



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

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

**Luang Prabang, Laos  
April 8 and 9, 2009**

## Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) that participated in the seminar organized by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the meeting of the Political Committee of the APF in Luang Prabang, Laos, on April 8 and 9, 2009, has the honour of presenting its report.

The delegation was composed of Bernard Patry, MP, accompanied by Jean Michel Roy, Executive Secretary of the Branch.

The following branches were represented: Belgium/Communauté française/Wallonie-Bruxelles, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, France, Jura, Laos, Morocco, Niger, Quebec, Central African Republic, Senegal, Switzerland, Aosta Valley and Vietnam.

### **Wednesday, April 8, 2009 – UNDP Seminar**

The following speakers made presentations: Paul Bélisle, Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments of Canada, and representative of the Association des secrétaires généraux des Parlements francophones; Louis Massicotte, Professor at Laval University in Québec City; and Jean-Philippe Roy, Professor at François Rabelais University in Tours.

The UNDP was represented by François Duluc, Advisor.

André Schneider (France) chaired the seminar on the status of democracy in parliamentary systems and criteria for evaluating this status.

The seminar was organized according to three topics:

- Elections and the status of parliamentarians, presented by Louis Massicotte. Subtopics included elections, eligibility, protecting the parliamentary mandate, and parliamentarians' materiel resources.
- Parliamentary prerogatives, presented by Jean-Philippe Roy. Subtopics included how Parliament's work is organized, legislative duties, parliamentary control, parliamentary committees, international relations, the accessibility of Parliament, and communicating parliamentary information.
- How parliaments are organized, presented by Paul Bélisle. Subtopics included the status of political parties, parliamentary groups, opposition and administrative staff; budgets and materiel resources.

In his opening remarks, Committee Chair **André Schneider** (France) reminded delegates that this seminar represented a first-ever cooperative effort between the UNDP and the APF, and that it is hoped the United Nations will eventually adopt a universal declaration on parliamentary democracy.

Following this introduction, **Saysomphone Phomvihane**, Vice-President of the Laotian National Assembly, welcomed delegates. In his speech, the Vice-President stated that Laos is working to find a suitable approach to implementing parliamentary democracy. He said that resolving this complex issue will depend on several socio-economic

elements that are influenced by various historical factors. People should anticipate a range of solutions rather than one single answer, and therein lay the value and diversity of democracy.

**Jean-Luc Lala**, Administrative Secretary General of the APF, put the seminar in context. This is the third stage in the process following deliberations by the APF Network of Women Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Affairs Committee. The results of these deliberations will be sent to all branches and adopted by the APF at its next sitting. The last stage of the process will take place at a conference in Paris on October 22 and 23, 2009, involving representatives from such organizations as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the APF.

**François Duluc** (UNDP) explained the relationship between the UNDP and parliaments. The UNDP's position is that economic and social development depends on good governance and a strong parliamentary democracy. The UNDP works with 65 parliaments from around the world, most of them Francophone. Mr. Duluc added that the assessment criteria for parliamentary democracy will enable parliaments to evaluate themselves against recognized standards.

**Paul Bélisle** presented a report entitled, *L'organisation des parlements au service de l'intérêt public*. Mr. Bélisle spoke about democratic values in general. All organizations develop based on the values they embody. A parliament embodies the people's will as expressed through a wide variety of opinions. These opinions are brought forward in parliamentary debates. Furthermore, a democratic system is not an end in and of itself, just as elections alone are not a guarantee of democracy.

#### **Thursday, April 9, 2009 – Committee Meeting**

##### **Relations with the OIF**

Committee Chair **André Schneider** (France) stated that Hugo Sada, the Peace, Democracy and Human Rights Representative, had completed the questionnaire sent to him. The questionnaire is designed to inform parliamentarians of the Representative's many activities in countries that are in crisis or emerging from a crisis.

##### **Political situations in Francophone countries**

**Bongnessan Arsène Yé** (Burkina Faso) presented the report. He stated that the APF is a close observer of democratic practices, rights and freedoms in Francophone countries and that it plays an active role as a "democracy watchdog." The APF also suggests ways to support the parliaments and governments of countries in crisis.

Mr. Yé emphasized that this report usually focuses on recent political crises in Francophone nations, and particularly on the latest developments in countries whose parliament has been suspended from the APF. When a branch is suspended, it cannot hold positions of authority, participate in cooperative activities or attend various meetings.

Mr. Yé recognized the fact that Mauritania, Guinea and Madagascar were under suspension. The parliament of Ivory Coast, which is not recognized by the international community, is also under suspension.

Discussions then focused on the situation of two branches, Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo, which are under observation following the repeal of their suspension.

Lastly, delegates turned their attention to political situations that have arisen in several Francophone countries over the past year, some of them very troubling. The Committee identified the following areas as being in need of monitoring: Burundi, Cameroon, Cambodia, the Comoro Islands, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Lebanon and Darfur (Central African Republic – Chad).

The Committee passed draft resolutions concerning the Ivory Coast, Guinea, Madagascar and Mauritania, which will be presented to the APF for ratification at its next sitting.

In closing, Mr. Yé noted that, in 2008–2009, governments in Francophone countries moved away from the law, democracy and the respect of human rights.

### **Updating APF by-laws**

**Bernard Patry** presented the report. He reminded delegates that the APF Bureau had decided at its February 2008 meeting in Bujumbura to give the Political Committee the mandate to update the APF's by-laws, and that the Canadian Branch had agreed to prepare the related report. At the Committee's meeting in Québec City in July 2008, Vivian Barbot, a representative of the Canadian Branch, presented an initial report establishing the framework for the review and a draft schedule.

Mr. Patry stated that the Bureau had agreed to limit the by-law review to the following four items, insofar as possible:

#### 1. Consistency between the by-law and the new OIF documents

The Bureau wanted the articles concerning operations to be revised based on the new documents for the Francophonie adopted since the last by-law review in July 2002 at the Berne session.

The primary goal is to ensure that the wording is consistent with the new Charte de la Francophonie adopted by the 21st Conférence ministérielle de la Francophonie on November 23, 2005, in Antananarivo.

Mr. Patry stated that he had also taken into account the Ten-year Strategic Framework, 2005–2014 (adopted at the 10th Sommet de la Francophonie, held November 26–27, 2004, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso), and documents adopted at recent summits (declarations) and ministerial sectoral conferences (particularly the Bamako and Saint-Boniface declarations).

#### 2. Adopting declarations or resolutions by APF bodies

Mr. Patry reminded delegates that APF committees had been adopting "declarations" (and occasionally resolutions) at intersessional meetings for some time. However, the existing by-law does not reflect this new practice, which was started because meetings were being held less frequently and committees wanted to take a position on issues. The Bureau hoped that the Committee would take into account the basic principle that motions, resolutions, recommendations and notices would always be presented and

adopted during plenary sessions of the APF so as not to change the operation and hierarchy of APF bodies.

### 3. Branch status and membership procedures

Mr. Patry noted that article 5.3 sets out very few criteria for membership in the APF. The parliament's presiding officer is to submit a letter of interest, including a list of members, the composition of the executive, a description of the internal organization, the location of headquarters and information on the status of the French language in the government or the community concerned.

In addition, there is little or no difference in branch status (member, associate and observer), except that observers can speak only with the permission of the APF Chair.

The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie held discussions on its expansion, which led to new membership procedures and new forms of membership status (document adopted at the Beirut Summit in October 2002 and amended at the Bucarest Summit in September 2006).

Using the previous work of the Francophonie as a model, and without re-examining the composition of the APF, this by-law review could serve to identify membership criteria and lead to discussions on the rights and privileges associated with various types of branch status (member, associate and observer).

### 4. Mechanisms for suspension

Mr. Patry noted that, as of 1998, the APF temporarily suspends the branches of countries whose institutions do not fully live up to APF principles, as when the parliament is dissolved or stripped of its powers, until conditions are reintroduced that comply with the principles underlying any representative democracy.

The APF also institutes a two-year observation period for any branch whose suspension has just been lifted. This provision, implemented by the Bureau in 2003 (during the Strasbourg meeting), does not remove any of the branch's privileges and it can continue to attend meetings and benefit from all cooperative programs. However, the Political Committee and the Bureau will examine the situation in the country concerned at each of their meetings. The observation period ends automatically after two years if the APF gives a positive evaluation. This mechanism is not included in the by-law.

Mr. Patry concluding by saying that the last by-law reform in 2002 had two specific objectives: officially integrating the Network of Women Parliamentarians as one of the APF's bodies, and strengthening various mechanisms for paying dues.

Lastly, the APF is to approve the Committee's proposed amendments at its next sitting.

## **Report on proceedings of the APF-UNDP seminar of April 8, 2009**

**Françoise Fassiaux** (Belgium/Communauté française/ Wallonie-Bruxelles) presented the report. She stated that the document, *La réalité démocratique des Parlements: Quels critères d'évaluation?*, led to important discussions on the following five issues: conditions and timeframe for changing voting procedures; opposition rights; distinguishing between administrative parliamentary staff, political staff and associates;

the need to place greater importance on parliamentary budgets; raising moral standards in politics or the issue of parliamentarians changing allegiance while in office.

**Effect of the global financial crisis on the stability of Francophone countries**

Mr. Koukeo Akhamontry, Chair of the Laotian Branch, spoke to delegates on the economic situation facing his country.

The Committee's next meeting will be held July 4, 2009, as part of the APF 35th Session in Paris.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernard Patry, M.P.  
Member of the Canadian Branch of the  
*Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)*

## Travel Cost

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	UNDP Seminar and meeting of the Political Committee of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Luang Prabang, Laos
<b>DATES</b>	April 8 and 9, 2009
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Bernard Patry
STAFF	Jean Michel Roy
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$14,746.75</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$748.49</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$747.32</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	<b>\$328.79</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$16,571.35</b>