



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

**Workshop on enhancing the role of parliamentarians from member states of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* in the Universal Periodic Review process**

**Geneva, Switzerland**

**From December 10 to 11, 2019**

# Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (CAPF) participated in the workshop on enhancing the role of parliamentarians from member states of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. The workshop was held in Geneva, Switzerland, on December 10 and 11, 2019.

The delegation was composed of Darrell Samson, M.P., Chair of the Canadian Branch and First Vice-President of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF); and Joël Godin, M.P., Executive Member of the Canadian Branch and Chair of the APF's Parliamentary Affairs Committee. The delegation was joined by Jean François Lafleur, Administrative Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

In addition to the Canadian Branch, the following branches were represented: Benin, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, France and Senegal. Representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) and UPR-Info were also in attendance.

The opening ceremony began with a speech by Her Excellency Ms. Kadra Ahmed Hassan, Chair of the Group of Francophone Ambassadors in Switzerland and Ambassador of Djibouti to Switzerland; Bakary Bamba, OIF Representative; His Excellency Mr. Cody Seck, President of the Human Rights Council; Karen Jabre, Representative of the IPU Secretary General; and Gianni Magazzeni, Head of the Universal Periodic Review Division of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Jacques Krabal, APF Parliamentary Secretary General, also gave opening remarks and highlighted the APF's efforts to support the OHCHR's work.

## **Return on the 5th francophone seminar on the Universal Periodic Review of Dakar**

### **- Bakary Bamba, OIF Representative**

Mr. Bamba said at the outset that the 5th seminar included more than 150 participants from over thirty member states and governments of *La Francophonie* across five continents. The composition of the participants was as follows: diplomats, parliamentarians, members of National Human Rights Institutions, and national and international NGOs.

He then presented a summary of the 5th seminar for the participants in attendance, outlining the following issues covered during the seminar :

- Making countries better prepared for the UPR's third cycle and strengthening the implementation of and follow-up to recommendations;

- Enabling countries to assimilate the method for developing an integrated approach for the implementation of UPR recommendations and other UN and regional human rights mechanisms;
- Ensuring consistency between the recommendations accepted by the countries as part of the UPR and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and
- Helping countries to better understand the possibilities for assistance at the international (OHCHR Fund, OIF), regional and bilateral levels, as well as within the framework of south-south and north-south co-operation.

In relation to these issues, Mr. Bamba shared the following objectives for the 5th seminar :

- Facilitate discussions on the international and regional human rights mechanisms as part of the follow-up to UPR recommendations;
- Share experiences and best practices to help countries prepare for the transition to UPR and the effective implementation of UPR recommendations;
- Encourage and facilitate follow-up actions, both before and after countries transition to UPR;
- Strengthen co-operation between parliaments, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), civil society and regional human rights protection mechanisms in the UPR process;
- Analyze potential synergies with the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights indicators to include human rights and development efforts in the UPR process; and
- Formally introduce the new UPR Interactive Guide, which will help countries and other UPR stakeholders prepare their reports, make recommendations, develop their implementation plans and follow up in a coordinated and proactive manner.

## **Role of parliamentarians in the follow-up to and implementation of UPR recommendations**

### **– Noémy Barrita-Chagoya, OHCHR**

Ms. Barrita-Chagoya began her presentation by pointing out that Universal Periodic Review was established by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly in 2006. The UPR is a co-operation mechanism conducted by countries every four and a half years to examine the human rights situations of the 193 member states of the United Nations. In addition, the UPR gives countries the opportunity to present the measures they have taken to improve their human rights situations. This review is an opportunity to remind member states of their responsibility to respect and fully implement all human rights and

basic freedoms. The overall purpose of the above is to help countries constantly improve their human rights situations.

This UPR has three components: governments' national reports; stakeholders' view of the countries under review and their recommendations; and action taken by the United Nations to manage stakeholder interactions and follow-up to recommendations.

The UPR cycle consists of the national process (develop with the notes); the review by the UPR working group; the position of the country under review for each of the working group recommendations; the consideration and adoption of the final document during the plenary; and the follow-up to the review.

The review is conducted through an interactive dialogue among a 47-member working group of the Human Rights Council (HRC), with member and observer states participating. All countries, regardless of their geographical size, political clout or population count, are reviewed according to the same process for the same duration. These countries must clearly outline their position on each of the recommendations before the report is considered by the General Assembly. At that time, countries have 30 minutes to present their views on the report as a whole. Lastly, there is an adoption phase of the report, where all stakeholders can freely express their views once more.

According to Ms. Barrita-Chagoya, the third cycle of the UPR will be an opportunity to create a new dynamic for even more constructive dialogue and increased co-operation between review participants. She sees this cycle as a new opportunity to share best practices from the two previous cycles for protecting and promoting human rights in compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

She went over the roles of each participant under review, highlighting the role of the governments. Their role is inter-ministerial coordination through the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up. They also organize and manage national consultations with participating stakeholders, ensure parliamentary co-operation in the UPR process and prepare the various reports.

## **Principles and best practices of parliamentary work on human rights**

### **– Martin Seutcheu from the OHCHR and Ayiko Afouda from the IPU**

After thanking the parliamentarians in attendance, the speakers said they were pleased with the growing attention paid to human rights in general. He reaffirmed the objective of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to help parliamentarians improve the contribution of parliaments to his work and the Universal Periodic Review. His organization recognizes the crucial role of parliaments in ensuring international human rights obligations are reflected in national legislation and policy. In this sense, awareness of human rights should be raised among all parliamentarians.

He welcomed the initiative of a number of parliaments that have established parliamentary committees on human rights to support the study and implementation of the recommendations of international and regional human rights mechanisms.

He also welcomed parliamentarians' right of legislative initiative when studying and reviewing legislation in consideration of their country's international human rights

obligations. Parliamentary oversight over a country's executive branch plays an important role in the fulfillment of its human rights obligations, and the creation of recommendations for the human rights situations of various countries is a powerful tool.

He closed by setting out six points for parliamentarians to implement in their respective parliaments :

- Encourage the ratification of or adherence to international and regional human rights instruments;
- Submit and study bills and review existing legislation to ensure they are compatible with international human rights obligations, and propose amendments if necessary;
- Monitor government action related to respecting human rights and commitments made to international and regional human rights mechanisms;
- Provide parliamentarians with information on human rights when they debate legislation, policy directions and government action;
- Assess the potential human rights impacts when considering national budget proposals; and
- Work with and consult NHRIs and civil society representatives on human rights issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis Drouin, M.P.

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

### **Travel Costs**

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i>
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Workshop on enhancing the role of parliamentarians from member states of the <i>Organisation internationale de la Francophonie</i> (OIF) in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Geneva, Switzerland
<b>DATES</b>	From December 10 to 11, 2019
<b>DELEGATION</b>	

