



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the meeting of the Political
Committee of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie* (APF)
Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie* (APF)
Lomé, Togo
March 14 to 16, 2012**

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF), having participated in the meeting of the Political Committee of the APF held in Lomé, Togo, on March 14–16, 2012, has the honour of submitting its report.

Consisting of Bernard Trottier, MP, the delegation was accompanied by Philippe Méla, acting Administrative Secretary of the Branch.

The following branches were represented at this meeting: Belgium/French Community/Wallonia-Brussels, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, France, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Jura, Niger, Quebec, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Switzerland and Togo.

After welcoming remarks by the President of the Togo Branch of the APF, André Schneider (France), Chair of the Political Committee, welcomed the Committee delegates. One minute of silence was observed to mark the two tragedies in the Congo and in Switzerland, where children had died in an automobile accident on the eve of the meeting.

Mr. Schneider said that he hoped the coming century would be Africa's century. He also said that the Togo Branch had distinguished itself by its very active involvement on several levels to advance democracy and the participation of women and youth in the democratic process.

The President of the Togo Branch of the APF commenced the meeting of the Political Committee with his opening address. He expressed his wish to see relevant resolutions to come out of the substantive agenda. He pointed out that, in addition to strengthening ties among members of the francophone community, the APF also ensured that the voice of La Francophonie was heard throughout the world. He reviewed the issues that would be discussed during the meeting of the Political Committee and thanked the Committee Chair for the relevance of the topics chosen to reflect our changing world.

Commencement of proceedings

The agenda and minutes of the last meeting of the Committee were adopted unanimously.

The agenda having been adopted, proceedings began with the consideration of the reports.

1. Political situation in La Francophonie

Rapporteur: Ms. Denise Mekam'Ne

Ms. Mekam'Ne (Gabon) summarized the situation in the countries that had been suspended. The report was up to date as of February 22, 2012, and could be amended to reflect recommendations made by the branches.

A. Côte d'Ivoire

Ms. Mekam'Ne indicated that progress toward democracy has been made but that tension was still palpable following the bloody clashes that followed the elections. She

also mentioned that the country still faces challenges in terms of strengthening its democratic institutions, but that the last election had gone well. The government must be established as soon as possible. Mr. Guillaume Soro had been elected President of the National Assembly.

The report gave rise to a discussion; the various comments highlighted the country's desire to end the crisis in which it has found itself, and stressed the importance of ensuring that democratic institutions are established as soon as possible.

B. Guinea

Ms. Mekam'Ne reported that the APF Bureau had asked the Guinean authorities to take the necessary steps to organize free, fair and transparent elections as soon as possible. The resolution was adopted with a few technical amendments.

C. Madagascar

Ms. Mekam'Ne mentioned that the political crisis that has been ongoing since 2009 seems to have taken a positive turn in recent months. Nonetheless, the return to democratic politics will depend on the holding of presidential and legislative elections. One of the major advances has been the opposition's willingness to take part in a national unity government. The resolution was adopted with a few technical amendments.

D. Syria

A discussion followed Ms. Mekam'Ne's report on the situation in Syria. It was felt that the resolution was not strong enough, and Mr. Trottier requested the inclusion of a paragraph condemning China and Russia for using their veto, thus preventing the UN from taking action against Syria.

The resolution was adopted with amendments.

E. Niger

Ms. Mekam'Ne presented her report on Niger. The report was adopted with a few changes proposed by Niger's delegate.

2. The role of ombudsmen in La Francophonie

Rapporteur: Mr. Henri-François Gautrin (Quebec)

Mr. **Henri-François Gautrin** (Quebec) presented an update on his report. Mr. Gautrin took note of the comments made following his presentation and would update his report before the next Committee meeting.

3. How to face the demographic challenges of the 21st century

Rapporteur: Ms. Françoise Fassiaux-Looten (Wallonia-Brussels Federation)

Ms. Françoise Fassiaux-Looten (Wallonia-Brussels Federation) presented an update on her report, which addressed three main issues: the demographic revolution, the grey revolution (or issues related to life expectancy) and the urban revolution.

A discussion followed Ms. Fassiaux-Looten's presentation. Togo's delegate said that his country was focussing on developing education for young girls. He also indicated that it

is important for women to achieve a certain level of financial independence so that they can look after their children.

Mr. Gauthrin (Quebec) proposed adding a paragraph on the use of cereal crops for hydrocarbon production, which is having a negative impact on food capacity in areas growing cereal crops for this purpose.

The draft report will be adopted at the next meeting in Brussels.

4. Natural resources and conflicts

Rapporteur: Mr. Bernard Trottier (Canada)

Mr. Trottier presented his report on natural resources and conflicts in La Francophonie. He explained that the issue is a complex one, with a significant risk of compromising human rights in areas where natural resources (oil, diamonds and forestry products, to name only a few) are extracted. He said that there were many examples of resource companies expropriating without compensating the local population, or exposing residents to toxic substances used to extract these resources. Moreover, there have been about twenty violent disputes that are a direct result of the extraction of natural resources.

He added that resource extraction companies should be made socially responsible and that many governments were now looking at either principles or legal provisions to implement standards for corporate social or societal responsibility. He gave as an example the Kimberley Process, which was established to prevent human rights abuses associated with the diamond extraction industry, and seeks to establish a certification scheme requiring governments to identify the specific geographic areas these diamonds are coming from.

Mr. Trottier said that there had been developments in this area recently, including the introduction, in La Francophonie, of the ISO 26000 standard, which advocates putting social responsibility into practice.

He added that Canada, a country rich in natural resources that is home to the headquarters of 75% of the world's exploration and mining companies, has been a leader in corporate social responsibility since 2005.

During the discussion that followed the presentation of the report, Mr. Trottier said that the resolution in support of the report would be prepared for the upcoming meeting in Brussels. He added that this resolution could contain a clause calling for member countries to implement a resource development mechanism before the resources are even developed. This mechanism would have the support of the representative of the Central African Republic, who maintains that the implementation of this mechanism (including how resources will be developed, how persons living in these areas may be affected and how they will be compensated) is essential in order to stem any violence that could result from the development of these resources.

5. Review of the regulatory provisions governing the statutes of the AFP branches

The Belgian Branch proposed several amendments to the AFP statutes. After discussion, it was proposed that a subcommittee be established to review the proposed

changes and report its findings at the Brussels meeting in July 2012. It was also decided that this subcommittee would have two vice-chairs, one from the northern countries and the other from the southern countries.

6. Preparation for the statement by the Secretary General of the OIF (XXXVIIIth Session of the APF)

A draft question had been prepared by the Quebec delegation on behalf of the Political Committee, and would be addressed to His Excellency Abdou Diouf, Secretary General of the OIF, at the next annual meeting of the APF, in Brussels in July 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernard Trottier, M.P.
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	Political Committee of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
DESTINATION	Lomé, Togo
DATES	March 14 -16, 2012
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Bernard Trottier
STAFF	Philippe Méla
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 16,986.56
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 1,436.83
PER DIEMS	\$ 550.22
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 68.50
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 724.00
TOTAL	\$ 19,766.11