



Meeting of the APF Political Committee -- New York, New York, United States of America -- Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF)

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

**New York, United States of America
April 11–13, 2016**

Report

The parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch that attended the meeting of the Political Committee of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, United States of America, on April 11–13, 2016, is honoured to present its report. The delegation was made up of Mr. **Darrell Samson**, MP and Vice-President of the Canadian Branch, Mr. **Joël Godin**, MP and Vice-President of the Branch, and Mr. Jean Luc Bourdages, analyst and adviser.

Some sixty parliamentarians from the four regions of the francophone world took part in this meeting. In addition to the Canadian Branch, the following branches were represented at the meeting: Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Georgia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Quebec, Democratic Republic of Congo, Romania, Senegal, Switzerland, Chad, Togo and Valle d'Aosta, Italy.

Mr. **Jacques Legendre**, a French Senator and Chair of the Committee, welcomed the attendees and opened the proceedings. The Assembly adopted the agenda, minutes and record of decisions from the meeting held in Bern, Switzerland, on July 8, 2015, during the Annual Session.

The Chair invited members of the branches represented to a roundtable in which the parliamentarians briefly described the current political issues in their respective countries. Mr. **Joël Godin**, MP (Canada) and Vice-President of the Canadian Branch, gave a brief overview of the results of the 42nd general election held on October 19, 2015. He also mentioned the election of MP **Geoff Regan** by preferential voting as Speaker of the House of Commons and the appointment of Senator **George Furey** as Speaker of the Senate. Mr. **Godin** then discussed the main legislative and budgetary initiatives of the new government. He concluded by citing the government motion to refocus Canada's mission to combat the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant as well as the changes announced in the nominating process for new Senators.

The parliamentarians then heard Mr. **Hervé Ladsous**, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations responsible for peacekeeping operations; he explained the main challenges facing the UN and its peace missions around the world. He stressed, in particular, how important the sustained contribution of the francophone states is to the smooth operation of these missions. Mr. **Ladsous** mentioned his visit to Canada with the Secretary General of the Francophonie, Ms. **Michaëlle Jean**, noting that the possible return of Canada to the peace missions would likely increase the number of francophones within the chain of command of these missions.

Mr. **Cheikh Diop Dionne**, MP (Senegal) and Alternate Rapporteur, presented the statutory review report on the political situations in the francophone community. The report prompted discussions and debates that led to the adoption of statements on the situation in Syria (which is currently under suspension by the APF), the Central African Republic (specifically proposing to lift the suspension), and the political situation in Haiti (which will be able to benefit from cooperative activities to strengthen that country's Parliament once the electoral process is concluded). With respect to this last statement,

Mr. **Joël Godin**, MP (Canada), proposed an amendment should the electoral process culminating in the election on April 24, 2016, be compromised; this amendment was passed by the Assembly.

The political crisis in Burundi was the subject of intense discussion. In spite of the objections of the Burundi delegation, the parliamentarians agreed to keep that Branch under preventive observation; this resulted in a suspension of all institutional cooperation activities.

The statements adopted by the Assembly are available for consultation [in French only] on the APF website: <http://apf.francophonie.org/Reunion-de-la-Commission-politique-2731.html>

On behalf of the Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator (Canada) and Rapporteur for the Canadian Branch with the Political Committee, Mr. **Darrell Samson**, MP and Vice-President of the Canadian Branch, presented the theme of the Branch's new report on legalizing marijuana, considered from a public policy perspective. This first report makes reference to the extraordinary session of the United Nations General Assembly held in 2016 to debate global drug-control priorities. The degree to which the debate over drug-control policies has evolved was briefly outlined, not only in terms of criminality but also of public safety. After discussing the new Canadian government's intentions vis-à-vis the decriminalization/legalization of marijuana, the Rapporteur for Canada confirmed the contents of the report that will be developed for the Committee's next meeting in Madagascar in July 2016, namely, an overview of the status of the debate within the francophone community to encourage dialogue on this matter among francophone parliamentarians facing similar issues and debates. In this regard, Committee Chair and French Senator **Jacques Legendre** concluded that it is not a question of the APF's taking a position in this debate but one of developing knowledge and creating a profile that each Branch can apply in its own specific parliamentary context.

Mr. **André Drolet**, MP (Quebec) and Vice-Chair of the Committee, presented a draft report on the role of parliamentarians in the fight against religious radicalism. The document briefly assesses this issue in the Francophonie and led to discussions among attending parliamentarians about how to fine-tune the report, for example, how to distinguish between religious radicalism and religious fundamentalism. Further discussions concerned a draft statement on the broader issues of international terrorism in the francophone community. The statement adopted by the Assembly invites the member parliaments of the APF to improve their legislative co-operation in the area of anti-terrorism.

The Rapporteur for the Belgium/French Community/Wallonia-Brussels, Mr. **Alain Onkelinx**, MP, spoke on the development of the Normative Document on parliamentary democracy aimed at revising the APF's democratic oversight process. Following his presentation, the decision was taken to set up a working group to finalize the drafting of the document and identify any amendments to the APF by-laws that might be required.

As their final topic of discussion, the parliamentarians in attendance talked about the preparation of the APF's Notice for the 16th Francophonie Summit, which will be held in late 2016 in Antananarivo, Madagascar; the theme will be "shared growth." The Assembly approved the suggestion by the Committee Chair, **Jacques Legendre**

(France), to address the themes of governance, migrant populations and the deradicalization of young people.

Under “miscellaneous items,” Switzerland referred to Bern’s decision to prepare a report on the use of the death penalty in the francophone community, while Romania reiterated its wish to become a full member of the APF and confirmed that it had submitted an official application to this end. The Madagascan Branch gave an update on the preparations for the APF’s 42nd Plenary Session and the 16th Francophonie Summit; these will take place in Antananarivo in July and November 2016, respectively. Finally, the Chair of the Political Committee, Senator **Jacques Legendre** of France, with the Assembly’s consent, mandated the branches of the Democratic Republic of Congo and France to report on migratory issues.

The proceedings ended with a presentation to the Committee by Mr. **Stephan Tafrov**, Ambassador of Bulgaria and Chair of the Francophone Ambassadors Group, on the role of this Group in the United Nations and the main challenges facing the representatives of the francophone states within the UN.

Thanks to its participation in the proceedings of the Political Committee of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, the Canadian Branch was able to achieve its objectives. These consisted of fulfilling its international obligations; summarizing the main activities of the Parliament of Canada over the preceding months; presenting a draft report for the purpose of information-sharing; maintaining international links with its Francophonie partners; and advocating the Canada’s interests by participating in discussions arising from the topics addressed. In addition, this experience enabled two MP Vice-Presidents of the Canadian Branch, recently elected to the House of Commons, to become familiar with the functioning of the APF and its committees, and to speak with their counterparts from the other francophone state parliaments.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Samson, M.P.
President of the Canadian Branch of the
Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)

Travel Expenses

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Political Committee of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
DESTINATION	New York, United States of America
DATES	April 11–13, 2016
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Darrell Samson Mr. Joël Godin
STAFF	Mr. Jean-Luc Bourdages, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$2,284.26
ACCOMMODATIONS	\$4,299.81
PER DIEM ALLOWANCES	\$864.83
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$7,448.90