

Canada – Africa  
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire  
Canada – Afrique

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**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting  
its participation at the Bilateral Mission to the People's  
Democratic Republic of Algeria**

**Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association**

**Algiers and Tipasa, Algeria**

**October 7 to 13, 2018**

# Report

## BILATERAL MISSION TO ALGERIA

The Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association (the Association) visited the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (Algeria) from October 7 to 13, 2018. The Association was represented by the Honourable Raynell Andreychuk, Senator, Co-Chair; Robert Oliphant, M.P., Co-Chair; the Honourable René Cormier, Senator, Director; Michael Cooper, M.P., Director; Ali Ehsassi, M.P.; Cheryl Gallant, M.P.; and Geng Tan, M.P. The delegation was accompanied by the Association's Secretary, Grant McLaughlin, and André Léonard, Analyst.

This mission to Algeria was the Association's first since 2009. The delegation's objectives were as follows:

- to update members of the Association on the current political, economic, and social situation in Algeria, as a follow-up on its 2009 bilateral mission;
- to engage with parliamentarians from both the government and opposition on governance and parliamentary democracy;
- to meet with business leaders and interested stakeholders to discuss the economic situation in Algeria and economic relations with Canada;
- to engage with civil society organizations, media, women's groups, and others on issues related to human rights, freedom of the press, freedom of religion and the rule of law;
- to meet with members of the Council of the Nation (Senate) on their role and on upcoming elections to that body;
- to hear about security concerns affecting Algeria and North Africa, including issues of terrorism and migration; and
- to learn more about Algeria's involvement in the Arab Maghreb Union, other regional associations, and the African Union (AU).

In support of its objectives, the delegation met with parliamentarians, government officials and representatives from the business community, media, cultural community, the United Nations (UN), and human rights organizations. The delegation also visited a desalination plant co-owned by a Canadian firm, as well as cultural sites. This report contains information about the current situation in Algeria and a summary of the delegation's meetings held in that country. It concludes with the delegation's key observations.

It should be noted that the delegation's program was to have included a separate mission to Mauritania. Unfortunately, the host country cancelled that mission one day prior to departure. This development necessitated a number of program changes, as the

delegation's mission to Algeria was extended by several days. Those adjustments were ably facilitated by our professional Embassy and Association staff.

The delegation wishes to express its deep gratitude to the Speaker and to members of the Council of the Nation for accepting the visit with such warm friendship, sharing their personal histories and experiences, and facilitating high-quality meetings, all of which gave the Association a greater appreciation of Algeria and opened doors for an enhanced partnership.

Our delegation arrived, as we understand it, at a difficult moment in Algeria's parliamentary process. Nevertheless, their assistance greatly benefited our mission, enhancing our understanding of Algeria and the importance of the bilateral relationship between our two countries, as well as the role of Algeria within its region.

## **THE REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA**

### **A. Geography <sup>1</sup>**

Algeria is located in northwestern Africa, with a coastline that stretches for almost 1,000 kilometres along the Mediterranean Sea. The country is bordered by Tunisia and Libya to the east, Niger to the southeast, Mali and Mauritania to the southwest, and Western Sahara (claimed by Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic) and Morocco to the west.

As of July 2017, the Algerian population was estimated at nearly 41 million. In 2017, the population growth rate in Algeria was 1.7%.

Algeria's capital is Algiers, the most heavily populated city in the country, with about 7.8 million inhabitants as of 2015. The country is divided into 48 provinces known as wilayas, which are further subdivided into daïras. There are 548 daïras, which in turn comprise 1,541 communes (towns or villages that are part of each daïra). Other than Algiers, the most heavily populated wilaya is Oran (1.6 million inhabitants), followed by Sétif (1.5 million). There were plans to create 46 additional delegated wilayas, which would later become full wilayas, and to eliminate the daïras, but the project has reportedly been stalled.<sup>2</sup>

Algeria's population is 99% Arab-Berber and less than 1% of European background. That said, only 15% of the population reportedly identify as Berber. This minority lives mostly in the mountainous region east of Algiers and speaks mainly Berber. The country's official languages are Arab and Berber (Tamazight, also called Amazigh); French is the language used in trade and government. Other Berber dialects spoken include Kabyle, Chaoui, Mozabite and Tuareg. Algeria is 99% Muslim, predominantly Sunni. Less than 1% of the population is Christian or Jewish.

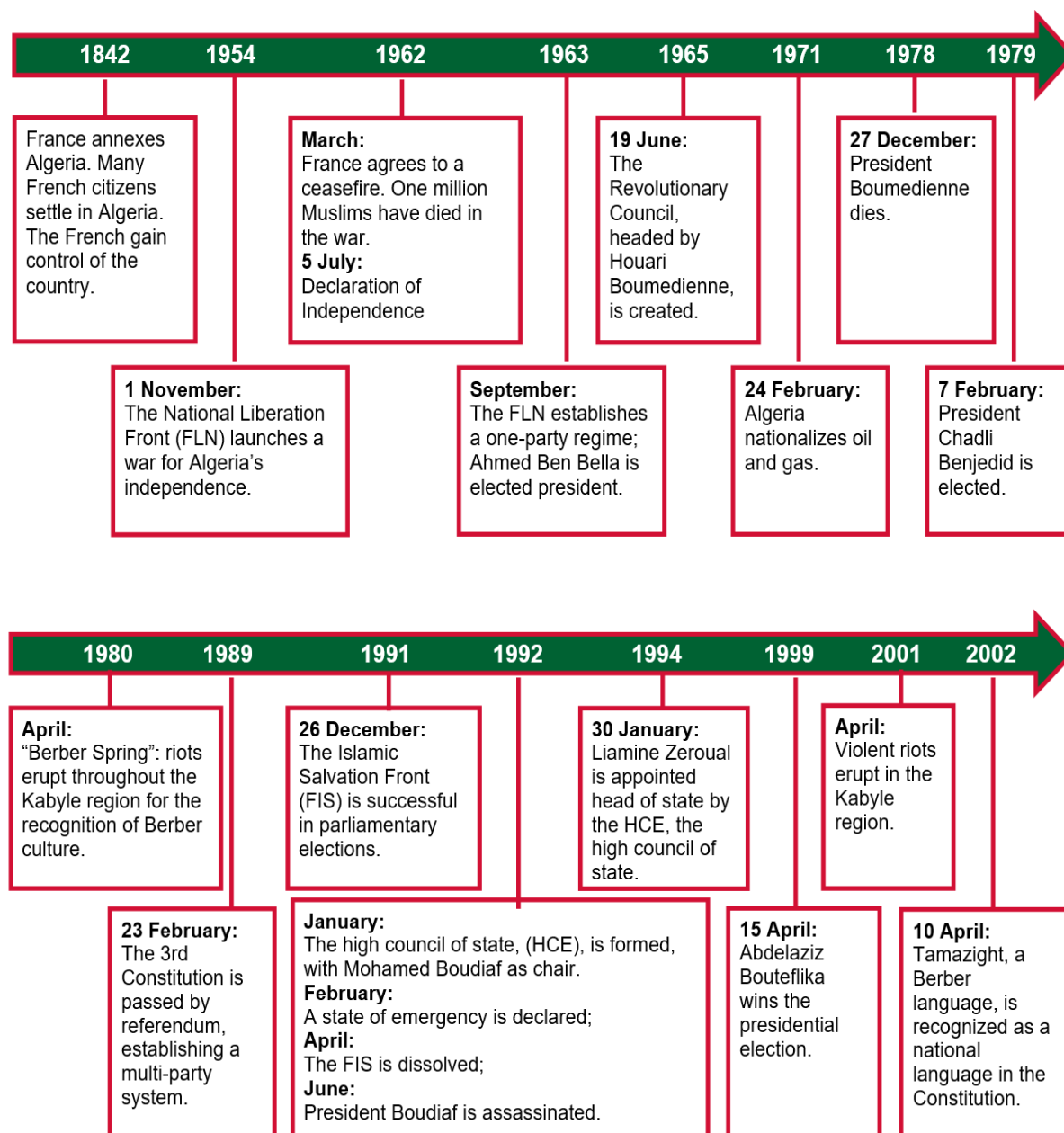
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<sup>1</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, « [Algeria](#) », The World Factbook.

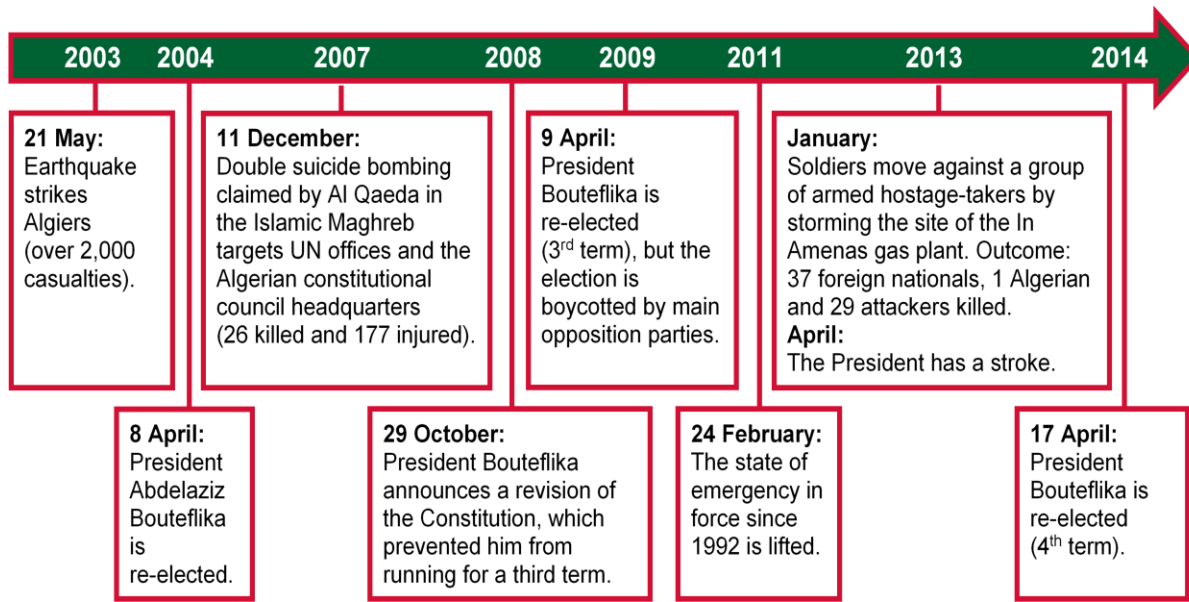
<sup>2</sup> « [Découpage administratif à l'horizon 2019 : 94 wilayas, suppression des daïras et quelques appréhensions](#), » Algeria Watch, 17 November 2016.

As of 2017, 45% of the Algerian population was estimated to be under 25 years old, with a median age of 28.1. The net migration rate was -0.9 per 1,000 inhabitants, meaning that there were about 37,000 more emigrants than immigrants per year.

## B. Political Timeline, 1842–2014 <sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Jeune Afrique, "[Chronologie](#)," Algérie; and Europa World, [Algeria](#).



In August 1999, President Bouteflika admitted that the civil conflict of the 1990s, also called the “black decade,” had resulted in 100,000 deaths.<sup>4</sup> Other sources put the death toll at closer to 200,000 deaths.<sup>5</sup>

### C. System of Government

Algeria is a presidential republic. The Constitution was approved on 23 February 1989 by referendum. Reforms were then made in 2016 to introduce a two-term presidential limit and to recognize the Tamazight language as an official and national language.

President Bouteflika has been Algeria’s Head of State since 1999. The President is elected for a maximum of two five-year terms by majority, with two rounds of voting if necessary to attain 50% of the votes. There is no consensus on whether President Bouteflika’s candidacy for another term would be unconstitutional, since this would be his first election (for a second term) after the 2016 amendments to the Constitution, although he has served a total of five terms. Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia was appointed Head of Government in August 2017. The Head of Government is appointed by the President, after consultation with the majority party in Parliament. The Cabinet is appointed by the President.

The National People’s Assembly (Assemblée populaire nationale or APN) is the lower house of Parliament, with 462 seats. Members of Parliament are elected for five-year terms. Candidates must be at least 25 years old. There are 48 wilayas, each represented by at least four members. More seats can be allotted to each wilaya, according to population. The voting method in place is a proportional representation list system. At the

<sup>4</sup> Europa World, [Algeria](#).

<sup>5</sup> France 24, [En Algérie, près de 55 000 personnes ont été poursuivies pour terrorisme](#), 28 December 2016.

time of the delegation's visit, Saïd Bouhadja had been Speaker of the APN since 23 May 2017.<sup>6</sup>

The Council of the Nation is the upper house, with 144 seats. The president appoints one-third of the members (48). The other two-thirds (96, or two per wilaya) are elected by a closed electoral college composed of about 15,000 members from local (commune) and provincial (wilaya) people's assemblies. Candidates must be at least 40 years old. The Council's term of office is six years and half of its members are replaced every three years. This system also applies to members appointed by the president. Abdelkader Bensalah has served as Speaker of the Council of the Nation since 2 July 2002.<sup>7</sup>

The last presidential election was held on 17 April 2014, and the next will take place in April 2019. The last elections for the APN were held on 4 May 2017; the next elections will take place in 2022. The last elections for the Council of the Nation were held on 29 December 2015; the next will take place in December 2018.

#### **D. Participation in Regional and Multilateral Organizations**

Algeria is a member of the African Union and of the Arab Maghreb Union, the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and most major international multilateral organizations (United Nations, World Health Organization, and others). The country is a signatory to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) but has not ratified it.<sup>8</sup> Algeria has observer status at the World Trade Organization, and negotiations towards full membership are currently under way.<sup>9</sup> It is not a member of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, although it is the second largest francophone country in the world; it regularly participates in the Francophonie's Summit as an observer.

#### **E. Economy**

In 2017, Algeria had a gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$199 billion, or about US\$4,825 per capita. From 1997 to 2017, real GDP grew by about 3.6% per year while prices rose by 6.2% per year. Given the population increase of about 1.6% per year, real GDP per capita grew at an average annual rate of 1.9%.<sup>10</sup> The primary industries are oil and natural gas production, mining, electrical and petrochemical industries, and food processing.<sup>11</sup>

In 2017, Algeria recorded exports of US\$33.15 billion, compared to imports of US\$49.99 billion, for a trade deficit of US\$16.84 billion. Exported products were primarily crude oil, natural gas and petroleum products. In 2017, Algeria exported to Italy (17.4%), Spain (13%), France (11.9%), the United States (9.4%), Brazil (6.2%) and the Netherlands (5.5%). Main imports consisted of capital goods, foodstuffs and consumer goods. The

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<sup>6</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, "[Algeria – National People's Assembly](#)," PARLINE. See further, "Recent Developments" Section.

<sup>7</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, "[Algeria – Council of the Nation](#)," PARLINE.

<sup>8</sup> International Criminal Court, "[The States Parties to the Rome Statute](#)."

<sup>9</sup> Europa World, Algeria, "[Regional and International Co-operation](#)."

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, "[World Development Indicators](#)."

<sup>11</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "[Algeria](#)," The World Factbook.

primary suppliers of imports were China (18.2%), France (9.1%), Italy (8%), Germany (7%), Spain (6.9%) and Turkey (4.4%).<sup>12</sup>

In 2017, the International Labour Organization estimated the unemployment rate in Algeria at 8.3% for men and 18.2% for women. The labour force participation rate, specifically the number of workers and unemployed persons (job seekers) divided by the total population aged 15 and over, which also includes students, retirees and those not looking for work, was 15.3% for women and 67.3% for men.<sup>13</sup>

In its 2018 “Ease of Doing Business Index,” the World Bank ranked Algeria 166th overall among 190 countries worldwide, with companies in Algeria facing a relatively unfavourable regulatory environment.<sup>14</sup>

## **F. Human Development and Governance**

In 2015, the UN ranked Algeria 83rd overall among 188 countries on its Human Development Index, classifying it as a country having “high human development” (there are four classifications: very high, high, medium and low). Algeria also places in the fifth and last group for the Gender Development Index and ranks 94th on the Gender Inequality Index.<sup>15</sup>

According to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, in 2016, Algeria ranked 22nd out of 54 African countries in overall governance.<sup>16</sup> According to Transparency International, Algeria ranked 112th out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2017.<sup>17</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit’s 2017 Democracy Index ranked Algeria 128th out of 167 countries analyzed, placing it in the “authoritarian regime” category.<sup>18</sup> According to Freedom House, Algeria and its press are “not free.” Out of a maximum rating of 7 (7 being the “least free”), the country scores 5.5 for overall freedom, 6 for political rights and 5 for civil liberties.<sup>19</sup> Homosexual acts are illegal.

## **G. Recent Developments** <sup>20</sup>

Upon his return from hospital in Paris, where he was recovering from a stroke that had physically debilitated him since 2013, President Bouteflika announced in January 2014 that a presidential election would be held. He won the election with 81.5% of the vote, but his opponents accused the government of electoral fraud.

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<sup>12</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit, “[Annual data and forecast](#),” Algeria; and Central Intelligence Agency, “Algeria,” The World Factbook.

<sup>13</sup> International Labour Organization, “Employment-to-population ratio”; and “Unemployment Rate,” [Key Indicators of the Labour Market](#).

<sup>14</sup> The World Bank, [Doing Business: Measuring Business Regulations](#), 2018.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Development Programme, [Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone](#).

<sup>16</sup> Mo Ibrahim Foundation, [Ibrahim Index of African Governance](#).

<sup>17</sup> Transparency International, [Corruption Perceptions Index 2017](#).

<sup>18</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit, [Democracy Index 2017: Free speech under attack](#).

<sup>19</sup> Freedom House, “[Algeria Profile](#),” Freedom in the World 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Most of the information in this section is taken from Europa World, [Algeria](#).

In 2017, many migrants from sub-Saharan Africa attempted to migrate to Europe through Algeria, which created tensions among the Algerian people.

In the 2017 legislative elections, the President's National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération nationale* or FLN) won 161 seats, while the National Rally for Democracy (*Rassemblement national démocratique* or RND) party secured 100 seats. The FLN and RND coalition government therefore retained its majority. Voter turnout was low, at 35.4%. The main opposition party is the Movement of Society for Peace, with 34 seats.

In September 2018, a motion calling for the resignation of the Speaker of the APN, Saïd Bouhadja, for alleged expense overruns was approved by a majority of its members (mostly members of the coalition government parties). The Speaker had been elected by his peers on 23 May 2017. The Constitution provides that the Speaker of the APN is elected for the duration of a parliament (five years), except in case of death, incapacity or incompatibility (e.g., conflict of interest). Since none of these circumstances applied, Mr. Bouhadja argued that he had done nothing wrong and refused to resign. It was reported that he said he would resign if President Bouteflika asked him to do so, but this had not happened by the time of the delegation's visit. President Bouteflika threatened to dissolve the APN and hold new elections, even though they are not scheduled until 2022. The APN's response to the Speaker's refusal to resign was to halt proceedings, including meetings with foreign delegations. On 24 October 2018, APN members elected a new Speaker, Mouad Bouchareb.<sup>21</sup>

On 28 October 2018, the FLN's General Secretary announced that President Bouteflika would be the party's candidate for the presidential elections, scheduled for April 2019.<sup>22</sup>

## **MEETINGS IN ALGERIA**

### **A. Briefing by Canadian Embassy staff in Algeria**

The Embassy's Security Officer, Francis Auger-Voyer, provided a security briefing for the delegation. Ambassador Patricia McCullagh, accompanied by the Political Advisor, François Goudreau, and the Senior Trade Commissioner, Jocelyn Guimond, discussed the social, political and economic situation in Algeria.

### **B. Cultural visits in Algiers**

The delegation began its mission with visits to two cultural sites to learn more about the history of Algeria.

Through the architecture of the *Palais des Raïs*, also known as *Bastion 23*, the delegation learned how Algeria's history had been influenced by various cultures: Arabic, Berber, Ottoman and French.

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<sup>21</sup> Since then, the APN has resumed its plenary meetings. Rania Hamdi, "[Algérie : qui est Mouad Bouchareb, le nouveau président élu de l'Assemblée populaire nationale?](#)", *Jeune Afrique*, 24 October 2018.

<sup>22</sup> *Jeune Afrique*, "[Algérie : le secrétaire général du FLN annonce que Bouteflika sera candidat en 2019](#)", 28 October 2018.



At the National Museum of the Mujahideen, the delegation was informed about Algerian history in more detail, including the occupation by the Ottomans, then the French, as well as the War of Independence, which took place between 1954 and 1962 and led to Algeria's Independence on 5 July 1962.

### **C. Meeting with Abdelkader Bensalah, Speaker of the Council of the Nation**

The delegation met with the Speaker of the Council of the Nation, Abdelkader Bensalah. He indicated that he wanted the meeting to be the starting point for a broader series of meetings between Algerian and Canadian representatives. The meeting was of great importance given what was happening at the political level at the time of the delegation's visit, i.e., the paralysis of the APN, due to the unresolved issue with its Speaker. Mr. Bensalah wanted to provide an overview of the situation in Algeria. His views can be summarized as follows:

- Algeria is the largest country in Africa in terms of area, which contributes to certain security problems, as there are numerous borders and a large territory to protect. After a decade of violence in the 1990s, the country is now more stable. Reforms were undertaken to achieve better living conditions and national reconciliation. Terrorists who had not been directly involved in attacks were pardoned and reintegrated into society. Algeria is now an example of how to deal with terrorism for other countries in the region.
- Algeria did not experience the "Arab Spring," because the country had just emerged from a civil war. As a result, a large segment of the population had no appetite for further clashes. In addition, efforts were made by the government in the areas of housing and job creation. The country has paid its foreign debt.
- The parliamentary system is similar to Canada's, in that it is bicameral, but there are some differences. For example, there are many political parties in Algeria.
- In terms of the relationship between the two houses of the Algerian Parliament, bills from the Council of the Nation may be amended by the APN, and vice versa. The two houses cooperate and are complementary. In the event of disputes, an ad-hoc joint committee is established and is responsible for proposing a revised text, which is submitted to both houses for approval, with no possibility of amendment.
- Algeria's future is promising, particularly in the area of natural resources. Canada has a good relationship with Algeria, and could develop partnerships and strengthen relations between the two countries even more. The country is seeking to diversify its economy into agriculture, as well as education and health. Increased trade between the two countries would be desirable. Many Algerians study in Canada, but sometimes experience difficulties. The Speaker of the Council of the Nation would like to create a friendship group between the Council of the Nation and the Canadian Senate.

The members of the Canadian delegation stressed the importance of the Algerian diaspora in Canada, who contribute to the development of the Canadian economy with highly skilled young workers. The delegates indicated that they were very grateful for the welcome received in Algeria and at the Council of the Nation. They also raised questions about the fight against terrorism and the relationship between the APN and the Council.

#### **D. Meeting with Abdelkader Messahel, Minister of Foreign Affairs**

The delegation met with the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs. The following is a summary of the views he shared with the delegation:

- The Minister indicated that the delegation's visit was important since parliamentary diplomacy is given high priority in Algeria. The date of the delegation's meeting with the Minister, 8 October, corresponds to the national day of diplomacy in Algeria, because of Algeria's admission to the United Nations on 8 October 1962. Cooperation between Canada and Algeria is strong and mutually beneficial. For example, in 2011, Canada and Algeria participated in the launch of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), for which the two countries currently co-chair the West Africa Working Group.
- The Africa Action Plan was established at the G-8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta in 2002. This plan contributed to the development of a new Africa defined by democracy, freedom of expression and association and multi-party systems. It also led to the development of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Agenda 2063 of the AU followed. Africa is poised to become a major player in the world, particularly with the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Africa needs and welcomes investment, new foreign companies, infrastructure, etc.
- Algerian politics and the Algerian economy are doing well, but security remains a challenge. The fight against terrorism, as well as conflict resolution in Mali, Libya and Somalia, are major challenges, as is migration. Migration within Africa is 20 times greater than that between Africa and Europe. Africa must rely on itself to restore stability and peace in Mali, Somalia and Western Sahara. External solutions, for example in Mali or Syria, are often problematic. Stability and peace would facilitate sustainable development.
- African partnerships are becoming highly sought-after by numerous countries: Africa–China, Africa–Japan and Africa–Europe summits were held shortly before the delegation's visit.
- With respect to countering terrorism and advancing national reconciliation, Algeria emerged from its problems of the 1990s because it took ownership of its solutions. Three of the key solutions were: (1) the enactment of the [Loi sur la concorde civile](#) in 1999 granting amnesty to certain terrorists; (2) the 2005 referendum on national reconciliation, which received 80% support; and (3) establishment by the UN

(partly thanks to Canada), on 8 December 2017, of the International Day of Living Together in Peace, beginning 16 May 2018.

- A policy of deradicalization has been undertaken in schools and mosques. It is not only a question of combating terrorism, but also racism and xenophobia. Moderate Islam is being taught, and this vision is shared with other countries (through the creation of anti-radicalization textbooks). The media is freer, and this is not by chance. Algeria has engaged in these efforts because it paid a high price for independence, and more recently, in internal struggles. The country finds itself in “positive isolation” because it is better at countering terrorism than its neighbours.
- Algeria does not have a tradition of sending troops abroad, but has contributed in other ways – for example by training special forces in Mali – to prevent extremism from spreading throughout the country. In addition, the Minister stressed that communication between the government and the public is crucial.

In response to questions from the delegates, the Minister indicated that Algeria is a special guest, but not a member, of the Organisation internationale de la francophonie due to the complexity of its historical relations with France. Algeria is the second largest French-speaking country in the world, ahead of Canada and behind France, and because of its demographic growth, it is likely to become the largest French-speaking country. The Minister also mentioned that he would like Algeria to become an observer country in the Commonwealth.

The Minister spoke of the importance of having strong and fair institutions. It is his view that Algeria is a resilient country, and will not accept a dictatorship, as illustrated by its past. Algerians from all walks of life (cultural, media, religious) must be active civic participants. He also made the following points:

- Canada is seen as a country with influence in Africa, and would be even more so if it were to become a member of the UN Security Council in the near future. Canada is doing a lot for Africa in terms of knowledge and skills. With regard to the assistance that Canada can provide, particularly in helping to resolve the conflict in Western Sahara, Algeria is not seeking financial assistance. It already hosts a significant number of Saharan refugees. There needs to be a political solution to the conflict, as well as development in Western Sahara. This is a matter for the UN because it involves decolonization. Algeria is not a party to the conflict. The issue must be resolved between Morocco and the Polisario Front or the Sahrawi Republic.
- The self-determination of the people is essential. In 2018, the UN Security Council adopted [Resolution 2414](#), which contains two crucial paragraphs (11 and 12) calling on stakeholders to enter into talks in a spirit of compromise, and neighbouring countries to encourage the stakeholders in the negotiations. Negotiations were held on 5 and 6 December 2018 in Geneva.
- Algeria is a signatory to most international agreements and has ratified almost all of them. It signed the Rome Statute of the ICC, but has not ratified it because of

Algeria's perception that the ICC mainly targets African countries, but not other crimes committed outside the continent. Moreover, other important countries, such as Russia and the United States, have not ratified it.

- With respect to the situation in Somalia, Algeria was envisioned as a contributor to regional stability through the Algiers Agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which may help to stabilize the Horn of Africa. Regarding the South Sudan peace agreement reached in 2018, Algeria participated as a representative of North Africa.

#### **E. Working lunch with members of the Council of the Nation**

Nouara Saadia Djaffar, Vice-Speaker of the Council of the Nation, offered her thanks and welcomed the delegation to the lunch with Council of the Nation members from government parties, namely the FLN and the UPR. Various discussions took place between Canadian and Algerian parliamentarians around the table.

#### **F. Meeting with representatives of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT)**

The delegates had a meeting with the ACSRT, an organization of the AU Commission that was created in 2004. The centre focuses on counterterrorism and ways to combat extremism. Its main activities involve organizing seminars, assisting in treaty ratification, conducting country assessments and increasing awareness on these issues. The ACSRT deals with downstream issues (e.g., prevention) and receives an operational budget from the AU. Projects are often funded by donor countries and are developed based on country assessments and meetings with national governments. The centre also maintains relations with regional African organizations. The ACSRT is not in the field, but maintains strong relationships with organizations that operate in the field and are familiar with the situation in the communities. The centre has a four-year strategic plan, which is updated annually. It uses social media to keep the community and stakeholders informed of progress.

Below are some of the views expressed by the ACSRT representatives:

- In 2014, the AU developed the [African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development](#). This is a step in the right direction, but only three countries have ratified it, and it would be important for more countries to do so.
- It is important to monitor what is being taught in schools and to close schools that do not train young people in an appropriate and respectful way. Civic education and "living together" must be the foundations of formal schooling. The money that finances these schools and mosques must be better monitored. Most countries have intelligence centres and can freeze accounts that are financing terrorism.
- Since 2006, the centre has met with representatives of several federal departments and agencies, including Global Affairs Canada, the Royal Canadian

Mounted Police and the Canada Border Services Agency. The ACSRT wants Canada to further invest in Africa's peace and stability. Action must address not the symptoms (radicalization, terrorism), but the root causes (socio-economic difficulties, poverty, lack of education). Reconciliation and amnesty for radicalized people who have not committed major crimes must be part of the solution.

## **G. Meeting with Saïd Djellab, Minister of Trade**

The delegates met with the Minister of Trade, Saïd Djellab, in the presence of his Secretary General. He stressed the importance of the Algerian diaspora in Canada, who can act as a bridge between the two countries. He mentioned that he had recently undertaken an economic and cultural mission to the United States, and indicated that it would be mutually beneficial to organize a similar mission in Canada to strengthen cooperation. In particular, a meeting with representatives of Agriculture Canada or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency would be useful for promoting Algerian exports.

The Minister then described economic and political developments in Algeria. The following were his main points:

- The executive branch works in accordance with the laws adopted by the APN. President Bouteflika prepared an action plan for diversifying the economy, which was discussed by the APN and the Council of the Nation. A five-year plan has been put in place after each election since 1999 (there have been three), following a decade (1990s) of internal war that was very difficult for Algeria. These plans focused on peace, reconciliation and stability. Initially, they included many infrastructure investments aimed at restarting the economy.
- There is a trade promotion agreement (2005–2020) in place with the European Union (EU). Algeria is a member of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area. The decline in oil prices in 2014 resulted in a 50% loss of government revenue. Urgent measures were taken, such as the imposition of import quotas, and a complete ban on the importation of some products. A law passed in 2018 provided for the gradual (over three years) lifting of these restrictions, and replaced quotas with tariffs. A five-year plan (2019–2023) has been launched to diversify into a hydrocarbon-based economy and transition to new sectors, such as agri-food and building materials. Greater emphasis has been placed on the private sector.
- Diversification does not involve only production sectors, but also partners: Algeria is a signatory to the agreement on the continental free trade area, which should be implemented in the next 12 to 18 months. A border post has been opened with Mauritania, which also gives access to Senegal. Additionally, an agreement is within reach with the Economic Community of West African States. Algeria has paid off its debt to African countries. The Trans-Saharan Highway is an ongoing project to link northern and southern Africa. It represents a platform for trade with southern Africa. The economy is repositioning itself, particularly with the EU and its companies, and is targeting partnerships in new sectors (pharmaceuticals, household appliances, food processing, etc.). At the agri-food level, the focus is

on the promotion and better marketing of dates. There is also potential for petroleum-based products (e.g., plastic).

- Canada and Algeria have a balanced trading relationship. Algeria is seeking a strategic cooperative relationship based on innovation. The Minister reiterated his desire to organize a trade mission to Canada, and for the two countries to further open their respective markets to each other. Canada can help Algeria with product marketing and regulatory development in the area of electronic commerce.

#### **H. Meeting with Mahdjoub Bedda, Minister of Parliamentary Relations**

The delegation met with the Minister of Parliamentary Relations, Mahjoud Bedda. He explained that his ministry was established in 1999 and has powers of control and oversight over Parliament. It is mandated to ensure coordination between the actions of the President and those of Parliament, and to promote parliamentary diplomacy. The Minister summarized his role and those of relevant Algerian institutions as follows:

- The ministry acts as an intermediary between the government and both houses of Parliament. The government can propose laws, but they must be passed by both houses. The executive branch is attuned to the issues raised by parliamentarians. The ministry can help speed up the process of passing bills. In response to a question from a delegate on what this meant, the Minister indicated that there are deadlines for the consideration of presidential bills in Parliament. Despite this, there is a separation of powers. The executive branch does not interfere with the powers of Parliament. The problems of the APN (in reference to the crisis concerning the Speaker of the APN) must be and will be resolved by the APN. He recalled that, in 2004, the Speaker of the APN resigned following a disagreement with the President.
- As a former Minister of Industry, the Minister indicated that he was trying to encourage trade in the industrial sector, and that relations were good with Canada, which should view Algeria as a gateway to Africa.
- On governance and audit processes, the Minister mentioned that the Finance Commission (the equivalent of a committee at the Parliament of Canada) reviews budgets, and that the various sectoral committees review and oversee the work of the different ministries.

#### **I. Meeting with representatives of the Algerian Chamber of Commerce and Industry**

The delegation met with representatives of the Algerian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CACI). This organization represents the country's 48 chambers of commerce and industry (CCI, one per wilaya). The CCIs are under the authority of the Minister of Trade. Representatives discussed a variety of subjects:

- The Algerian economy is overly dependent on oil, and is therefore in the process of diversifying and giving greater importance to the private sector. The intention is

to create wealth based on innovation. Algeria must also open up more to trade with other African countries.

- Canada can help Algeria through its experience and knowledge. For example, the Algerian recycling sector is not very developed. Algerian producers are looking for Canadian distributors to create partnerships. The Canadian Embassy in Algeria, as well as Canadian industrial groups and the Algerian diaspora in Canada, can help Algeria develop partnerships with Canadian entrepreneurs. Algerian entrepreneurs need to be better informed about the Canadian market and Canadian laws, but also about how to transform small companies into large exporting companies.

### **J. Working dinner with representatives of large Algerian companies**

The delegates had an opportunity to meet representatives of major companies, who spoke to them about the state of the Algerian economy. The following is a summary of their comments:

- Some of the leaders mentioned the need for a change in mentality. Algeria had a socialist economy for 30 years, and is increasingly opening up to the private sector. They noted that the government is prepared to make more room for the private sector and diversify the economy.
- For some, the problem is one of governance in that the rule of law is deficient. The CACI is under the authority of the government, but other business associations exist and can be critical of government policies. The government agrees with the changes to be made, but is slow to take concrete action.
- The business community must be more open to women, as must the labour market in general. The low participation of women in the labour market is a waste for the Algerian economy. But younger women are more educated. The problem is the lack of economic opportunities for both young men and young women, and this stems from poor governance.
- Africa represents 16% of the world's population, but only 3.5% of its GDP. Some participants argued that Canada and Europe must help Africa develop its business sector and foreign trade. Conditions are favourable for the development of Africa, which is experiencing high population growth.
- There are historical reasons for the lack of entrepreneurship, whether it is the colonial past or state policies of ownership. New technologies, younger generations and political will can change this situation.

### **K. Meeting with representatives of United Nations agencies**

Delegates had an opportunity to hold discussions with representatives of several UN agencies and programs, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund

(UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The following is a summary of the main messages from the various agencies:

- According to the IOM, Algeria is both a transit country to Europe and a destination country for migrants from Mali and Niger. Between 75,000 and 100,000 migrants, including Tuaregs, frequently cross the border. There is no national strategy on migration, but “smuggling” is illegal, and Algeria is working on the issue within the Arab League.
- According to the UNDP, Algeria is classified as a country with “high” human development; it is doing well in terms of the economy and education. The problem lies mainly in the area of gender equality, as evidenced by the low participation of women in the labour market. Gaps also exist in the field of mental health. The legal framework is in place for greater parliamentary independence and economic diversification, but implementation is slow. The UNDP works locally to ensure that political actors are vectors of change, as well as to encourage women's participation in politics.
- According to the UNFPA, there has been a great deal of progress in maternal health. There is a willingness to raise awareness at the community level about women's health and family planning, and the Ministry of Health is contributing. Violence against women is rarely a public subject in government and society. On the other hand, the legal framework is progressive, including in the area of child marriage – which is a limited and localized problem – as well as sexual harassment. Again, it takes time to implement measures, for example in the case of sex education.
- The UNHCR highlighted Canada's good work in refugee camps and migration in general. According to that organization's representatives, the root causes of migration must be addressed, as most refugees come from underdeveloped countries. Some countries are turning refugees back at the border, and borders are being militarized. Asylum applications should be made there, not once people have arrived in country.
- The WFP works with Saharan refugees, offering nutrition programs and organizing activities to keep refugees busy, such as milk, cheese and meat production and fish farming.
- There was also discussion of possible ill-treatment of migrants from Niger. Return convoys have been observed; however, it seems that many migrants are travelling through Niger to Algeria from third countries. There must be a better determination of the status of migrants, whether they are refugees or other types of migrants. Understandably, increased demands are a problem. It will require that all countries involved work within UNHCR and the host country (Algeria).



- Various other subjects were discussed, such as Saharan refugees. A long-term solution will necessarily be political. Meanwhile, the WFP has been mandated by Algeria to assist these refugees. Their safety is ensured internally in the camps. According to various participants, migration is seen more as a problem to be solved; the priority is national security and sovereignty. There is also a problem with inadequate migration data.

#### **L. Meeting with representatives of human rights associations**

The delegation participated in a meeting with representatives of various organizations involved in the defence of human rights, women's rights, children's rights and HIV/AIDS prevention.

- One of the associations that participated in the meeting is working on capacity building for populations vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, such as the LGBT community, sex workers, migrants and intravenous drug users. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is relatively low in Algeria, but higher in these at-risk groups.
- Some organizations are working on gender equality and non-discrimination against women, greater participation of women in politics, inheritance rights for women, and gender-responsive policies.
- One children's rights association that participated in the meeting is fighting against child marriage and labour; it provides psychosocial support and education about children's rights in the media. Numerous laws have been amended to promote the well-being of children, including the law on child maintenance.
- A democracy and human rights organization participated in an electoral mission to Mali, and some of its members were trained by the National Democratic Institute (USA) to monitor the 2012 Algerian parliamentary elections. This Algerian organization also works with migrants, because Algeria is no longer just a transit country. It is involved with housing and defending migrants' rights. The response to immigration must be at the local level.
- One of the organizations was concerned with defending the rights of people with disabilities. The usual response to the barriers these people face is a medical or charitable one. The approach to rights for people with disabilities is not yet a part of the mindset. They have problems accessing training. Companies must hire at least 1% people with disabilities, but there is no enforcement.
- A lawyer working for an organization that helps people living with HIV/AIDS mentioned that dialogue with the authorities helps to solve problems such as a lack of antiretroviral drugs or cases of migrants who have been raped. The association offers an anonymous and free screening program. Vulnerable people turn to them rather than to hospitals. Attitudes are slow to change, especially when it comes to gay rights.

- In addition, associations must be registered and accredited. Since the late 1990s and the end of the civil war, exchanges and partnerships with other countries have become easier. However, since 2012, foreign associations have had more difficulty working in Algeria.

### **M. Working lunch with media representatives**

Delegates discussed freedom of the press with four media representatives, who stated that the press was relatively free, but certain topics are not discussed, such as religion and homosexuality. The 2012 Information Act was adopted, but not its regulations. The discussion was lively and not necessarily unanimous on all topics, but some political themes emerged:

- Some argued that the executive branch has too much power and influence over the legislature.
- Others argued that the transition phase between the civil war, during which more than 100 journalists were killed, and real democracy has been too long. It was suggested that this has led to civic disenchantment and low voter turnout.
- Some suggested that freedom of the press favours pro-government or Islamist entities.
- One issue that did not meet with unanimity was whether or not the Islamists would win if truly free elections were held. Some said that this fear, this need for stability and to avoid returning to the civil war experienced in the 1990s, serve as an argument for the current government; others argue that the civil war made Algeria immune to the Islamists.

### **N. Meeting with Nouredine Bedoui, Minister of the Interior, Local Authorities and Regional Planning**

The views expressed by the Minister to the delegation follow:

- He expressed a wish for more exchanges between Canada and Algeria and would have liked the delegation to see several regions of the country, as Algeria is large and diverse.
- According to the Minister, after the dark years of the 1990s, changes introduced by President Bouteflika pushed the country into a transitional phase towards a freer and stronger society. The Constitution gives more rights to associations. Algeria must now implement all its plans in order to complete its development.
- Algeria needs the expertise of countries like Canada. It faces two major issues, namely security and the fight against terrorism, and irregular migration:
  - Algeria has had to adopt counterterrorism measures, due to the instability in the region and an influx of migrants.

- Algeria was previously only a transit country for migrants, but it is now a destination for those fleeing poverty. The country welcomes migrants with its tradition of hospitality. The Minister wondered what would have happened in Europe if Algeria had not welcomed all these migrants, despite its lack of financial resources. He also expressed support for greater stability in Libya and Mali; Algeria is taking political steps to assist in this happening.
- In response to questions from delegates, the Minister said that Algeria is a country with great potential; its economy must diversify and offer more economic opportunities for young people. The country needs allies like Canada to create business partnerships between Canadian and Algerian companies that benefit both sides. Compared with its two neighbours, Morocco and Tunisia, Algeria still has work to do in developing its tourism sector.

## **O. Meeting with members of Council of the Nation committees**

The delegation met the chairpersons and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Legal Affairs and Human Resources Committee and the Economic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Council of the Nation. The members of these committees expressed the following views:

- The Constitution was amended in 2016 to better protect human rights and reflect social changes. As such, no one may be held in police custody more than 48 hours without the consent of the Attorney General. Algeria established a moratorium on the death penalty in 2003, and the last execution was in 1993. There is greater freedom of expression and association; press offences are no longer punishable by imprisonment. Fines may, however, be imposed in cases of defamation. Prisoners also have more rights, and increased access to health care and education.
- Much discussion centred around economic diversification, developing tourism, agri-food and services, and partnerships with foreign companies, particularly Canadian companies, in research, agriculture and forestry. The Algerian diaspora in Canada is an important resource to contribute to these partnerships. Canada can help this diaspora by offering better recognition of foreign credentials in Canada.
- The reconciliation at the end of the 1990s, initiated by President Bouteflika, promoted the transition to greater stability and the rule of law; the transition is not complete, it is a gradual process.
- Respect of the human rights of members of religious minorities, some of whom are Muslims (for example, the Ahmadis), was raised by delegates. This point elicited a response indicating that Members of the Council of the Nation did not seem to see this as an issue.
- One Council member indicated that it is important to be familiar with the historical context of French colonization and the subsequent war of independence, as well

as the civil war in the 1990s, in order to understand why changes in thinking and rights do not happen overnight. Basic human rights must first be respected, namely the right to exist, to live a healthy life and to receive a quality education.

#### **P. Meeting with representatives of the Algerian arts and culture community**

The delegates met with leading Algerian artists from several fields and discussed freedom of expression and culture with them. These comments can be summarized as follows:

- According to participants, official censorship does not exist, although there may be a form of self-censorship in the arts. For example, politics and homosexuality are still taboo subjects. The question that there may be fewer subsidies for those who are more critical of the government was canvassed. There can also be problems with obtaining visas, for example, for theatre groups that want to perform outside Algeria. The same can also be true for those in the visual arts sector.
- Nevertheless, participants were rather optimistic about the future, as more and more young people are creating and taking an interest in culture.
- Culture carries a message that supports women's rights and cultural diversity, including the contribution of Berbers, and opposes all forms of radicalism. This may sometimes be subtle, through the portrayal (written or painted) of characters and their interiority, which can change mentalities.

#### **Q. Visit to SNC-Lavalin's water desalination plant in Fouka**

The delegation visited a water desalination plant, co-owned by Canadian firm SNC-Lavalin and a Spanish partner and Algerian companies. The consortium has received two contracts, one for the construction of the plant and the other for its operation and maintenance. One fifth of the initial capital was provided by the various companies, and 80% by loans from Algerian banks. The plant is in its eighth year of operation. It uses reverse osmosis to desalinate seawater to make it potable. Canadians are transferring technology to Algerians and training local employees and providing water to local communities.

#### **R. Cultural visit to the archaeological site of Tipasa**

Finally, the delegation visited the Roman ruins of Tipasa, which illustrated the extent and richness of Algerian culture and history. This site is included on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The delegation's visit came at a difficult time for the National People's Assembly, which appeared to be at a stalemate regarding its internal issues and was not sitting. Despite this situation, the delegates nonetheless were able to meet with the Speaker and members of the Council of the Nation, government officials, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations, members of the cultural community and business leaders. The

Association's mission enhanced its understanding of the development, history, and culture of Algeria.

As is normally the case, the delegation heard different views depending on the interests of the individuals with whom it met. These issues can be grouped under the following seven key themes.

### **A. Governance and the rule of law**

The delegation heard comments on the rule of law and governance in the country, including election irregularities, lack of executive branch engagement with Parliament and poor governance in general, particularly with respect to quality control over government spending. The delegation also heard about challenges with respect to adherence to human rights, particularly with regard to the rights of women, and the rights of minorities, whether religious or related to sexual orientation.

The Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association encourages the Algerian government to dispel doubts about governance and the rule of law in Algeria by continuing its work towards having solid, transparent and independent institutions. For example, this could include accepting foreign observers at the 2019 presidential election, strengthening or giving more independence to institutions such as the Court of Auditors. It also encourages the Algerian government to promote gender equality and to ensure that the rights of all Algerians, including minority groups are respected.

### **B. Economic diversification**

The delegation was told on many occasions that Algeria is seeking to diversify its economy, which has immense potential but is overly dependent on hydrocarbons. Algeria would like to find economic partners such as Canada to create joint ventures. This would allow Algeria to benefit from foreign know-how and the transfer of advanced technologies.

The Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association encourages the Government of Canada to take the necessary steps to promote business opportunities between Algerian and Canadian companies, for the benefit of both countries.

### **C. Migration**

Algeria is at the centre of migration from more southern African countries to Europe, and is also becoming a destination for migrants, given its wealth relative to several other African countries. Migration trends reflect conflicts and economic problems within the broader region. Integration can sometimes be a problem.

The Association acknowledges Algeria's efforts related to migration, in particular for Saharan refugees. It encourages the countries of the region to find a peaceful, political and lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara. It calls on the Government of Canada to support Algeria in the area of migration through financial, political and other means.

### **D. Security and the fight against terrorism**

Algeria experienced a “black decade” of terrorism and civil war in the 1990s, during which between 100,000 and 200,000 people were killed. It paid a huge price for the fight against terrorism and continues to do so.

In this regard, the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association acknowledges the efforts of the Algeria-based African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, and encourages the Government of Canada to explore whether it can further contribute to the centre’s work in this field.

## **E. Historical heritage**

Algeria paid a high price from 1954 to 1962 for its independence, as well as during the “black decade” in the fight against fundamentalism. This legacy translates into an increased need for stability, and as delegates often heard, a slow pace of change.

The Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association encourages the Algerian government to continue along its path of reform, including with respect to democratic development.

## **F. Education and health**

Delegates heard that Algeria was striving to make improvements in the sectors of education and health. This is corroborated by the country’s ranking in the various human development indicators. Algerians are highly educated, but sometimes lack opportunities and may seek employment abroad, including in Canada. Recognition of their educational credentials seems to be a problem at times.

The Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association encourages the Government of Canada to continue to work with the provinces and territories and other stakeholders to increase recognition of foreign credentials.

## **G. Culture**

One of the delegation’s last meetings was with artists. The delegates observed the dynamism and the diverse, rich and inclusive Algerian culture. It needs to be shared internationally and the Government of Canada should explore ways to build on the shared Francophone heritage with Algeria in this new digitized and globalized world.

The Association supports Algeria’s continued interest in exploring possible membership in the Organisation internationale de la francophonie. In addition, the delegation trusts that Algeria will help its artists to spread the country’s wonderful culture throughout the world.

## **CONCLUSION**

The delegation heard throughout its visit that there is a longstanding positive relationship between Algeria and Canada. It was told repeatedly that now is the time to re-engage and to build on existing ties such as those already established, particularly with Quebec, the Algerian diaspora, and in various international fora.

With the opening up of the business climate in Algeria, and within the context of a challenging international environment, the delegation suggests that the Canadian government, in looking to new diversify its trading relationships, should engage with Algeria by increasing high-level Ministerial visits, trade delegations and support parliamentary diplomacy. Furthermore, cultural opportunities need more study and attention.

With terrorism containment a continuing issue, and ongoing migration concerns, the Government of Canada should prioritize its engagement with Algeria for the mutual benefit of both countries.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The members of the delegation express their appreciation to the staff of the Embassy of Canada to Algeria, particularly Ambassador Patricia McCullagh, François Goudreau, Political Advisor, Jocelyn Guimond, Senior Trade Commissioner, and Francis Auger-Voyer and Martin Léveillé, from the Embassy's security personnel. They are also grateful to all drivers and security staff. The Association would also like to thank all of those it met with in Algeria for sharing their opinions and views. It also expresses its thanks to its local hosts, particularly the Council of the Nation, its Speaker, Committee Chairs and Members as well as the Government of Algeria.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Honourable Raynell Andreychuk,  
Senator  
Co-Chair  
Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association

Robert Oliphant, M.P.  
Co-Chair  
Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association

## **Travel Costs**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>ASSOCIATION</b>    | Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association  |
| <b>ACTIVITY</b>       | Bilateral Mission at the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria   |
| <b>DESTINATION</b>    | Algiers and Tipasa, Algeria  |
| <b>DATES</b>          | October 7 to 13, 2018  |
| <b>DELEGATION</b>     |  |
| SENATE                | Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator, Co-Chair<br>Hon. René Cormier, Senator   |
| HOUSE OF COMMONS      | Mr. Robert Oliphant, M.P., Co-Chair<br>Mr. Michael Cooper, M.P.<br>Mr. Ali Ehsassi, M.P.<br>Ms. Cheryl Gallant, M.P.<br>Mr. Geng Tan, M.P. |
| STAFF                 | Mr. Grant McLaughlin, Association Secretary<br>Mr. André Léonard, Analyst  |
| <b>TRANSPORTATION</b> | \$ 80,335.40   |
| <b>ACCOMMODATION</b>  | \$ 13,166.47   |
| <b>HOSPITALITY</b>    | \$ 295.15  |
| <b>PER DIEMS</b>      | \$ 7,761.06  |
| <b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b> | \$ 510.05  |
| <b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>  | \$ 4,207.56  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>          | <b>\$ 106,275.69</b>   |