



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

Bureau Meeting of the APF

Dakar, Senegal

From January 28 to 30, 2020

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch that attended the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) Bureau meeting in Dakar, Senegal, from 28 to 30 January 2020, has the honour to present its report.

The members of the Canadian delegation were Mr. Éric Forest, Senator and Vice-Chair of the Canadian Branch, and Mr. Joël Godin, MP and Chair of the APF's Parliamentary Affairs Committee, accompanied by Mr. Jean-François Lafleur, Branch Secretary.

In addition to the Canadian Branch, the following branches also participated: Belgium/French Community/Wallonia-Brussels, Cameroon, Chad, France, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Jura, Laos, Luxembourg, Mali, Morocco, Ontario, Quebec, Senegal, Switzerland, Togo, Vietnam and the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*.

Opening of the meeting

Opening remarks were made by Mr. Moustapha Niassé, Speaker of the National Assembly of Senegal, Mr. Jacques Krabal, APF Parliamentary Secretary General, and Mr. Amadou Soumahoro, President of the APF and Speaker of the National Assembly of the Ivory Coast.

The meeting agenda and the minutes of the last Bureau meeting in Abidjan were adopted.

Bureau composition

Following apologies for the absence of certain Bureau members, several appointments were approved, including the appointment of Mr. Christian Levrat (Switzerland) as the new Chair of the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee (CECAC).

The Bureau then decided to submit the request to change the status of the Parliament of Catalonia to associate branch and the application for membership from Wallis and Futuna to the Political Committee for evaluation.

It authorized the APF administration to initiate contact with the parliaments of OIF member countries that are not members of the APF.

Remarks from the OIF administrator

The Bureau then heard from Ms. Catherine Cano, Administrator of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF). She stressed the importance of close collaboration between the APF and her organization.

She noted that 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of the *Francophonie* and outlined the major international issues that multilateral organizations like the OIF are facing, such as climate change and education. These two issues are important to the OIF. She reminded the Bureau members of the actions that the OIF has taken to reform international security and of its support for sustainable development objectives (SDOs).

Ms. Cano praised the important role played by the APF and expressed a hope for even stronger synergy with the APF. OIF funds for parliamentary co-operation must always be used as efficiently as possible. Among other things, she advocated minimal use of the principle of fungibility of credits and urged the APF to continue seeking out complementary funding for its initiatives.

Ms. Cano was asked questions by the committee and network chairs. Mr. Joël Godin, MP (Canada) and Chair of the APF's Parliamentary Affairs Committee, asked her about the means at her disposal for promoting the SDOs and how she would support francophone parliaments in that regard.

Mr. Éric Forest, Senator (Canada) and Vice-Chair of the Canadian Branch of the APF, asked the OIF administrator how her organization plans to strengthen youth involvement in the francophone community. Ms. Cano answered that youth will be the primary beneficiaries of the OIF programs, given that nearly 70% of the OIF's clients are young people.

Parliamentary Secretary General's activity report

Mr. Jacques Krabal (Member), France, presented the Parliamentary Secretary General's activity report for 2019.

Mr. Krabal spoke about the 45th Annual Session the APF and the work accomplished by the various committees and networks. He then spoke about the fight to establish the status of the *Francophonie* in the world. He called on the branches to do more to show their francophone pride and to take concrete actions to affirm their status as francophones in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the *Francophonie*.

The Parliamentary Secretary General spoke to the Bureau members about the importance of the APF's relations with other stakeholders in the *Francophonie*, especially the OIF, and mentioned the organization's actions at the last few international meetings attended by the APF.

The Parliamentary Secretary General's activity report was adopted.

Institutional activities

The programming was adopted as presented, specifically:

- the joint meeting of the Co-operation and Development Committee and the Political Committee on 5 and 6 March in Bucharest, Romania; the Network of Women Parliamentarians in French Polynesia on 30 and 31 March; the Young Parliamentarians Network in the Aosta Valley, Italy, from 16 to 18 April; the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee in Quebec City on 25 and 26 May; and the 46th Annual Session in Morocco in early July.

Parliamentary co-operation programs

The Bureau members adopted the parliamentary co-operation program for 2020.

They decided to:

- hold six parliamentary information and discussion seminars for francophone parliamentarians;
- award 12 bursaries for parliamentary officials to participate in the internship program organized by the French Parliament and the French National School of Administration;
- continue to support the International Parliamentary Training Program offered by the Quebec National Assembly in collaboration with Laval University Laval;
- support a seminar for francophone officials organized by the French Community/Wallonia-Brussels and Luxembourg branches;
- schedule classroom training on the administration and organization of parliamentary work in collaboration with Senghor University in Alexandria and the Association of Secretaries General of Francophone Parliaments;
- schedule online training on the administration and organization of parliamentary work in partnership with Senghor University and the Association of Secretaries General of Francophone Parliaments;
- schedule training on the evaluation of Cambodian public policy, in collaboration with the Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia (PIC);
- carry out 10 co-operative actions as part of *Numérique* APF, the APF's digital strategy, namely, three actions to support modernization, three actions to strengthen the French language, and four knowledge- and skill-building seminars, two of them regional seminars for the Asia-Pacific Region and Africa;
- allocate the knowledge- and skill-building seminars to the branches for Togo, Cambodia, Laos, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo and the Ivory Coast;
- hold a Francophone Youth Parliament in Rabat in 2020;
- as part of the gender equality program, hold two seminars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad, and one workshop on the margins of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and participate in the women parliamentarians' leadership workshop organized by the Quebec National Assembly.

Bureau members also selected the two branches that will be invited to send officials on an internship at the APF Secretariat General, namely, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

They received an update on hosting a francophone international volunteer at the APF Secretariat General; on the good offices mission – or information and contact mission – to Benin that will take place on 3 and 4 February.

They also agreed that the beneficiaries of the actions to modernize information systems would be the branches for Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Guinea-Conakry and that the beneficiaries of the actions to promote the *Francophonie* would be the branches for Armenia, Cambodia and Madagascar. Furthermore, they decided to partially fund the cost of sending two parliamentarians on a seminar in New Caledonia.

Mr. Joël Godin asked the APF Parliamentary Secretary General about the decision-making process regarding cuts to existing co-operation programs and how funding is allocated to those programs in general. The Parliamentary Secretary General answered that he would like to encourage reflection on a more political decision-making process, suggesting that the Chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, which oversees these programs, could be consulted. Another speaker noted that defaulting branches should not benefit from the APF's co-operation programs.

Treasurer's report

Mr. Christian Levrat, Chair of the Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee, presented the treasurer's report on the draft 2020 budget for the 2019 fiscal year ending December 31, 2019.

The report was adopted, and the draft 2020 budget that he presented would, among other things, allocate the 2019 surplus to the fund for supporting parliamentary co-operation and strengthening the French language and for committing to various co-operative actions on the fund for supporting parliamentary co-operation and strengthening the French language with parliaments amounting to 138,000 euros and on the fund for support to Haiti amounting to 6,000 euros.

A discussion followed the presentation of this report. Several ideas were discussed regarding the manner in which the Secretariat administration uses budget surpluses and applies the principle of fungibility of credits. The treasurer reiterated that he does not have the authority to approve additional spending with surpluses. Mr. Joël Godin stated that the members should think about an effective governance process and consider implementing financial management decision-making and transparency mechanisms. Mr. Éric Forest also asked how the APF manages budget surpluses and whether there is a management policy on that subject. Several members who were present were interested in that issue.

Partnership agreements

The Bureau will, with support, submit the ratification of a partnership agreement with the United Nations for food and agriculture to the Plenary Assembly. It also took note of the partnership request from the francophone network of parliamentary ethics and conduct, and referred it to the Parliamentary Affairs Committee for study.

Modernization of statutes

The work schedule of the sub-working group was adopted. The possibility of expanding the sub-group's membership (add one representative per APF branch) was raised.

50th anniversary of the *Francophonie*

The President of the APF and the Parliamentary Secretary General marked the 50th anniversary of the *Francophonie* being founded in Niamey. They urged the parliamentarians to properly commemorate this milestone. The branches are invited to communicate with the Parliamentary Secretary General to share the actions they will take to promote the *Francophonie* within their respective parliaments.

Adoption of reports from committees, networks and chargés de mission

All committee and network reports were adopted unanimously. Each group also gave an overview of its upcoming activities. Mr. Joël Godin, Chair of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, reported on its work and emphasized the importance of the APF's co-operation programs. The reports from the regional *chargés de mission* were also adopted.

Study of political situations in francophone countries

The Syrian Arab Republic is the only branch whose membership is still suspended. Mr. Bruno Fuchs, Member (France), presented the report on behalf of Mr. Christophe-André Frassa, Senator (France) and Chair of the Political Committee. It was agreed that the Burundi Branch should remain under observation. It was also agreed to maintain the alert for Benin and Cambodia. An alert was also issued for the Haiti Branch.

The members agreed to ask the Political Committee to provide further information on the political situation in the following countries: Egypt, Guinea, Cameroon and Ivory Coast. Lastly, they agreed to ask the Political Committee to propose a reform of the democratic oversight mechanisms.

Presentation – Birth registration

The Bureau heard a presentation from Ms. Dieh Mandiaye Ba, Chair of the Commission of Laws of the National Assembly of Senegal, about civil birth registration in Senegal. She presented the legal framework for birth registration and outlined the situation in Senegal.

She noted certain difficulties connected with universal birth registration such as inconsistent or, in some cases, insufficient political will and involvement, stemming from a lack of adequate public policies and national strategies. Notably, the use of software for recording births has significantly contributed to improving the situation in Senegal.

She stated that the situation is improving in Senegal, where, with support from UNICEF, nearly 85% of children under age five have been properly registered. There is sufficient political will to facilitate the implementation of a more efficient national policy.

The presenter made several recommendations to the APF :

- Support the development and implementation of a framework law specifically regarding civil registration.
- Support projects to improve and strengthen civil registration systems.

- Promote synergistic action.
- Support data reliability and security.
- Support communication to change behaviours and paradigms.

In conclusion, she stated that birth registration must be simple, quick, secure and universally available. The process must gradually evolve towards digital registration. She also urged the members to consider new methods for registering children from birth, as it is a right but also a duty.

Mr. Joël Godin thanked her for her presentation and mentioned the work of the APF Parliamentary Affairs Committee, which he chairs, emphasizing the 2015 Bern resolution that gave rise to this study.

46th Annual Session of the APF and 9th Francophone Youth Parliament (Morocco)

The delegate representing the Moroccan Branch presented an update on the preparations and announced that the theme of the 46th Annual Session would be “Democracy in the 21st Century: New Challenges.” He also informed the Bureau that his branch intended to hold the Annual Session in Western Sahara. Given that the Annual Session was originally going to be held in Rabat, several Bureau members spoke up. Mr. Éric Forest also spoke up, pointing out that the Bureau had formally agreed, earlier that day, to hold the annual meeting in Rabat.

Honours awarded by the APF

The suggestions of the various branches for the *Ordre de la Pléiade* and the Geoffrey Dieudonné Award were accepted as presented. Mr. Didier Berberat, Senator (Switzerland), raised the issue of the closure of an institution that was to have received the Senghor Césaire Award. It was agreed that the prize would be awarded to the runner-up in Abidjan in 2019.

Relations with the *Association des secrétaires généraux de Parlements francophones*

The report of Ms. Marie-Joséphine Diallo, President of the *Association des secrétaires généraux de Parlements francophones* (ASGPF), was adopted without further comment.

Other business

A motion of thanks was addressed to the Senegalese Branch. A second motion on the vitality and promotion of the French language.

The summary of the Bureau’s decisions was adopted.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis Drouin, MP

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i>
ACTIVITY	Bureau Meeting of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
DESTINATION	Dakar, Senegal
DATES	From 28 to 30 January, 2020
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Éric Forest, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Joël Godin, MP
STAFF	Mr. Jean-François Lafleur, Branch Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 19,886.20
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 4,433.18
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,362.37
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 538.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 1,380.00
TOTAL	\$ 27,510.75