of the seminar, and all other contributions, will be taken into account in the final version of the document, to be ratified in principle at the Paris Session in July. The document will then be presented at the "*Conférence internationale sur les bonnes pratiques de la démocratie parlementaire*" in Paris on October 22–23, 2009. At the request of the UNDP and the World Bank, this Conference will cover all the work carried out by the APF, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the World Bank Institute, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the National Democratic Institute so as to achieve the adoption in 2010 of a universal declaration on parliamentary democracy by the United Nations General Assembly.

Following Senator De Bané's presentation, Mr. **Francois Duluc**, UNDP Advisor, was asked to speak. Mr. Duluc pointed out that the partnership between the UNDP and the APF was completely natural and that a similar partnership existed with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the World Bank and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. He explained that the UNDP's interest in parliamentarianism is based on the acknowledged link between economic development and parliamentary democracy. He also pointed out that the UNDP has links to 65 parliaments around the world.

During discussion of the document on the democracy of parliaments, **Senator De Bané** moved that the following section be added:

"A legal mechanism must oversee relations between public office holders and interest groups. This mechanism could take the form of a public registry of interest groups and their activities."

Tuesday, March 24, 2009 – Committee meeting

Before the meeting got underway, Mr. **Alain Berset**, President of the Council of States of Switzerland, welcomed the Committee members. In his speech, Mr. Berset pointed out the importance of the whole issue of language in Switzerland and the Francophonie in particular, underscoring the existence of four languages and four cultures in Switzerland and the desire of its citizens to live in harmony.

Address by the Chair of the Committee

Senator De Bané discussed the Francophonie and its institutions. In the course of his remarks, he pointed out that one of the characteristics of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee's meetings was that the people who participate are, quite often, eager to debate issues under the jurisdiction of parliaments, exchange experiences as parliamentarians and follow up co-operation programs of the APF.

He also noted that the Committee has a special feature that distinguishes it from the other three APF committees and makes it one of the most valuable: in addition to examining substantive reports, it also examines the follow-up reports on inter-parliamentary co-operation programs. The APF implements inter-parliamentary co-operation programs in collaboration with the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF).

Follow-up on election observer missions

Ms. **Françoise Fassiaux-Looten** (French Community of Belgium) presented this report, which dealt with observer missions under the auspices of the OIF in which members of the APF participate. One mission has been carried out since July 2008, and one APF parliamentarian participated in it. The mission was to the legislative elections in Rwanda in September 2008.

Senator De Bané read the news release of the APF of March 20, 2009, in which the APF noted the unconstitutional change of executive power in Madagascar and the suspension of Madagascar's parliamentary activities. The APF also noted that section 5.6 of its by-laws provides for the suspension of a member when the constitutional law of a state is overthrown and Parliament is dissolved or deprived of its powers. The Madagascar Branch of the APF has therefore been suspended.

Parliamentary seminars and traineeships

Ms. **Ramatou Rahimou** (Niger) presented this report. She noted that these two inter-parliamentary co-operation programs have existed for 10 years and that, since the meeting in Quebec City in July 2008, the APF has held one parliamentary seminar in Togo and another in the Democratic Republic of Congo and organized training for parliamentary officials at the *École nationale d'Administration* (ENA) in Paris.

A parliamentary seminar was held in Lomé, Togo, in October 2008. It dealt with the following topics: parliamentary budget oversight; the role of citizenship in a democracy and how to strengthen it; the development of legislation; and support in carrying out a mandate.

A parliamentary seminar on the status and role of the opposition in parliamentary democracy was held in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, in November

2008. It dealt with the following topics: the problem of the opposition in parliamentary democracies; political parties in parliament; representation of the opposition in various parliamentary bodies and the organization of parliamentary business.

Senator De Bané then told Committee members about the Canadian Parliament's initiatives on training senior parliamentary officials.

He pointed out that co-operation has always been an integral part of inter-parliamentary relations in the Parliament of Canada, which has demonstrated this value by holding exchanges for senior parliamentary officers.

Initially, these exchanges took the form of seminars or field trips. In 1997, however, the information that was presented to senior officers on an ad hoc basis was consolidated into a structured program that allowed the Parliament of Canada to host a number of representatives from foreign parliaments all at one time. In the Parliamentary Officers Study Program, visitors tour the various sections of the Senate, the House of Commons and the Library of Parliament to learn about the broad range of services necessary for the functioning of Parliament.

The Program is held over a two-week period and includes briefings, question and answer sessions, tours and networking opportunities.

The Noria program

Ms. **Mireille Eza**, Director of the Noria program (APF General Secretariat) presented this report. She explained that the purpose of the program was to support the dissemination and management of parliamentary information and to narrow the digital divide by assisting partner legislatures in computerizing and modernizing the management of and access to parliamentary information. The program has since been broadened to include Burundi, Gabon, Nova Scotia, Laos and Togo.

With respect to Nova Scotia, Ms. Eza noted that the selection of documents to translate and the identification of suppliers was successfully underway and on schedule. The website of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly now has a French-language section. The organization of a French-language course and the distribution of holdings should follow shortly.

The Francophone Youth Parliament (FYP) and national youth parliaments

Mr. **Bachir Dieye**, chargé de mission for the FYP within the APF General Secretariat, presented this report on the state of preparation of the Francophone Youth Parliament, which will hold its fifth session on July 2–7 in Paris.

The agreed-on themes for the next session of the FYP are as follows:

- child soldiers (Political Committee);
- child labour in the francophone world (Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee);
- youth and political parties (Parliamentary Affairs Committee);

- the food crisis, the financial crisis, cost of living, purchasing power: social consequences for francophone youth (Cooperation and Development Committee).

As to youth national parliaments, the APF has decided to extend its youth-related actions by introducing, in collaboration with the OIF, a support program for these parliaments. This program has a twofold objective: to strengthen youth parliaments within APF member branches and to promote the creation of such structures in branches that do not yet have them. The APF will therefore bring its past experience in this area and material support to these parliaments. The parliaments of Niger, Mali, Gabon and Burkina Faso were the first to benefit from this program. Cameroon, Senegal, Congo-Brazzaville and Madagascar are next in line.

Report on the APF-UNDP seminar of March 23, 2009

Senator De Bané discussed the seminar's objectives. Ms. **Michèle André** (France) summarized the seminar.

Wednesday, March 25, 2009 – Committee meeting

Access to parliamentary information for all citizens

In the absence of a rapporteur from the Quebec Branch, Mr. **Dominic Dumont**, Interparliamentary Relations Advisor with the National Assembly of Quebec, presented on behalf of the Quebec Branch a questionnaire on the freedom of the parliamentary press in the Francophonie. The questionnaire aims to provide a snapshot of the media situation in each APF member parliament.

Legislative assemblies in the francophone world: compendium of procedures and practices

Ms. **Michèle André** (France) presented the follow-up report of the compendium's Chapters VII, VIII, IX and X on legislation, oversight procedures, institutional communication and inter-parliamentary relations, respectively. It should be noted that the Canadian Branch submitted a contribution to the four chapters.

Globalization issues and challenges for the francophone world

Mr. **Alain Berset** (Switzerland) presented a draft report.

The Committee's next meeting will be held on July 4, 2009, in Paris, as part of the XXXVth Session of the APF.

Respectfully submitted,

Pierre De Bané, Senator
Member 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</i> (APF)
ACTIVITY	Seminar of the UNDP and Meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the APF
DESTINATION	Fribourg, Switzerland
DATES	March 23–25, 2009
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Pierre De Bané
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Jean Michel Roy
TRANSPORTATION	\$6,775.22
ACCOMMODATION	\$1,626.69
PER DIEMS	\$601.14
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$215.50
MISCELLANEOUS	\$123.99
TOTAL	\$9,342.54