

Canada – Africa
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada – Afrique

Report of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association

Bilateral Visit to Ghana

Accra, Ghana

May 21 to 27, 2022

Report

A delegation from the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association visited Ghana from May 21 to 27, 2022. The Honourable Amina Gerba, Senator, Co-Chair of the Association, led the delegation composed of the Honourable René Cormier, Senator, Mr. Yves Perron, M.P. and Mr. Doug Shipley, M.P. Accompanying the delegation was Mr. Rémi Bourgault, Association Secretary.

Ghana is one of the countries on the African continent known for both its strong economy and democratic governance. The visit to Ghana provided an opportunity for the association to show its support for democratic values, human rights and a resilient Africa. One of the goals of the visit was to provide the opportunity for the delegation to be present during the 2022 Annual Meeting of the African Development Bank (AfDB), which focused on climate resilience and energy transition in Africa.

VISIT TO GHANA

Ghana is a multi-ethnic country and is one of the most stable and democratic countries in West Africa. Situated on the Gulf of Guinea, Ghana lies between Cote d'Ivoire and Togo. According to 2022 estimates, the country has a population of 33.1 million people¹.

Historical Overview²

Portuguese sailors arrived on the coast of Ghana in 1471 and began trading in gold, ivory and pepper.

The British Colonial Office took control of the territory, and in 1850 a Legislative Council was established to advise the colonial governor³. In 1916, the Legislative Council's composition was changed to include nine nominated officials. Ghana achieved independence on 6 March 1957. Ghana was the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to achieve independence from colonial rule.

Ghana suffered a series of destabilizing military coups from 1964 until 1992⁴.

Recent Political Developments

Politically, the relationship between the two main parties in Ghana remains tense. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) have traded power over the past two decades in highly competitive elections. On 7 December 2020, Nana Akufo Addo faced John Mahama once again, as well as 10 other candidates in the presidential elections. Akufo Addo was re-elected in the first round of voting, securing a little more than 51% of the vote, while Mahama, his nearest challenger, received slightly more than 47%. In parliamentary elections held the same day, Akufo Addo's NPP and

¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "[Ghana](#)," The World Factbook, Database, accessed on 9 May 2022.

² Unless otherwise indicated, the information source for this section is: Britannica Digital Learning, "[Ghana](#)," Britannica Academic, Database, accessed on 9 May 2022.

³ Parliament of Ghana, [History of the Parliament of Ghana](#).

⁴ "[Ghana profile – Timeline](#)," BBC News, 1 May 2018.

Mahama's NDC each won 137 seats, with 1 seat being won by an independent. The independent candidate later joined the NPP, thereby giving the NPP a one-seat majority.

The System of Government

Under Ghana's current constitution – promulgated in 1992 and entered into force on 7 January 1993 – the country is a presidential republic with a unicameral legislature. The president is both the head of state and the head of government. Members of the cabinet, called the Council of Ministers, must be nominated by the president and approved by Parliament.

The Parliament comprises 275 members directly elected in single-member constituencies by majority vote for four-year terms. In the 2020 election, 40 of the 275 members that were elected to Parliament were women, accounting for 14.6% of the total membership⁵. The Speaker – nominated by the majority party in the legislature – may either be an incumbent Member of Parliament or anyone who is qualified to be elected as a Member of Parliament. The current Speaker, The Right Honourable Alban Kingsford Sumana Bagbin, is not a member of Parliament.

The constitution provides for the establishment of parliamentary committees, which may inquire into the activities and administration of ministries and departments. These inquiries may extend to proposals for legislation. According to its website, the Parliament of Ghana currently has 14 standing committees and 16 select committees⁶.

The judiciary is independent of the other two branches of government. The highest court is the Supreme Court, which consists of 12 justices and the Chief Justice. Justices are appointed by the president with the advice of the Judicial Council and the Council of State⁷. It has broad powers of judicial review, including the authority to rule on the constitutionality of any legislation or executive action.

Governance and Human Rights

Ghana is one of the most politically stable countries in West Africa. It ranks above the regional average for Africa on several global indices that measure governance, democracy and corruption. For example, Ghana ranks 56th out of 167 countries on the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2021 Democracy Index, which measures electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture⁸. Ghana is the sixth highest-ranking sub-Saharan African country on the index, after Mauritius (19th), Botswana (30th), Cape Verde (32nd), South Africa (44th), and Namibia (55th).

s well, Ghana ranks 73rd out of 180 countries surveyed on Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index, a report that assesses countries and territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be⁹.

⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union, "[Ghana](#)," IPU Parline, Database, accessed on 9 May 2022.

⁶ Parliament of Ghana, [Committees of Parliament](#).

⁷ The Republic of Ghana Judiciary, [The Supreme Court](#).

⁸ Economist Intelligence Unit, [Democracy Index 2021: The China Challenge](#).

⁹ Transparency International, "[Corruption Perceptions Index 2021](#)," Database, accessed on 9 May 2022.

Notwithstanding its relatively strong rankings on these and other indices, several organizations have raised concerns about certain aspects of the political and human rights situation in Ghana. According to the United States Department of State, human rights issues in Ghana include arbitrary or unlawful killings, lack of investigation of and accountability for gender-based violence, crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting LGBTI persons, and existence of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults¹⁰.

The Economic Situation

Ghana is endowed with rich natural resources, including arable land, forests and sizeable deposits of gold, diamonds, manganese and bauxite. Agriculture has historically been the most important sector of Ghana's economy. It accounts for about 20% of gross domestic product (GDP) and employs about 45% of the labour force¹¹.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ghana was one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, with GDP growth averaging 7% annually over 2017–2019¹². Following the March 2020 lockdown and the decline in commodity exports, the country's GDP decreased from 6.5% in 2019 to 0.4% in 2020. The economic slowdown had a considerable impact on households. The poverty rate is estimated to have slightly increased from 25% in 2019 to 25.5% in 2020¹³.

Alongside continued attempts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, the Government of Ghana is strengthening agro-processing and food security as well as supporting diversified export growth and foreign direct investment, in line with its long-term Ghana Beyond Aid development strategy.

Meetings in Accra, Ghana

Opening Ceremony, Annual Meetings of the African Development Bank Group, Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina President, African Development Bank

The delegation attended the Opening Ceremony of the Annual Meetings of the African Development Bank held in Accra, Ghana on May 24. The Opening Ceremony gathered representatives of many countries and many African leaders were in attendance, including the President of the Republic of Ghana, the President of Tanzania and the President of Mozambique. The delegation heard the speech of Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, President, African Development Bank (ADB). Dr. Adesina gave an overview of the accomplishments of the ADB over the years. He also addressed imminent challenges for the African continent, including the impact of climate change, the looming food crisis in Africa due to the war in Ukraine, the need for improved agricultural technologies and the shift to renewable energy sources.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of State, "[Ghana](#)," 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.

¹¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "[Ghana](#)," The World Factbook, Database, accessed on 9 May 2022.

¹² The World Bank, [FY22-26 Country Partnership Framework for Republic of Ghana](#), Report No. 157249-GH, 24 January 2022.

¹³ Ibid.

He said that the lives of Africans “are affected every day by climate change, majority of them women. Many of their lives are affected by lack of electricity, and also Africa is the least emitter of climate in the world, accounting for only 4% of all global greenhouse gas emissions. The continent suffers disproportionately from the negative impacts of climate change.”

As an example of combating the impacts of climate change, Dr. Adesina highlighted the work of Feed Africa, whose efforts benefited more than 76 million farmers with access to improved agricultural technologies. Also, he spoke of the flagship program Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT), which delivered climate smart seeds to 12 million farmers in 27 countries within only two years. He reiterated the importance of support to Africa for food production.

Finally, he reminded attendees that the ADB is a AAA-rated financial institution, the only one in Africa.

Meeting with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations Representatives to Ghana

The [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) of the United Nations (FAO) leads international efforts to combat hunger. Founded in Québec City in 1945, the FAO is composed of 194 member states and the European Union. The organization is headquartered in Rome, Italy, and maintains regional and field offices in 130 countries. Among other tasks, the FAO assists governments and development agencies in coordinating their activities to improve and develop agriculture, forestry, fisheries and other resources.

The Ghanaian office of the FAO opened in 1978. Ghana’s Country Programming Framework for 2018–2022 contains three priorities for collaboration between the FAO and the Government of Ghana: food and nutrition security, environmental and sustainable natural resource management, and rural development and resilient livelihoods.

The delegation first met Mr. Yurdi Yasmi, Deputy Regional Representative, FAO Regional Office for Africa. The delegation then heard presentations from various FAO representatives. The delegation was told that Canada is one of the most important partners of the FAO.

It was noted that millions of Africans go to bed hungry every night. FAO representatives explained that, during interventions, particular attention is paid to how the impacts of food shortages disproportionately impact women and highlighted the fundamental role women play in many sectors, including agriculture. According to data presented, over 12% of households suffer food insecurity. The representatives also noted the major impact of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia on the food security crisis, due to Ghana’s dependence on fertilizers imported from the two countries. Many African countries are also dependent on wheat imports from the two countries.

Meeting with H.E. Wamkele Mene, Secretary General of Africa Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat

The Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was adopted by the AU Assembly in March 2018 at an extraordinary session held in Kigali, Rwanda. At that session, 44

member states signed the agreement, a total which has now risen to 54 (Eritrea is currently the only AU member not to have signed). As of 3 May 2022, 43 countries had [deposited](#) their instruments of ratification with the African Union Commission.

The AfCFTA seeks to significantly increase intra-African trade through the elimination of tariffs and to create a single market across Africa for goods and services.

The agreement also seeks to facilitate the free movement of businesspeople and investments. If fully implemented, the free trade area would be the world's largest by the number of member countries.

Ghana was selected as the host for the secretariat of the AfCFTA. The purpose of the secretariat is to facilitate the efficient conduct of the AfCFTA and to implement the decisions of ministers and of heads of state and government.

[His Excellency Wamkele Mene](#) was elected by the Assembly of Heads of States and Government of the African Union (AU) to the position of Secretary-General of the AfCFTA Secretariat in February 2020. He has previously served as Chief Director of Africa Economic Relations at the Department of Trade and Industry of South Africa and represented South Africa at the World Trade Organization in Geneva from 2010 to 2015.

The Secretary General welcomed the delegation and thanked the Government of Canada, which was one of the first countries to show support for the AfCFTA. He acknowledged that the scope of the agreement is very ambitious and explained that it is being implemented in stages. He further explained that the first phase covered areas of trade in goods and in services. The second phase, which was the operational phase at the time, covers areas of Investment, Intellectual Property Rights and Competition Policy.

The Secretary General highlighted the importance for Africa to transform raw materials in Africa instead of exporting them to Europe. He noted that investments in infrastructure are also key for Africa to become less dependant on exporting raw materials.

The Secretary General stressed the need to build the legal foundations for the AfCFTA project and noted that there are still issues to be discussed, such as human rights and climate change. The objective is that, by 2035, 97% of all goods will have no customs fees and no quotas in all member countries. The remaining 3% of goods will be able to be designated as excluded products. He acknowledged that achieving this in 12 years is a major challenge and that while some feel the deadline is too long, others feel it is too short.

Meeting with the Rt. Hon. Alban Bagbin, Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana

The [Speaker of Parliament](#) in Ghana is the first officer of the House and is the third highest officer of the State, after the President and the Vice President. The Speaker enforces order in the House, is expected to be impartial, and does not take part in debate on the floor of the House.

The current Speaker, the [Right Honourable Alban Kingsford Sumana Bagbin](#), was elected to the position on 7 January 2021. A member of the opposition National Democratic Congress, he was first elected to Parliament in 1992. He has held a number of positions in government and Parliament throughout his tenure, including Minister for Health and

Majority Leader in Parliament. He is the first opposition member to be elected as Speaker and, until his election as Speaker, was the longest-serving Member of Parliament.

First, Speaker Bagbin welcomed the delegation and spoke of his visits to Canada. He noted that the Speaker is not a member of Parliament. In becoming Speaker of the Parliament, he had to resign his position as member and a by-election was held. He noted the difficulties he has applying the rules, such as not speaking on the phone in the House. He noted that Ghana's Constitution of 1992 assigned powers and highlighted the challenges of being the Speaker, of the Parliament and of the Westminster system.

Speaker Bagbin said he was looking forward to travelling to Canada in August 2022 for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference to be held in Halifax, and to meet his colleague, the Honorable Anthony Rota, Speaker of the House of Commons and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association President. He thanked Canada for holding the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in these difficult times.

Meeting with representatives of several parliamentary committees

Delegates met with members of several parliamentary committees of the Parliament of Ghana to discuss common issues, including the Foreign Affairs Committee, Gender and Children Committee and Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee.

Parliamentarians took the opportunity to discuss a number of topics, including parliamentary process, security, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), women's representation in Parliament and human rights.

Meeting with Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, President, African Development Bank (AfDB)

The African Development Bank (AfDB) was created in 1964 with a mission to reduce poverty, improve living conditions for Africans and gather resources for Africa's economic and social development. Canada became a member of the AfDB in 1982 and holds a permanent seat on the 20-member AfDB Board of Directors. Canada is the fourth largest non-African shareholder in the Bank and sits on the 14 member Board of Directors of the AfDB's African Development Fund, which provides low-interest loans and grants to support the poorest and most vulnerable African countries.

In its April 2021 Budget, the Government of Canada [announced](#) it would "accelerate and complete Canada's purchase of shares of the African Development Bank in 2022–23, rather than in 2027–28." This was meant to help the bank maintain support to its client countries throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as during the recovery.

The delegates commended the President of the AfDB on his very inspiring speech at the official opening of the conference. President Adesina, who was elected in 2015, noted that Canada is not a country that tells Africans what to do. Canada is one of the main shareholders in the African Development Bank. The Bank has 81 shareholders and three institutions: the African Development Bank, the Africa Development Fund and the Nigeria Trust Fund. According to President Adesina, the most important thing is the development of five main priorities: light up and power Africa, feed Africa, industrialize Africa, integrate Africa and improve the quality of life for the people of Africa. He also noted that the Bank is recognized as one of the best multilateral institutions in the world. The war in Ukraine

was mentioned, as well as its impact on several areas of the economy, particularly agriculture. President Adesina also spoke about energy, youth, security and adapting to climate change.

Meeting with the Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration

The [Honourable Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey](#) was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration on 10 January 2017. She holds a Master of Business Administration, a Master's in Public Communication and a Bachelor of Law. In previous New Patriotic Party administrations, she served as Deputy Minister for the Foreign Affairs and Information ministries, as well as Trade and Industry ministries. She is currently in her fourth term as a legislator. Before entering politics, she ran a marketing and communications company that provided consulting advice to the Ghanaian Ministry of Tourism.

The members of the delegation were pleased to meet with the Minister at the end of their stay in Ghana. The Minister talked about her dismay that women account for only 14.5% of members of Parliament. She hopes the situation will improve with the Affirmative Action Bill. She noted the economic weight of micro/small businesses in Africa, with a large percentage headed by women. It is therefore important to have women speaking for women at the local level. The Minister noted that the President of Ghana has advocated for the empowerment of women at the African Union. She also discussed social media, which is sometimes a source of misinformation, and security in the region. Although Ghana is in favour of freedom of expression, there is a need to look at the impact of social media. Concerning ECOWAS, the region is doing well. The constitution should be ready by the end of 2022. She noted that Ghana is on the United Nations Security Council in 2022–23 and that there are several major issues, including the conflict in Ukraine. Ghana promotes respect for humanitarian law. The war has had impacts on Ghana, including in agriculture with fertilizers.

Courtesy visit to Diaspora African Forum

The African Union (AU) recognized the importance of the African diaspora, designating it as the AU's sixth region, the five others being Central Africa, Western Africa, Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Northern Africa. During the Canada–Africa Parliamentary Association's mission to Ghana, parliamentarians met with the Diaspora African Forum (DAF) team and toured DAF's headquarters, accompanied by Kati Csaba, High Commissioner of Canada to Ghana. DAF is a non-government organization recognized by the African Union and the only African diaspora organization with AU diplomatic status, enabling it to represent the African diaspora around the world.

At a moving surprise ceremony organized by DAF, Senator Gerba was honoured to receive the flag of the 6th region as a representative worthy of the title of “ambassador” of the African diaspora in Canada.

Visit to a Financial Inclusion for Enterprise Development (FINEDEV) partner

Opportunity International Canada (OIC) and its Ghanaian partner, Sinapi Aba Trust/Savings and Loans in partnership with Global Affairs Canada launched Financial Inclusion for Enterprise Development (FINEDEV) in April 2017. FINEDEV focuses on building capacity, skills and knowledge among underserved Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), especially ones run by women, who drive growth within Ghana's communities.

SMEs are the foundation of Ghana's economy, accounting for 70% of the country's GDP and 92% of its total businesses. Women form 53% of the labour force, generate 44% of the GDP and own 70% of Ghana's SME businesses. However, economic growth is hindered because traditional banks consider SME lending too risky. Key deliverables of FINEDEV include 20,000 SME loan clients, 50,000 jobs created or sustained, and 200,000 indirect beneficiaries.

The delegation met with a representative of Sinapi Aba Savings and Loan, and heard from clients that served as examples of beneficiaries of the FINEDEV project: the owner of a nursery school, a hairdresser and an entrepreneur in large scale production of household cosmetics.

Summary and recommendations

The mission to Ghana gave the delegation an appreciation of the importance of Canada's involvement in that country, but also in Africa in general. From its role as a major shareholder in the African Development Bank and its support and technical assistance in establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), headquartered in Accra, Ghana, to its commitment to women entrepreneurs through FINEDEV, Canada is undeniably committed to Ghana and Africa.

However, the delegation notes that Canada could do more to deepen its relationship with the African continent. Economic exchanges between Canada and Africa account for less than 1% of Canada's foreign trade and are not sufficiently diversified. Yet, during its visit, the delegation noted the immense potential and vitality of the continent, which is still waiting for a strong and renewed commitment from Canada.

In this regard, the delegation believes that establishing the AfCFTA is a unique opportunity for Canada to build an ambitious partnership with Africa. The rise of this important free trade area will clearly have considerable influence on the future of Africa, unifying it by increasing intra-continental trade, substantially reducing poverty and supporting the continent's emergence.

The AfCFTA also provides a preferential framework for action on issues that are important to Canada, including its feminist international policy and its fight against climate change. The AfCFTA, which will be the world's largest once fully implemented, would allow Canada to act simultaneously on its human rights, environmental and economic development objectives.

Other matters

The delegation attended the address to the Parliament of Ghana of the President of Mozambique. The delegation was officially recognized in the National Assembly and attended part of the proceedings.

In addition, at a working lunch, the delegation participated in a discussion with civil society leaders on governance issues in Ghana. It was an opportunity to discuss various topics including freedom of press, peace and security, accountability, transparency and good governance as well as gender equality and women's empowerment.

The delegates also met with feminist and women's rights organizations active in Ghana and held a meeting to discuss the human rights of LGBTI persons in Ghana. Finally, they participated in a reception with members of the artistic community.

Acknowledgements

The delegation would like to thank the staff of the Parliament of Ghana for preparing the visit itinerary at Parliament.

Conclusion

The delegation would like to thank Canada's High Commissioner to Ghana, Ms. Kati Csaba, as well as the dedicated staff of the high commission for preparing a very comprehensive program and contributing to a successful visit. The delegates would also like to thank the representatives of Global Affairs Canada and the Library of Parliament who helped prepare the necessary background information.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Amina Gerba, Senator
Co-Chair
Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association

Ms. Brenda Shanahan, M.P.
Co-Chair
Canada-Africa Parliamentary
Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit to Ghana
DESTINATION	Accra, Ghana
DATES	May 21 to 27, 2022
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Amina Gerba Hon. René Cormier
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Yves Perron Mr. Doug Shipley
STAFF	Mr. Rémi Bourgault
TRANSPORTATION	\$39,037.87
ACCOMMODATION	\$6,418.43
PER DIEMS	\$4,582.42
HOSPITALITY	\$1,204.42
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$502.03
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	\$1,043.71
TOTAL	\$52,788.88