



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation regarding
its participation in the Meeting of the Cooperation and
Development Committee of the *Assemblée parlementaire de
la Francophonie* (APF)**

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

**Réunion Island, France
March 2 to 4, 2017**

Report

The parliamentary delegation from the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) that participated in the Cooperation and Development Committee meeting held in Réunion Island, France, from March 2 to 4, 2017, is honoured to present its report.

The Canadian Branch's delegation consisted of **Francis Drouin, M.P.**

Besides the Canadian Branch, the following branches attended the meeting: Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Gabon, Guinea, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mali, Quebec and Switzerland.

The opening ceremony began with welcoming remarks from Jacques Legendre, Vice-President of the French Branch, and Faouzia Vitry, Vice-President of the Réunion regional council.

The members of the Committee being present, the Committee unanimously adopted the agenda and the minutes of its last meeting, that of July 10, 2016, in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

French development agency (AFD)

The Committee heard from Zolika Bouabdallah, head of parliamentary relations at the French development agency (AFD). She provided an overview of her organization, its activities and its areas of focus.

The AFD is a public organization under the authority of the French departments of foreign affairs and finance. It works in 75 countries out of offices in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America.

Established by General de Gaulle in 1941 as the Free France central fund, the AFD established a subsidiary to work with the private sector in 1977. The year 2016 was a turning point, as the AFD signed a deal with France's public investment fund to establish a €500 million infrastructure fund. That year, €9 billion in commitments were announced, and the President of France set a target for 2020 of €12 billion.

France's interdepartmental committee on international cooperation and development (CICID) establishes the AFD's strategic framework, which is presented to Parliament through the foreign affairs committee. The AFD has created an anti-vulnerability facility, funded at €100 million annually, to work locally with NGOs to implement quick-impact projects. Examples include combatting Boko Haram at Lake Chad and responding to migration flows in Lebanon.

The AFD is working toward the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN). It is partly subsidized by the European Union (EU). It also provides a support facility for local communities. In 2015, 38% of the AFD's activities occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, 14% in the Mediterranean and Middle East, and 17% in the Asia-Pacific region. About 80% of its funding from the French government is committed to

sub-Saharan Africa. Following Ms. Bouabdallah's presentation, the Committee members took turns making comments and asking questions.

Presentation and review of draft reports and resolutions

The impact of international migrations in francophone countries

Stéphane Demilly, Member (France), presented a report on the impact of international migrations in francophone countries. He began by pointing out that, last year, the Committee had asked his colleague Abdoulaye Thiam, Member (Mali), and him to present a joint report on migration between Africa and Europe, a complicated issue with multiple causes that covers a variety of situations. The report focused on ways to handle the humanitarian emergency the EU has faced since the summer of 2015 and addressed the issue of Europe taking in migrants, more specifically, those from sub-Saharan Africa. The authors of the report would like to continue this work, but in a new direction.

Regardless of what type it is and where it comes from—voluntary emigration to carry out a life plan, go to school or make an investment, or forced emigration to escape misery, civil war or climate disaster—migration has controversial impacts on our societies. Migration is often negatively viewed by both migrants themselves and the residents of the countries receiving them.

In some countries, the government and society agree to welcome migrants, as in Canada, for example. In others, they are rejected by both state institutions and citizens, as in Poland and Hungary. In Switzerland, the result of the 2014 vote on the popular initiative against mass immigration was 50.7% in favour, showing that the public was split. In France, the government has an immigration policy that brings in up to 32,000 legal immigrants per year, all while about 200,000 people are in the country illegally. Yet the economic role that undeclared persons play is known and almost recognized.

First, it is worth studying the economic and social impact of migration on host countries. The main impact is clearly demographic. Migration increases the population and changes the age pyramids of host countries, which often have very low and steadily declining fertility rates.

In the medium run, the arrival of migrants helps maintain the size of the labour force and balance large economic aggregates. Migration also helps compensate for imbalances in the labour market by filling labour shortages in certain sectors and makes it more flexible.

However, what many are unaware of is that many immigrants are entrepreneurs, who help create jobs and growth in their host country. In aggregate terms, there are no jobs without businesses and no businesses without businesspeople. Immigrants start businesses, create jobs and sometimes have great success.

Mr. Demilly also noted that people in host countries tend to believe that immigrants receive more in social assistance than they pay in taxes. Yet the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that the cumulative impact of

the waves of migration over the past 50 years is on average zero and rarely more than positive or negative 0.5% of GDP.

In Switzerland and Luxembourg, for example, the net benefit of immigration on public finances is estimated at approximately 2% of GDP. The OECD maintains that most immigrants, after all, do not immigrate for the social safety net but instead to find work and improve their and their family's lives. Likewise, the McKinsey Global Institute published a study in late 2016 showing that migrants contribute up to 9.4% of global GDP, or \$6.7 trillion, equal to the GDP of Japan and France combined.

But what are the effects of migration on countries of origin? It is undeniable that migration causes these countries to lose human capital, particularly skilled workers. The loss of skills—the brain drain—is not a myth. Indeed, it is sometimes worsened by the selective immigration policies of Northern countries that prefer the highest-skilled workers and deliberately restrict the entry of less-skilled ones. However, the remittances emigrants send back to their countries of origin represent a substantial windfall.

According to the OECD, 60% of migrants send money back to their families in their countries of origin. The World Bank estimates that these remittances are worth 0.6% of global wealth. In 2015, 250 million migrants worldwide sent \$601 billion back to their countries of origin, including \$441 billion to developing countries.

Finally, discussions with migrants revealed that a large majority think about returning to their country of origin, even though very few will do so. The OECD estimates that between 20% and 50% of migrants, depending on the destination country and time period in question, return within five years and that the likelihood of returning after this time decreases dramatically. In any case, returning migrants contribute to the growth and development of their country in various ways.

Presentation of the report on the impact of international migrations in francophone countries by Abdoulaye Thiam, Member (Mali)

Mr. Thiam presented his report on the impact of international migrations in francophone countries. His country, Mali, has some 18 million inhabitants and, as of 2015, 4 million of them lived outside the country, including 3.5 million in Ivory Coast. Many Malian migrants are disheartened youth trying to leave the country at all costs.

He believes that Mali's immigration policy is very loose because it reflects a tradition of hospitality. In addition, a new trend is emerging: the migration of women. Some are leaving to join their spouses in Europe, while others are leaving for economic reasons. The data show that 91% of Malian women migrants emigrate for social reasons, 64% to rejoin their spouses and 13.8% for economic reasons.

In total, one third of the Malian population lives outside the country. One of the benefits of migration is remittances. These financial flows from the diaspora make a major contribution to Mali's economy. They improve bank liquidity and serve as a form of credit. Between 2011 and 2015, they accounted on average for 6.5% of GDP and 35% of investments. They increased from \$111 billion in 2011 to \$450 billion in 2014. Remittances are five times higher than total official development assistance.

Mr. Thiam believes the key issue is facilitating these remittances and regulating them. The average amount of funds remitted is 330,000 CFA francs per person, 23,000 CFA francs per person in the north. If mechanisms to manage these funds are not found, the trade flows they create could make the country dependent on foreign countries. The remittances could lead local activities to be abandoned. They also stimulate consumption of imported products at the expense of local ones.

Statement by Abderrahmane SYLLA, Mali minister responsible for Malians abroad

Mr. Sylla remarked that migration is both an asset and a threat. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), over 5,000 people drowned in the Mediterranean Sea in 2016. This is a call to action. The basic reason for migration remains youth unemployment, including among educated youth.

He believes it is not only Malians in the Kayes region who are leaving. Three categories of migrants exist: intellectuals, businesspeople—a hundred of whom have succeeded in central Africa and Asia—and migrants leaving to look for work worldwide.

The minister said that the Mali government is trying to turn this situation into an asset for the country. For intellectuals, it has created a skills transfer program and opened positions in universities where they can teach. A public-private partnership has been launched, but is behind schedule, and the diaspora is opposed to it. The government is working to correct the problem.

As for skilled workers, the government needs to encourage them to return to work in Mali. The government applauds the AFD for its work in this area funding return initiatives. The government has drafted a document on the Mali national migration policy (PONAM) that analyzes the issue and proposes a concrete action plan. It condemns the networks of counterfeiters that provide fake travel documents, which have operated out of Bamako, among other places.

Mali is asking Europe for its understanding. The wave of migrants staying illegally in Europe poses a general problem, as well as specific economic and security challenges. Migration needs to be given a human face.

Report on the follow-up on the Economic Strategy for *La Francophonie*

Benoît Charrette, Member (Quebec), reported on the achievements of the Francophonie institutions—the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), the APF and the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF). The report has four parts:

- the economy of La Francophonie and the need for cooperation;
- the associated Strategy;
- the description of the key actions proposed by the Strategy; and
- the challenges in implementing the Strategy.

Inclusive economic growth: Study on Sustainable Development Goal 8 in francophone countries

Francis Drouin, M.P. (Canada), stated that this is the final version of his report. In Luxembourg, he will present a draft resolution, and he noted that the report includes a number of proposals concerning the key priorities to support inclusive growth in francophone countries. The list is far from exhaustive, especially since the 2030 Agenda emphasizes the interdependence of the various SDGs.

For example, he believes that, for the growth targeted by SDG 8 to be not only inclusive but sustainable, a large number of its initiatives should focus on environmental protection, sustainable natural resource management, climate change and other environmental risks and challenges. Other possibilities must also be part of the analytical framework for policies to promote inclusive growth, including the role of digital technologies in development.

Mr. Drouin remarked that the discussions on inclusive growth are a reminder that economic growth is not an end in itself—it is a means to the end of improving people's lives, including the lives of the most vulnerable. Faced with this difficult task, the governments of francophone countries and La Francophonie must work together to build momentum for initiatives to promote inclusive growth in the francophone world. Meanwhile, francophone parliaments must not underestimate the role they can play in pursuit of this goal, as legislators, for example.

After COP 22 in Marrakech

Angélique NGOMA, Member (Gabon), and Sylvestre OSSIALA, Member (Congo), reported that the meeting in Marrakech had the following priorities:

- Translating national contributions into action;
- Mobilizing funding;
- Strengthening adaptation initiatives; and
- Fostering technological development

The two rapporteurs stated that the main goal of the meeting of francophone parliamentarians was to help speed up the process of ratifying the Paris Agreement among the countries that have not yet done so and to ensure it is implemented in domestic legislation.

But in order to strengthen monitoring of compliance with domestic and international commitments and improve transparency, as well as the accountability of the parties for their climate actions, the two rapporteurs believe that the essential aspects of these issues must be understood.

As a result, they proposed to the Committee members a review of some of the decisions made at COP 22. Following their presentation, Abdoulaye Thiam, Member (Mali), and the members from Lebanon and Guinea held a full debate.

Economic development in the Indian Ocean: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles and France (Mayotte and Réunion Island)

Vanilla Islands: Tourism and cooperation among Indian Ocean countries

Pascal Viroleau, President of the Vanilla Islands, began his presentation by describing the partnerships established with cruise ship companies to promote the region. He spoke about the status of the transportation providers in the region, some abstaining for economic reasons. He noted in passing that the English-speaking islands are better served by airlines than the French-speaking ones. The hope is to establish more air connections with Africa.

Tourism accounts for between 3% and 5% of the islands' overall GDP. But for some islands, such as the Seychelles, tourism is a very important part of the economy.

Pascal Plante, First Vice-President of Réunion Island's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, responsible for regional cooperation, and founding member of the Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Indian Ocean

Mr. Plante gave an overview of the various organizations he represents. He discussed the support process for business start-ups. **Francis Drouin, M.P. (Canada)**, asked about this process, which amounts to a research tax credit provided by local tax systems. This sector is growing, and the authorities are doing their best to support the region's many entrepreneurs.

Waste management was also discussed. As a French department, Réunion Island is subject to the same constraints and regulations as French cities, particularly those governing the storage and transportation of certain types of waste. Réunion Island produces 320,000 tonnes of waste each year. Continuing on the environmental front, it was noted that windmills provide only a modest amount of energy, and Mr. Plante explained that, unless more green energy can be produced, part of the solution must also be reduced consumption.

Indian Ocean business climate

Isabelle Chevreuil, President of the Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Indian Ocean, began by explaining that mobility barriers significantly hinder trade among the six islands. A number of measures have been taken, and the islands should be reaching an agreement soon, including on the visa issue. Here again, the issue of airline connections is important.

Passenger airline service has improved, but remains inadequate, as is the service by sea. A new European transportation program is about to be released and could be part of the solution for passenger transportation. Madagascar plays a large role in the logistics, and it is important to pursue even closer cooperation to maximize the economic development of Madagascar and the surrounding islands.

Ms. Chevreuil responded to a question from Jean-Pierre Grin, Member (Switzerland), regarding the state of labour force training on the islands. She hopes better cooperation

among them can reduce regional disparities in training options. She also encouraged aligning this training with needs in the various economic sectors.

Regional cooperation and La Francophonie

Daniel Gonthier, Vice-President of the Réunion Island department responsible for regional cooperation, presented the departmental policy that supports francophone communities on the Island. He explained that the largest supply of volunteers is on Madagascar. The unemployment rate is very high, exceeding 40% in some areas. It is particularly high for people aged 18 to 25 and 50 to 60. One of the dangers threatening the Island is the trend of English replacing French. According to Jacques Legendre, Senator (France), efforts to help the Island must not overly neglect cultural spaces there.

Stéphane Foucault, AFD director in Réunion Island

Mr. Foucault gave a presentation on the AFD's priorities and actions on the Island. Henri Koubizara, Member (Burkina Faso), wanted the Committee to study ways it could promote cooperation among the communities of francophone Africa. His colleague Mamadou Diallo, Member (Burkina Faso), encouraged the Committee members to urge their respective countries to provide small amounts of funding to assist the Island's communities. The Chair of the Committee took note of the suggestion. He also pointed out that China is an important economic player in the region.

Discussion on the Committee's future work

Benoît Charrette, Member (Quebec), said that the proposed topics for the Committee's future are as follows: health care systems, taxation and corruption, transportation and tourism. He noted that the interested branches must contact the APF Secretariat.

Ms. NGOMA, Member (Gabon), said she was interested in health care, as was Mr. Charrette. A number of delegates could work on this subject.

Abdoulaye Thiam, Member (Mali), and the Member from Benin expressed their interest in taxation and corruption, along with the Member from Guinea. **Francis Drouin, M.P. (Canada)**, said he was interested in studying the North-South dynamic in this area.

The Member from the Democratic Republic of the Congo was interested in transportation and tourism, along with the Members from Niger and Cameroon and Henri Koubizara, Member (Burkina Faso).

Other business

Benoît Charrette, Member (Quebec), informed the Committee members that the IMF and World Bank will host the Global Parliamentary Conference in Washington on April 17 and 18, 2017. He also noted that the WTO annual meeting will take place in the fall of 2017.

The next meeting will be held in July 2017 in Luxembourg.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Samson, MP President, Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la
Francophonie APF

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the <i>Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie</i> (APF)
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Cooperation and Development Committee of the APF
DESTINATION	Réunion Island, France
DATES	March 2 to 4, 2017
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Francis Drouin
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$13,500.11
ACCOMMODATION	\$1,040.62
PER DIEMS	\$181.87
TOTAL	\$14,722.60