



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

Cooperation and Development Committee Meeting

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

From May 3 to 5, 2019

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) is honoured to present its report on its participation in the meeting of the Cooperation and Development Committee of the APF held in Phnom Penh from May 3 to 5, 2019.

The members of the delegation were the Honourable Éric Forest, Senator and Committee Rapporteur, Darrell Samson, MP and President of the Canadian Branch, Joël Godin and Chloé Forget, Advisor to the Canadian Branch.

The meeting was convened by Angélique Ngoma (Gabon), Chairperson of the Committee.

Close to 50 parliamentarians from approximately 30 branches attended the Committee meeting.

Opening of meeting

The meeting was opened by Pen Pannha, President of the Cambodian Branch of the APF, Ngy Tayi, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Cambodia, and Sorin Mihai Cimpeanu, President of the Francophone University Agency.

Pen Pannha, President of the Cambodian Branch, made opening remarks. He welcomed all participants and said he trusts that the Committee's work will lead to constructive dialogue.

The Committee Chairperson then thanked the host branch and talked about the Committee's recent activities.

Since Jacques Krabal, Member (France) and Parliamentary Secretary General, was absent, the Committee Chairperson delivered Mr. Krabal's remarks on his behalf. She reiterated how important it is to implement the resolutions adopted by the APF and said that a formal assessment of the results will be proposed during the meeting this summer in Abidjan.

Adoption of agenda

The Committee then adopted the agenda and the minutes of the Committee meeting of July 8, 2019, in Quebec City, Canada.

Round table on current economic events

The Committee then had a round-table discussion on current economic events. Darrell Samson, MP and President of the Canadian Branch, said that Canada's economy was in relatively good shape overall and that last year, real gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 1.8%, the second-highest increase among G7 countries, albeit below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average. Mr. Samson noted that growth was slowed by falling crude oil prices in the second half of 2018, which hurt oil-producing provinces such as Alberta. He added that the impact of this drop is still being felt in 2019; as a result,

the Bank of Canada forecasts that GDP growth will be no higher than 1.2% this year, increasing to 2% in 2020.

Mr. Samson also said that the *North American Free Trade Agreement* renegotiations came to a close this fall when the Canada–United States–Mexico Agreement was announced and signed. The agreement must now be ratified by all three countries before coming into effect. He added that the *Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership* between 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Canada, came into effect in 2018.

Mr. Samson noted that the federal government presented its 2019 budget, the last before the next general election, scheduled for October. He said that the federal government is forecasting a budget deficit of 0.9% of GDP for 2019–2020. The deficit should shrink over the next few years to 0.4% of GDP by 2023–2024.

Lastly, he said that in 2019 Canada implemented its federal carbon pricing system, which comes into effect in provinces and territories that have yet to adopt carbon pricing systems that meet federal standards.

Presentations

The Committee heard from the following people:

- Ngy Tayi, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Cambodia, talked about economic co-operation between the Kingdom of Cambodia and French-speaking countries.
- Philippe Steinmetz, Director of the French Development Agency (AFD), spoke about the initiatives of the AFD, which is active in Southeast Asia, with a focus on sustainable development in Cambodia.

Reports

The Committee considered the following reports:

- Corruption as an obstacle to economic development, presented by Joël Godin, Member (Canada);
- Digital access in La Francophonie, a report by the Quebec Branch, presented by Darrell Samson, Member (Canada), on behalf of the absent delegate of the Quebec Branch;
- The impact of the digital revolution on employment in La Francophonie, presented by Mansour Kamardine, Member (France);
- Transportation and tourism and its economic impact as drivers of development, presented by Moussa Thiam, Member (Senegal), and Mamadou Diallo, Member (Burkina Faso); and
- Follow-up on international trade negotiations conducted under the World Trade Organization, presented by Henri Koubizara, Member (Burkina Faso).

Mr. Godin presented the final draft of the report on corruption as an obstacle to economic development. He thanked all the branches that responded to his questionnaire and noted that a number of their answers were incorporated into the report to enhance it.

Mr. Godin said that the scourge of corruption affects all countries and hinders global economic growth, representing an estimated cost of more than 5% of global GDP annually. He added that the report examines the consequences of corruption on three levels: private sector productivity, government revenues and public spending.

First, Mr. Godin argued that corruption reduces private sector productivity because it discourages investment and hinders competition and entrepreneurship. Second, corruption potentially reduces government revenues because tax evasion and the informal economy undermine governments' ability to collect taxes, their main source of income. Third, corruption can misdirect public spending. When political decisions are corrupted, they are more likely to lead to suboptimal economic outcomes. In addition, corruption tends to increase the cost of goods and services purchased by governments, including through procurement, which is highly vulnerable to corruption.

Mr. Godin added that corruption damages other aspects of socio-economic well-being, such as education, health and access to water. He noted that it is well-established that corruption perpetuates overall inequality and hinders sustainable development.

Mr. Godin also said that fighting corruption is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and that legal frameworks and effective anti-corruption measures are crucial to promoting economic growth and sustainable development. He added that the *United Nations Convention against Corruption*, a legally binding international instrument, outlines requirements and governing principles to fight corruption. He then listed anti-corruption measures and sound practices adopted by various countries.

Mr. Godin added that a number of APF branches have already taken action to fight corruption, but that much more is needed. To that end, he submitted a declaration to the Committee that

- conclusively states that the fight against corruption is closely tied to national and regional economic growth and essential to sustainable development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- calls on governments to introduce legislation, programs, policies and initiatives that promote transparency and fight corruption at every level;
- calls on parliamentarians to take on the responsibility of increasing the transparency of their practices and those of their parliaments;
- calls on parliamentarians to unite against corruption and introduce legislation, programs, policies and initiatives that fight corruption, including corruption in the parliamentary process; and
- calls on parliamentarians to use the powers available to them to ensure that their national and regional finances are managed with integrity.

While presenting the report on digital access in La Francophonie, Darrell Samson noted that his Quebec colleague, Harold Lebel, was absent and had asked him to submit it. On Mr. Lebel's behalf, he thanked the APF branches that took the time to respond to the questionnaire that was sent to them. He also asked the branches

that had not yet shared an overview of their situation and examples of sound practices with the Quebec Branch to do so.

Mr. Samson said that the report is a general assessment of digital access in La Francophonie, with a focus on unequal access to new technology. He added that more than 60% of the global population still do not have Internet access and that 58% of these 3.9 billion people are women. Furthermore, approximately 60% of them live in rural areas. He also said that, among Internet users in Africa, men outnumber women by 25% and that this gap is caused by structural gender inequalities that disadvantage women in terms of income and years of schooling.

Mr. Samson noted that there is truly a North-South digital divide. He added that there are many reasons for these disparities, including technological, economic and societal factors. He said that digital access depends on reliable access to electricity, noting that 1.1 billion people, or 14% of the global population, are still without electricity and that 85% of them live in rural Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Samson said that illiteracy and poor digital literacy are obstacles to digital access, adding that in most countries, these obstacles are mainly technological.

Mr. Samson ended by saying that, as parliamentarians, it is important to take action to reduce inequality in digital access and build adequate infrastructure.

Future report topics

The Honourable Éric Forest, Senator (Canada) and Rapporteur, proposed the topic of co-operation between developed and developing countries to prevent and mitigate the effects of climate change. He added that atmospheric greenhouse gas levels are continuously rising, resulting in increased average temperatures and major climate instability. He listed melting icecaps, rising water levels, ocean acidification, heatwaves, droughts, food insecurity and drinking water shortages as the most tangible consequences of climate change. Senator Forest said that the international community has recognized for years that reducing global greenhouse gas emissions is key to stabilizing the rise in global temperature and that countries need to adapt to climate change because of current disturbances that may become more serious in the future.

Senator Forest said that developing countries, especially the least developed and small island nations, are particularly vulnerable to climate change and do not necessarily have the tools needed to face this challenge because of their socio-economic situations. Accordingly, he emphasized that co-operation between developed and developing countries is essential to preventing and mitigating the effects of climate change. He noted that the APF has already pledged to fight climate change and put forward a number of initiatives. Senator Forest said that his proposed report would dovetail with La Francophonie's previous work on climate issues.

He said that a first draft of this report would explore different avenues for international climate co-operation, such as providing international financial assistance, improving technology transfer and sharing information and best practices between developed and developing countries. Senator Forest also

suggested compiling best practices for international co-operation and highlighting concrete examples of outstanding projects underway in La Francophonie. Lastly, he said that this report could serve as a reference for developing sound practices for fighting climate change, while acknowledging each country's individual situation and challenges.

The Committee agreed to Senator Forest's proposal.

Update on resolutions

The Cooperation and Development Committee then reviewed the resolutions adopted during the 2017 and 2018 annual sessions in Luxembourg and Quebec, respectively.

Senator Forest said that the Canadian Branch had done the same and sent a follow-up report to the APF Secretariat.

Date and place of next meeting

The Chairperson said that the next Committee meeting would probably take place in South Africa.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Samson, MP

President of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
ACTIVITY	Cooperation and Development Committee of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
DESTINATION	Phnom Penh, Cambodia
DATES	From May 3 to 5, 2019
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Éric Forest
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Joël Godin Darrell Samson
STAFF	Chloé Forget
TRANSPORTATION	\$24,595.14
ACCOMMODATION	\$0
HOSPITALITY	
PER DIEMS	\$2,204.89
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$92.86
MISCELLANEOUS	\$292.68
TOTAL	\$27,185.57