



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

**Meeting of the APF Political Committee**

**Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti**

**March 5 to 6, 2019**

## Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) that attended the meeting of the APF's Political Committee held in Djibouti, Djibouti, from March 5 to 6, 2019, has the honour to present its report.

The delegation was composed of the Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator and rapporteur of the Canadian Branch; the Honourable Éric Forest, Senator and member of the Canadian Branch; and Ms. Chloé Forget, advisor to the Canadian Branch.

The meeting was convened by Senator Christophe-André Frassa (France), Chair of the Political Committee.

The following branches of the APF were represented: Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, France, Luxembourg, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Quebec, Romania and Togo.

### Opening of the meeting

H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ali Houmed, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Djibouti, presided over the opening of the meeting. Remarks were made by the following individuals:

- H.E. Ali Hassan Bahdon, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Djibouti, in charge of Relations with Parliament;
- Mr. Jacques Krabal, Parliamentary Secretary General of the APF;
- Mr. Dileita Mohamed Dileita, Member and former Prime Minister of the Republic of Djibouti; and
- Mr. Georges Nakseu Nguiefang, Director of Political Affairs and Democratic Governance of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

### Adoption of the agenda

The branches in attendance adopted the agenda and minutes of the last meeting held in Quebec City, Canada, on July 8, 2018.

### Round table: political news from the branches

The Political Committee held a round table discussion during which the branches shared political news from their respective legislatures. The Honourable Éric Forest, Senator (Canada), was asked to outline political events in the Canadian Parliament in recent months.

Senator Forest noted that the Canadian Parliament passed the *Cannabis Act* and that it came into force in October 2019. He said that the law creates a framework for controlling the production, distribution, sale and possession of cannabis across Canada. He added that the provinces and territories played a role in its implementation since they are responsible for determining how cannabis is distributed and sold.

He said that municipal governments were very much involved as well, as they will have a role in prevention and response in partnership with local organizations as well as occasionally in the application of repressive measures. He said that, in March 2019, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-93, which provides for no-cost, expedited

criminal record suspensions for individuals who have been convicted in the past of simple possession of cannabis.

Senator Forest went on to say that Canada is preparing for its next fixed-date general election, to be held on October 21, 2019. He said that the Canadian Parliament passed the *Elections Modernization Act* in December 2018 and that it includes measures to reduce barriers to voter participation. He added that the law also introduces measures to improve transparency regarding the participation of third parties in the electoral process. Canada wants to ensure that the 2019 election is free from foreign influence. In that respect, he said that the Government of Canada unveiled its plan in January to protect the 2019 Canadian election against foreign interference.

### **Review of political situations in the French-speaking world**

Mr. Christophe-André Frassa reported on the political situations in the French-speaking world, as the rapporteur, Ms. Geneviève Inagosi Kassongo (Gabon), was not in attendance. Mr. Georges Naskeu Nguiefang of the OIF also made comments. The political situations in Syria, Burundi, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti and the Sahel region were discussed in particular.

The Committee adopted draft declarations on the political situations in Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti.

### **Monitoring of APF actions and commitments with the G5 Sahel**

Parliamentarians discussed the political situation in the Sahel and the actions of the APF in terms of the G5 Sahel. Mr. Christophe-André Frassa reminded the branches in attendance of the various actions taken by the APF in support of the parliaments of the G5 Sahel.

### **Reports**

The Political Committee then studied several reports:

- Report on UN peacekeeping operations presented by Mr. Alain Onkelinx (Belgium / French Community / Wallonia-Brussels). The Committee Chair pointed out that a working group had been set up and that the following branches had volunteered to participate: Belgium, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Mali, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tunisia. He said that a meeting had not yet taken place, as Mr. Onkelinx had resigned from his position. He expressed hope that this topic would be taken up by the next Belgian rapporteur as it is of interest to several members of the Political Committee.
- Report on digital governance presented by Mr. Éric Lefebvre, Member, Quebec.
- Report on the death penalty in the French-speaking world. The Committee Chair noted that Ms. Anne Seydoux (Switzerland) attended the 7th World Congress Against the Death Penalty held in Brussels since she was unable to travel to Djibouti.
- Report on LGBTI rights presented by the Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator and rapporteur of the Canadian Branch.

In presenting the report on LGBTI rights, Senator Dawson first thanked all the branches that responded to the Canadian Branch's questionnaire on LGBTI rights and that their

contributions had enriched the report. He said that the discussions held in Quebec City on the report and the questionnaire underscored the concerns of several branches. He emphasized the value of an open, sensitive and constructive dialogue on the rights of LGBTI people.

Senator Dawson then reviewed the five main obligations of States to protect the rights of LGBTI persons. First, States must protect the right to life, liberty and security of persons irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity. Second, States must prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Third, States must protect the right to privacy and against arbitrary detention on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. He said that laws that criminalize individuals on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity violate these rights. Fourth, States must protect individuals from discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. He said that LGBTI people face discrimination in many areas of life, including in education, employment and health. Fifth, States must protect the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly in a non-discriminatory manner.

Discussions followed the presentation of his report. Various branches reported on the measures taken to protect the rights of LGBTI people and other branches discussed constraints in their countries.

### **Follow-up on resolutions**

The Political Committee then followed up on the resolutions adopted at the annual sessions in Quebec City in 2018 and Luxembourg in 2017.

Senator Éric Forest summarized government and parliamentary action regarding the resolutions adopted by the Political Committee in relation to the fight against religious radicalism and the migration crisis.

First, with regard to the resolution on combating religious radicalism, he said that Canada had taken several steps in this area. At the parliamentary level, he noted that the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence and the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security examined issues threatening the country's national security, including religious radicalism. He said that, in its report to the Government of Canada, the House of Commons committee recommended, among other things, the development of a community-based strategy to prevent radicalization and increased development of anti-radicalization programs.

He added that, at the government level, the Government of Canada's 2016 budget proposed funding of \$35 million over five years, starting in 2016-2017, and \$10 million per year thereafter, to create an Office of the Community Outreach and Counter-radicalization Coordinator. He said this led to the creation of the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence. He noted that, among other things, the Canada Centre launched its National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence in December 2018.

Senator Forest then went on to point out that Canadian parliamentarians have conducted several studies in connection with the APF's resolution on the migration crisis. The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights presented several reports on migration,

including a report on the resettlement of Syrian refugees and a report on the Rohingya refugee crisis.

He noted that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration had also presented several reports on various aspects of the Canadian immigration system, including the proper integration of migrants, the protection of displaced groups and vulnerable persons, and the protection of LGBTQ2 refugees. He concluded by noting that Canada's immigration system is extremely complex and includes many programs and initiatives. He said that, among other things, Canada supported the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

### **Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear test bans: APF involvement**

The Committee Chair discussed issues surrounding the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, nuclear test bans and disarmament. He said that the Parliamentary Secretary General of the APF would like the APF to engage more actively on this issue, for example by getting more involved in the process leading to the signing of treaties in this area.

The Parliamentary Secretary General then discussed the APF's observation mission to Vienna during the work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

### **Regulatory issues**

The Committee Chair informed parliamentarians about progress made with regard to the application for membership by the Assembly of French Polynesia and the application for associate branch status by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. He said that the applications comply with the APF's rules and proposed that the Committee support the applications of both branches. The Committee adopted the proposal.

### **Other business**

The Chair said that the APF currently has observer status in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and that the Parliamentary Secretary General of the APF is working to make it an associate member so as to increase its participation in IPU committees and its rights within the IPU. He pointed out that an increased role would increase IPU membership fees.

Senator Dennis Dawson was in favour of this proposal. He said he has been a member of the IPU for several years. He noted that, although the IPU Charter recognizes English and French as official languages, the use of French is negligible. He said that the APF's change in status in the IPU could help defend the French language and ensure that the IPU uses both languages.

Following discussion, the Committee supported changing the APF's status in the IPU from observer member to associate member.

The Mali representative asked that the Political Committee consider inter-community conflict, particularly in view of the situation in his country.

Finally, the Political Committee adopted a motion thanking the Djibouti Branch for their welcome.

### **Date and place of next meeting**

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place in Abidjan on July 7, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Samson, M.P.

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

## **Travel Costs**

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (CAPF)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Meeting of the Political Committee of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti
<b>DATES</b>	March 5 to 6, 2019
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	Hon. Dennis Dawson Hon. Éric Forest
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Chloé Forget
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$18,582.97
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$3,192.13
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$0.00
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$1,892.83
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$152.36
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	\$19.99
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$23,840.28</b>