



**Report of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée
parlementaire de la Francophonie***

**APF Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs
Committee and APF Network of Parliamentarian Women**

Hanoi, Vietnam

From February 24 to 28, 2019

Report

A parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) participated in meetings of the Network of Women Parliamentarians and the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee (ECCAC) at Vietnam's National Assembly on February 26 and 27, 2019. The delegation was made up of Mr. Joël Godin, MP; Ms. Sylvie Boucher, MP and Rapporteur for the Network of Women Parliamentarians; and Mr. Pascal Tremblay, Branch Advisor and Analyst.

Meeting of the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee

Around 20 parliamentarians participated in the ECCAC meeting on February 26, 2019.

The meeting involved the presentation of several reports and discussion and debate on a variety of topics, including :

- tracking the implementation of the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*;
- the use of digital technology in education and in primary and secondary schools in francophone countries;
- issues associated with La Francophonie and the use of French in Asia, particularly in Vietnam; and
- the use of digital technology for long-distance higher education and training in French.

Mr. Joël Godin, MP, (Canada) presented the final draft of a report of the Canadian Branch of the APF on student mobility within *La Francophonie*. The report addressed the advantages of student mobility, as well as programs and strategies that have been implemented in francophone countries to promote it. The report also described some of the barriers to student mobility and addressed other related issues, such as access to quality higher education.

In addition, Mr. Godin introduced a draft declaration highlighting the importance of promoting student mobility at the graduate level within the international francophone community, which was adopted by the ECCAC. The declaration stated that student mobility improves employability and workforce integration for graduates, and that it can promote the French language and intercultural dialogue.

To take advantage of the benefits of student mobility, the declaration called on francophone parliamentarians to support agreements, programs and scholarships that encourage students to attend francophone institutions in order to eliminate financial and administrative barriers limiting student mobility. It also called for mechanisms to be developed to prevent the brain drain and support the efforts of developing countries that

want to increase access to quality education at an affordable cost, in keeping with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda.

The declaration proposed by Mr. Godin was adopted as written. The ECCAC Chair said that the topic was very relevant to the Committee's mandate and that the Committee should consider exploring other aspects of student mobility. He also said that the ECCAC should propose a resolution on student mobility to be adopted at the plenary assembly when the annual session is held in July 2019.

Meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians

Around 20 parliamentarians attended the meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians on February 26, 2019.

The meeting began with a presentation on the human rights situation for women and girls in Asia. The meeting included the presentation of reports and discussions and debate on a variety of topics, including :

- empowering women in the digital age in the francophone community;
- cross-border human trafficking of women and girls in francophone countries;
- monitoring international commitments for gender equality and women's rights; and
- the APF's strategic framework.

During the meeting, Ms. Sylvie Boucher, MP (Canada) presented the final draft of a report from the Canadian Branch of the APF on the health of refugee women and girls, which provided information on four critical situations involving APF member countries that were being monitored by the United Nations High Commission at the time the report was tabled.¹

The report explained that women and girls who are refugees are more vulnerable to gender-based violence and sexual violence, and they do not always receive the care and support they need to deal with the consequences of this violence. It also cited research showing that some mental and emotional issues that refugee women and girls are likely to experience are not treated or are misdiagnosed. It pointed out that refugee women and girls also have unique needs for reproductive health and family planning services, and that having access to these services offers a number of significant health benefits.

Ms. Boucher introduced a draft declaration supporting the report's findings. The declaration stated that emergency situations driving significant numbers of people toward refugee status are occurring within APF member countries and APF suspended member countries. The declaration affirms that refugee women and girls need more protection and should receive special gender-based protective measures, including :

¹ Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Syrian Arab Republic.

- access to targeted health care, including obstetrics and appropriate mental health services;
- prevention and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases;
- sex education and family planning services; and
- access to feminine hygiene products.

To address the concerns raised in Ms. Boucher's presentation, the declaration called on parliamentarians of both genders in francophone member states to affirm within their legislatures the need for unique gender-based protection for refugee women and children.

The French Branch proposed amending the wording of the first paragraph of the declaration to include a more detailed explanation of what caused the refugee crisis. The declaration was amended to reflect this comment and was then adopted.

Ms. Boucher then requested the approval of members for the Canadian Branch of the APF to begin drafting a new report on cyber violence toward women and children. She mentioned that cyberviolence includes any act of violence that is committed, facilitated or aggravated wholly or in part by information and communication technologies (ICTs), including online harassment, online stalking, revenge porn and uttering threats online. Pointing out that the consequences of cyberviolence can be devastating, and that the victims are often women and children, Ms. Boucher said that governments must put measures in place to prevent cyberviolence and raise awareness, take steps to protect women and children from cyberviolence, and introduce effective enforcement measures and sentences. Members of the Network of Women Parliamentarians agreed to have the Canadian Branch begin drafting a report on this topic.

Joint meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians and the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee

On February 27, 2019, following their respective meetings, the parliamentarians who attended the meetings of the Network of Women Parliamentarians and the ECCAC in Hanoi met together to discuss the theme of undocumented children—children whose birth and legal existence is not recorded on the national civil registry.

Representatives from UNICEF and the International Organisation of *La Francophonie* (OIF) gave an overview of unregistered civil status in francophone countries and how drastically it affects the lives of undocumented children, particularly their access to education and health care services. The Vice-President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians explained how unregistered civil status affects the rights of women and girls.

The UNICEF and OIF representatives, as well as other stakeholders who took part in the discussions, also spoke about initiatives to address this issue, which is particularly acute in Africa and some countries in Asia. A representative from the Vietnamese justice department described the improvements that have been made to Vietnam's civil registry and the progress on registering births within the country. Parliamentarians at the joint

meeting learned about an innovative solution from the private sector from the co-founder and CEO of iCIVIL Africa.

Parliamentarians adopted a declaration to increase awareness among APF member branches and parliamentarians of the issues, obstacles and methods associated with registering births on the civil registry. The declaration invited them to pass legislation to ensure that birth registration is free, universally accessible, confidential and integrated into their country's civil registry. The declaration also encouraged nations and governments in the international francophone community to develop mobile and digital technologies to ensure that registration is accurate and that there is a permanent civil record.

Ms. Boucher mentioned that the Canadian Branch had learned that the unregistered civil status for undocumented children resulted in serious consequences throughout their lives. For that reason, speaking on behalf of the Canadian Branch, she supported the declaration.

It was agreed that a follow-up meeting would be organized by the APF further to the joint meeting and the joint declaration of the Network of Women Parliamentarians and the ECCAC in order to work toward developing practices and legislation promoting the registration of births.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis Drouin, MP

Chair of the Canadian Branch of the

Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Travel Expenses

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i>
ACTIVITY	Meetings of the Network of Women Parliamentarians and the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee of the APF
DESTINATION	Hanoi, Vietnam
DATES	From February 24 to 28, 2019
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Sylvie Boucher, MP Mr. Joël Godin, MP

STAFF	Mr. Pascal Tremblay, analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 21,278.96
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 2,742.51
HOSPITALITY	
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,918.63
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 259.15
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 59.97
TOTAL	\$ 26,259.22