



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

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

**Cotonou, Benin
April 28 to 30, 2009**

Report

The Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Meeting of the Cooperation and Development Committee of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) held in Cotonou, Benin, April 28-30, 2009, has the honour to present its report. The delegation was composed of Mr. Louis Plamondon, MP and rapporteur of the Committee, and was accompanied by Mr. François Michaud, the Branch's Acting Executive Secretary.

The following branches were represented: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, France, Gabon, Haiti, Jura, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Quebec, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Switzerland, Chad, Togo.

Tuesday, April 28, 2009

As the Committee's proceedings got under way, the President of Benin's National Assembly, Mr. Mathurin Coffi Nago, welcomed the participants and expressed his hope that the discussions would be productive.

The agenda and the minutes and record of decisions of the meeting held on July 6, 2009 in Quebec City, Canada, were adopted unanimously.

Address by the Committee Chair

The Committee Chair, Mr. Mahama Sawadogo (Burkina Faso), welcomed all of the new Committee members, and asked Mr. Plamondon, the Committee's new rapporteur, to advise Senator Rose-Marie Losier-Cool, the former rapporteur, that all of the Committee members had fond memories of her participation and to thank her for her excellent contribution to the Committee.

He mentioned his attendance at the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva in September 2008. In this respect, he informed the Committee that the APF's request with regard to the WTO Steering Committee encountered a few problems but remained confident about its conclusion.

The Chair informed the Committee members about the first regional parliamentary seminar, which dealt with the topic of international trade. The seminar was organized jointly by the APF, the WTO and the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (international organization of the Francophonie) (OIF) and was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, December 8 - 10, 2008.

He provided a thorough overview of the program of this meeting and mentioned his attendance at the Bureau meeting at UN Headquarters in January 2009.

Statements delivered to the Committee

Translate the Millennium Development Goals into a poverty reduction law

Mrs. Ginette Karirekinyana, Director of the Agence Consultative en Éthique de la Coopération Internationale (international cooperation ethics advisory agency) (ACECI), a non-governmental organization based in Quebec City, introduced the agency and its project.

ACECI advocates for the human dimension in relation to major global issues like combating poverty. Its approach is based on human rights, and the principle that where there is poverty, rights are denied. Mrs. Karirekinyana explained that, while they are many and complex, the restrictions that prevent poverty reduction are not insurmountable, provided that national and international development stakeholders act with rigour, respect and responsibility in complying with this ethical imperative.

She continued by stating that, in order to meet this collective ethical challenge, there is an urgent requirement for a campaign to "Translate the MDGs into a model law aimed at reducing poverty". Ms. Karirekinyana indicated that this campaign was the topic of the 3rd Major North/South Diplomatic Conferences that Niger will host June 15 - 18, 2009.

During the discussion, Mr. Plamondon stressed that the anti-poverty law is not just a philosophical principle, it forced, example given, the Quebec government to act.

The financial crisis

Mr. Hervé Cronel, Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the Francophonie, presented greetings to the Committee from the Secretary General, Mr. Diouf, who is very committed to the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

Mr. Cronel made a very interesting presentation on the current global financial crisis. Mr. Cronel insisted that this crisis, unlike what was experienced in the past, is not cyclical but systemic. The crisis is due to a model in which credit is the foundation, demonstrating that the financial crisis is a debt crisis. He went on to address the consequences of the crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. Although it is not possible to ignore the real fall in the demand for natural resources from African countries and direct foreign investment, Mr. Cronel believes that sub-Saharan Africa could actually benefit from lower transportation costs and prices of surplus entry-level products, especially as developments in infrastructure and workforce training are undeniable.

During the discussion, Mr. Plamondon stressed that the Canadian supply management model could be a useful model for developing countries.

WTO Doha Round trade negotiations

His Excellency Ambassador Samuel Amehou made an exhaustive presentation on the WTO Doha Round trade negotiations, its history, process and numerous challenges. He concluded by stressing the need for all parties to demonstrate realism and flexibility, because failure would mean an indefinite postponement of the hope of rebalancing the multilateral trading system. He recalled that, as representatives of their citizens, parliamentarians are in a position to help negotiators in their consideration of the issues.

The revised OHADA Treaty

Mr. Hervé Cronel, Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the Francophonie, delivered a presentation on the revised OHADA Treaty, the Organisation pour l'Harmonisation en Afrique du Droit des Affaires (Organization to Harmonize Business Laws in Africa). OHADA was created in 1993, and is a major initiative to achieve integration and boost the attractiveness of private investment in Africa as well as the free movement of goods, persons and capital among African countries. Mr. Cronel presented the history, structure, issues and funding of OHADA.

Standardization and development in the Francophonie

On behalf of Mr. Alain Durand, Secretary General of the Réseau Normalisation et Francophonie (standardization and Francophonie network), Mr. Hervé Cronel, Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the Francophonie, made a presentation about the Réseau Normalisation et Francophonie (RNF). The challenges of development in the 21st century are many and standardization, especially in a science and technology framework, has a decisive role to play in affirming the performance and competitiveness of businesses and satisfying the needs of consumers and citizens. Relying on a community of standards developers, metrologists, quality specialists and certification bodies that have a shared language and culture, the RNF can assist in achieving true success.

Wednesday, April 29, 2009

The Central African Republic and the MDGs

After an amendment to the agenda was made, Mr. Alexander Ferdinand N'Guendet, MP, and second Vice-President of the National Assembly of the Central African Republic, made a presentation on the current situation in his country and its urgent needs in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Presentation and review of draft reports

Follow-up on the Ouagadougou Summit: Contribution of the Francophonie to the adoption of national strategies on sustainable development and the formulation of national policies on the management of ecosystems and natural resources

The rapporteur, Mr. Louis Plamondon, MP (Canada), reminded the Committee of the origins of this recurring topic. At the Ouagadougou Summit in 2004, the OIF was entrusted with the implementation of decisions in favour of sustainable development in the Francophone world. The OIF included these decisions in its ten-year strategic framework and its multi-year program. In this program, Assignment D, entitled "Develop cooperation to support sustainable development and solidarity" is of particular interest to the Committee. The Institut de l'énergie et de l'environnement de la Francophonie (Institute of energy and environment of la Francophonie), is associated with the OIF and based in Quebec City.

Since the 2006-2009 program for Assignment D is in its final year, a summary must be made. It should be noted however that the Francophonie Summit in Quebec City did not provide many details on the four-year program for 2009-2012. Essentially, the steps taken by the OIF and the IEPF, its designated operator with respect to sustainable development, may be summed up as networking, pooling and dissemination of knowledge, scientific and technical information and best practices, in the French language, by means of training or documentation, and coaching developing Francophone countries in the large international fora. These are therefore important and essential activities, judiciously focused on southern Francophone countries, but lack a certain degree of visibility towards the people and parliamentarians.

With respect to new programming, it appears that it should be a continuation of the 2006-2009 programming, while placing more importance on issues of environmental law.

Monitoring international trade negotiations conducted within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO)

In the absence of Mr. Germain Chevarie, MP and Vice-Chair of the Committee (Quebec), the Chair of the Committee, himself a rapporteur on this topic, presented the document. The Chair provided a brief review of the Doha Round international trade negotiations that began in November 2001 under the auspices of the WTO.

The most recent report on this question was presented during the meeting that took place in Quebec City in July 2008. During this meeting, the Committee members stated that they were concerned about the prolonged impasse on these trade negotiations as well as by the food crisis that was affecting many Francophone states. They also reiterated their commitment to the outcome of the Doha Round by adopting a *Resolution on multilateral trade negotiations under the WTO*.

The current global economic crisis adds to the difficulties of the Doha Round but also to its urgency. Indeed, the crisis will definitely affect international trade and negotiations relating to it. The WTO is already facing the challenge of trying to curb the protectionist measures that are developing and convincing its members that the conclusion of the Doha Program can be part of the solution to the crisis.

Since 2003, each year the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament have jointly organized one or two parliamentary conferences on the WTO. After an unsuccessful attempt, the APF was granted the status of full-fledged participant to future conferences.

Relying on this status, the APF was represented by the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Committee on Cooperation and Development at the WTO's Parliamentary Conference in September 2008. During the proceedings, the APF Delegation intervened three times, in particular to assert the need to directly involve the Heads of State and Government in the negotiations in order to end the deadlock in the situation and also to discuss the idea of an exemption for agriculture based on the cultural exception in the Doha Round negotiations.

Mr. Sawadogo emphasized the Committee's activities related to negotiations under the auspices of the WTO, namely its participation in the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, its participation in the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, the organization of regional parliamentary seminars in partnership with the WTO and the OIF, hearing WTO representatives and the governments of member sections, and the actions taken by the OIF under the WTO process.

In conclusion, he stressed that, whatever the outcome of the negotiations, the Committee must continue to monitor the status of the various issues and to continue its awareness-raising activities on these important issues with parliamentarians from the Francophone world. Finally, the APF must focus on determining common positions for the Francophone world with respect to international trade, guided not only by commercial interests, but also by a desire for equity and solidarity. It is vital to ensure that the outcome of trade negotiations does not interfere with commitments made under other international conventions and agreements concerned with the interests of the people.

Business intelligence in Francophone countries

The rapporteur, Mr. Jean-Pierre Dufau (France), presented this subject, whose topic was new to the Committee.

Business intelligence includes, with respect to operational activities, monitoring activities (acquiring relevant strategic information), security (preventing secret information from being disclosed) and influence (disseminating or standards of conduct and interpretation that support its strategy). Public authorities have taken on the role of strategist in defining means to be implemented to preserve their place in the globalized economy and to ensure the independence and standard of living of their people. National interests are defended through the development and exploitation of comparative advantages. The purpose of intelligence is therefore to maintain competitiveness in order to preserve sovereignty.

Mr. Dufau compared business intelligence in France, Morocco, Quebec and Canada and concluded by emphasizing that economic harmony through cooperation, that is, business intelligence garnered by sharing strategic information, could be the message that the Francophonie conveys today to a world tempted to engage in aggressive confrontation, whether military or economic.

The food crisis and rising prices

Mr. Mohamed Najib Boulifa (Morocco), as rapporteur, gave a presentation on the origins of the crisis and the current situation.

Widespread price increases for basic foods and staple foods required in most countries of the world, and essentially in developing countries, is the result of the process of globalization and global interconnection.

However, it should be noted that the consequences of this global food crisis are not the same in all countries. In the poorest countries, the food budget is already over 70% of the total household budget (compared to 10-20% in developed countries), which means that the doubling of food prices over the past three years will lead to the exacerbation of poverty by at least 100 million Africans in low-income countries.

Mr. Boulifa offered several possible solutions. It is clear that international aid is not a long-term solution to overcome the crisis, but the end of protectionism in developed countries with respect to agriculture would be a good start. A "green revolution" in developing countries is also essential to conserve resources (water, earth, ecology, etc.) while benefiting from foreign investment.

Economic governance

Co-rapporteurs Ms. Amissétou Affo Djobo Oloude (Benin) and Mr. André Burri (Republic and Canton of the Jura), provided a detailed presentation on economic governance.

Mr. Burri first emphasized that the Francophonie has already made commitments in the field of economic governance but it should increase its efforts because it is essential for sustainable and responsible economic development.

To achieve healthy regulation, an arsenal of legislative measures is required; their implementation should be monitored and there should be proper enforcement of those laws, and also governmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in this arduous task. One should not underestimate the strength of new actors that are appearing alongside States to assist in regulation without violating the principles of national sovereignty.

One should also be clearly aware of the fact that globalization involves a clash of cultures and contrasting notions of governance, regulation, economic transparency and social responsibility, which explains, among other things, the differences that may be encountered on the issue of economic governance from one continent to another.

Mr. Burri then spoke about global governance, with several examples relating to the OECD, G8, WTO, the EU, and so on. He then provided some examples from APF countries and regional members, with France, Belgium, Val d'Aosta, the Jura and Canada, finally concluding with the infamous Enron and Parmalat scandals.

Ms. Dobo then addressed the meeting, providing a definition from the World Bank for the concept of economic governance, namely "how power is exercised through the management of economic and social resources of a developing country", where the principles of transparency, accountability and empowerment play a key role.

She provided a case analysis of some APF countries, namely Egypt, Madagascar, Gabon, Cameroon and Benin. She concluded by stressing that economic governance in Africa, compared to other regions of the world, should serve as an instrument of poverty reduction. Reducing poverty requires social responsibility practices based on ethical values such as respect for employees, taking into account the expectations of civil society and environmental protection. Therefore, the development and application of principles of governance must go beyond the standards of economic and financial management to analyze the issues in relation to expectations and interests of people.

Land titles

Mr. Hervé Cronel, Special Adviser to the Secretary General of La Francophonie, presented a paper on the securitization of land titles in countries in the Francophone world, an important issue that is related to the work of the French notaries association.

Concluding the proceedings, the Chair of the Committee referred to the follow-up on the resolutions adopted by the Committee and the participation of some of the Committee members in the proceedings of the fifth session of the Parlement Francophone des jeunes (Francophone youth parliament) which will be held next July.

The delegation also took advantage of its stay in Benin to meet with the Honorary Consul of Canada in Benin, Mr. Joseph-Louis Hounton. The delegation benefitted from his knowledge of Benin and this region of Africa and once again thanks the Honorary Consul for his warm welcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Louis Plamondon, 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 (APF)</i>
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Cooperation and Development Committee of the APF
DESTINATION	Cotonou, Benin
DATES	April 28 to 30, 2009
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Louis Plamondon
STAFF	François Michaud
TRANSPORTATION	\$13,980.81
ACCOMMODATION	\$1,995.76
PER DIEMS	\$1,088.51
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$242.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$237.01
TOTAL	\$17,544.09