

Canada – Africa
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
Canada – Afrique

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
regarding its Bilateral Mission to the
Republic of Ghana and the Republic of The Gambia**

Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association

**Accra, Ghana and Banjul, The Gambia
August 25 to 30, 2017**

REPORT

BILATERAL MISSION TO GHANA AND THE GAMBIA

The Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association (“the Association”) conducted bilateral visits to Accra, Ghana, and Banjul, The Gambia, from 25–30 August 2017. The delegation was led by the Association’s Co-Chairs, the Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator, and Robert Oliphant, M.P., and included the Hon. René Cormier, Senator, the Hon. Mike Lake, P.C., M.P., François Choquette, M.P., and Mona Fortier, M.P. The delegation was accompanied by Josée Thérien, Association Secretary, and Brian Hermon, Association Advisor.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

This was the Association’s second bilateral mission to Ghana, following an initial visit to the country in 2011, and its first bilateral mission to The Gambia. In Ghana, the Association’s objectives were the following:

- to follow-up on its 2011 bilateral mission and to update members of the Association on the current political and economic situation in Ghana;
- to strengthen Canada’s bilateral and parliamentary co-operation with Ghana;
- to learn about the role that Ghana is playing in regional organizations, most notably the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with respect to the promotion of economic development, good governance and regional security;
- to hear about Ghana’s involvement in African multinational peacekeeping operations, and to discuss security issues facing West African countries;
- to engage with parliamentarians, government officials, members of civil society and other key interlocutors on issues related to human rights and the rule of law; and
- to acquaint parliamentarians – both Canadian and African – with Canada’s involvement in the region, including its development support, trade and investment activity.

In The Gambia, the Association’s objectives were the following:

- to engage with Gambian parliamentarians and officials in The Gambia’s first democratically elected government in 22 years;
- to meet with civil society organizations active in work related to human rights and the rule of law;

- to visit and to learn about the work and effectiveness of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) located in Banjul;
- to meet with officials from the United Nations (UN) and non-governmental organizations to learn about how The Gambia is addressing development challenges, including the prevention of child, early and forced marriage; and
- to examine ways in which Canada and The Gambia can enhance their bilateral relations.

In support of its objectives, the delegation met with a number of Ghanaian and Gambian parliamentarians, including the speakers of both parliaments. It also met with His Excellency Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana, and the Hon. Fatoumata Tambajang, Vice President of The Gambia ¹, along with several senior government ministers and officials in both countries. In addition, the delegation met members of civil society, including journalists and human rights advocates, business groups, as well as representatives of UN agencies and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The following report summarizes these meetings, and offers the delegation's main observations and conclusions from its bilateral mission to Ghana and The Gambia.

THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

A. System of Government and Governance

Ghana has a multi-party political system. Executive power is vested in the President, who is Head of State and Commander in Chief of the armed forces. The President is directly elected for a term of four years and is limited to two terms. Legislative authority lies with the 275 member unicameral Parliament. Members are elected for four year terms under a direct simple majority system in single-member constituencies. In the 2016 election, 35 of the 275 members elected to Parliament were women (12.7%).²

Ghana is widely considered to be one of the most politically stable countries in West Africa. It ranks above the regional average for Africa on several prominent global indices that measure governance, democracy and corruption. For example, Ghana ranks 54th out of 167 countries on the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2016 Democracy Index, which measures electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of

¹ The Honourable Fatoumata Tambajang was originally selected to be Vice President of The Gambia on 23 January 2017. However, a dispute arose surrounding whether she was constitutionally eligible to assume the position. Under The Gambia's [constitution](#), the Vice President must meet the same age requirements as the President – which means that he/she can be no older than 65 at the time they enter office. Fatoumata Tambajang was reported to be 67 at the time of her appointment. In February 2017, President Barrow appointed Fatoumata Tambajang as overseer of the office of Vice President – the position she held when the Association visited The Gambia in August 2017. In late July 2017, the National Assembly [voted](#) to remove the upper age limit for holding the presidential and vice presidential offices. On 8 September 2017, Fatoumata Tambajang was officially [appointed](#) as Vice President.

² Inter Parliamentary Union, [Women in national parliaments](#).

government; political participation; and political culture. ³Ghana is the fifth-highest-ranking African country on the index, after Mauritius (18th), Cape Verde (23rd), Botswana (27th), and South Africa (39th). Ghana ranked seventh in the African continent on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (Mauritius is first) in 2016.⁴ While well above the regional average, Ghana's total score has declined by the eighth-largest amount out of the 54 countries surveyed on that index over the past decade.

Ghana ranks 70th out of 176 countries surveyed on Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index, a report that assesses countries and territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be.⁵ Notably, Ghana's ranking on that index declined from 56th in 2015.

Notwithstanding its positive rankings on these and other indices, several organizations have raised concerns about aspects of the political and human rights situation in Ghana. For example, while Ghana is classified as a "free" country by Freedom House, that organization has noted that "some weaknesses in judicial independence and rule persist, and political corruption presents challenges to government performance."⁶ Concerns have also been expressed relating to instances of inter-party violence that have occurred in advance of elections. Amnesty International has also raised concerns about discrimination against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community and people with disabilities, as well as legal shortcomings in relation to human rights protection.⁷

B. Economic and Social Development

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 to Ghana's economy. However, over the past few decades, the overall importance of agriculture to the country's economy has declined as the country's economy has diversified. Gold is Ghana's largest export commodity, accounting for approximately 40% of the country's exports in 2015.⁸ Ghana's nascent oil industry is also beginning to contribute more to the economy after the discovery of commercially viable offshore oil reserves in 2007. Oil is now the third-largest export commodity by value after gold and cocoa.⁹

³ EIU, Democracy Index 2016: Revenge of the "deplorables".

⁴ The Ibrahim Index of African Governance is an annual report that assesses the governance of every African country according to indicators that measure respect for the rule of law and safety; participation and human rights; sustainable economic opportunity; and human development. See Mo Ibrahim Foundation, [Ibrahim Index of African Governance \(IIAG\)](#).

⁵ Transparency International, [Corruption Perceptions Index 2016](#).

⁶ Freedom House, "[Ghana Profile](#)," Freedom in the World 2017.

⁷ In early 2017, several Ghanaians crossed into Canada from the United States to seek asylum. News reports indicate that several of the individuals identified as being from the LGBTI community and expressed fear in the prospect of returning to Ghana. See "['I'm finally home': Frostbitten asylum seeker wins case to stay in Canada](#)," CBC News, 18 May 2017. Amnesty International, [Ghana 2016/2017](#), Annual Report.

⁸ The Observatory of Economic Complexity, [Ghana](#); and KPMG, [Economic Snapshot H1, 2017](#).

⁹ KPMG, [Economic Snapshot H1, 2017](#).

Ghana's near-term economic prospects are solid, led by new oil and gas production and an expected rebound in commodity prices. At the same time, the country's economy faces several challenges over the next few years. For example, the World Bank has noted that Ghana is likely to face continued high domestic and external financing costs as its debt expands and global interest rates rise.¹⁰ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has indicated that Ghana has become increasingly reliant on foreign investors for its financing and that significant unpaid commitments occurred in 2016.¹¹ In addition to these challenges, Ghana also faces high youth unemployment and a high cost for reliable electricity.

Ghana ranks 139th out of 188 UN recognized territories on the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 2016 Human Development Index (HDI), a ranking that puts it slightly above the average for countries in sub-Saharan Africa.¹² Poverty levels in Ghana have been falling over the past few decades. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, between 1992 and 2013, Ghana's national level of poverty fell by more than half, from 56.5% to 24.2%.¹³ The decline in poverty, however, has not been equally distributed throughout the various regions of the country and across different segments of society. Households in urban areas have a much lower average rate of poverty than those in rural areas (10.6% versus 37.9%).¹⁴ In addition, the northern parts of Ghana continue to have higher rates of poverty than the southern regions. Income inequality is also more pronounced in the northern parts of the Ghana than in the south, and particularly in rural communities.

C. Canada-Ghana Relations

Canada established diplomatic relations with Ghana in 1957. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) notes that bilateral relations between Canada and Ghana "are strong and based on more than sixty years of cooperation on the global scene, in particular in the United Nations and the Commonwealth."¹⁵ In 2016, two-way merchandise trade between Canada and Ghana totalled over \$300 million. Bilateral trade was composed of \$252.3 million in Canadian exports to Ghana, and \$67.2 million in imports from Ghana. The main Canadian exports to Ghana were cereals, vehicles and parts, machinery, and miscellaneous textiles, while the main imports from Ghana were cocoa, wood, and vegetable products.

¹⁰ The World Bank Group, "[Overview](#)," Ghana.

¹¹ International Monetary Fund, "[Ghana: Staff Concluding Statement of the 2017 Article IV Consultation Mission and Discussions for the Fourth Review under the Extended Credit Facility](#)," 13 April 2017.

¹² The Human Development Index is a composite measurement of education, health and income indicators. Ghana's Human Development Index [HDI] of 0.579 is below the average of 0.631 for countries in the medium human development group, but above the average of 0.523 for countries in sub-Saharan Africa. United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], "[Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone](#)."

¹³ The poverty line is calculated using a figure of 1,314 Ghana cedis per adult per year based on January 2013 prices in the Greater Accra area. In dollar terms, the poverty line is equivalent to approximately US\$1.83 per day for that same time period. Ghana Statistical Service, "[Poverty Profile in Ghana \(2005–2013\)](#)," August 2014.

¹⁴ Edgar Cooke, Sarah Hague and Andy McKay, "[The Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report](#)," University of Sussex, UNICEF and ASHESI, 2016.

¹⁵ High Commission of Canada in Ghana, "[Canada–Ghana Relations](#)."

According to GAC, Canada is among the top five bilateral donors to Ghana. The department notes that in 2015–2016, Canada contributed more than \$135 million in official development assistance to Ghana (from all sources). Canada’s bilateral development program in Ghana focuses on supporting “climate-smart agriculture”; food security and nutrition; sanitation; economic growth and financial management; and gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.¹⁶

MEETINGS IN GHANA

1. Briefing by High Commissioner Heather Cameron and Mission Staff

Canadian High Commissioner Heather Cameron and staff at Canada’s mission in Accra briefed the delegation on Canada-Ghana relations and on the current political situation in the country. High Commissioner Cameron said that the relationship between Canada and Ghana involves cooperation on issues related to development, trade, as well as on regional peace and security. People-to-people relations are also an increasingly important part of the relationship. The delegation was informed that demand for visas to Canada is growing, including in the area of student exchanges.

High Commissioner Cameron noted that Ghana experienced its third peaceful transfer of power following the December 2016 elections, which were won by President Akufo-Addo and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in an election considered free and fair. Since taking office, President Akufo-Addo has prioritized fighting corruption, fiscal discipline, as well as expanding access to free education. As a former Foreign Minister, delegates heard that President Akufo-Addo has also made Ghana’s foreign policy a priority, including by playing a leadership role in the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States. International peacekeeping is another foreign policy focus for Ghana. The delegation was told that Ghana is the 10th largest peacekeeping contributor to the United Nations, and the fifth largest in Africa; its troops are currently serving in 12 peacekeeping missions around the world. High Commissioner Cameron also noted that Ghana sent disaster management experts to Sierra Leone to assist that country after it experienced devastating landslides in August 2017.

Following the briefing, delegates posed questions to High Commissioner Cameron and mission staff about some of the socio-economic issues facing Ghana. The delegation heard that Ghana has a very young population, with about half of its people under the age of 24. While such a young population offers potential “demographic dividends,” delegates were informed that the population structure could exacerbate already high youth unemployment and strained social services. It was noted that President Akufo-Addo has made economic modernization and industrialization a priority for his government, most notably through the “One District, One Factory” project that aims to establish one factory in each of Ghana’s 216 districts. The delegation also discussed other social issues with Ambassador Cameron including relating to the rights of the LGBTI community and the rights of people with Albinism.

Finally, a discussion ensued about Canadian consular service in Ghana. The delegation was told that Canada’s High Commission in Accra processes visas, as well as

¹⁶ Ibid.

permanent and temporary residency applications, for nine countries in West Africa. Mission staff noted that they are actively promoting educational opportunities for Ghanaians in Canada, and are working to establish an alumni network of Ghanaians that have studied in Canada.

2. Meeting with Albert Arhin, National Coordinator, Coalition of Domestic Election Observers

The Association met with Albert Arhin, National Coordinator of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) in Ghana. CODEO is an independent network of civil society groups, faith-based organizations and professional bodies that observe and report on Ghanaian elections. It was established in 2000 to encourage citizens to actively participate in the electoral process and to complement the efforts of Ghana's Electoral Commission in ensuring transparent, free, fair and peaceful elections.¹⁷ Mr. Arhin talked about CODEO's work during the 2016 elections to contribute to the transparency and credibility of the electoral process. This work included the implementation of a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) system. The PVT is a random sampling procedure at select polling stations that is used to verify the accuracy of the tabulation process.

During the discussion period, members of the delegation asked questions about voter turnout, youth engagement, and the challenges faced by small political parties in Ghana. Mr. Arhin said that national turnout in the last presidential elections was approximately 69%. He noted that youth vote in lower numbers, and that CODEO has projects to encourage youth engagement in politics. He also mentioned that CODEO supports efforts to facilitate voting for people with disabilities, including, for example, by producing documents in Braille for those with visual impairments. Mr. Arhin explained that Ghana continues to be dominated by two large political parties and that smaller parties face significant financial challenges campaigning on a national level.

3. Meeting with the Honourable Mike Oquaye, Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana

The delegation visited the Parliament of Ghana for a meeting with the Honourable Mike Oquaye, Speaker of Parliament. Also present during the meeting was the Honourable Osei Kyei Mensah Bonsu, Majority Leader; the Honourable Huruna Iddrisu, Minority Leader; and the Honourable John Ntim Fordjour, Chairman of the Ghana-Canada Parliamentary Friendship Association.

Following opening comments from Senator Andreychuk on the objectives of the Association's visit to Ghana, Speaker Oquaye welcomed the delegation and provided an overview of some of the issues and challenges facing Ghana and its Parliament. He said that Ghana's Parliament, and the state of democracy in the country, has strengthened incrementally since multi-party politics were restored in 1992. The Speaker emphasized that, today, no party can claim a monopoly on power. At the same time, Speaker Oquaye explained that Ghana has more work to do to strengthen its

¹⁷ For more information, see: Coalition of Domestic Election Observers Ghana, [Our History](#).

democracy. In this regard, he expressed an interest in learning from Canada, and Canadian parliamentarians, about best practices in the areas of governance and parliamentary oversight. The Speaker also spoke about the creation of a Parliamentary Training Institute on the grounds of Ghana's Parliament, which he hopes will be a centre of legislative excellence and training for newly elected parliamentarians across Africa.

Majority Leader Mensah Bonsu spoke about the need to increase the number of women in Parliament. To this end, the delegation heard that Parliament is considering legislative action that would legally mandate policies to increase female representation in public positions of power and decision-making. Minority Leader Iddrisu expressed an interest in developing a parliamentary committee related to ethics in Ghana and requested Canada's help in this regard. Finally, the Honourable John Ntim Fordjour, Chairman of the Ghana-Canada Parliamentary Friendship Association, spoke about his interest in building relations with Canadian parliamentarians, including in the area of combatting early, forced and child marriage.

4. Meeting with Members of Ghana's Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and Select Committees on Health and Foreign Affairs

The delegation had a working lunch with members of Ghana's Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and Select Committees on Health and Foreign Affairs. In total, more than 20 members of Ghana's Parliament – including both government NPP and opposition NDC members – participated in the meeting. The discussion began with comments from the Chairpersons of the Public Accounts and Foreign Affairs committees and the Ranking Member of the Health Committee. The Association heard that Ghana's Public Accounts Committee is chaired by an opposition Member of Parliament. The Chairperson explained that the goal of the Public Accounts Committee is to put partisanship aside in order to look honestly and critically at reports of the Auditor General.

The Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee indicated that his committee is currently studying the subject of biometric passports and related regulations necessary to comply with international travel standards. The Chairperson thanked Canada for its support to Ghana in the area of food security and expressed an interest in partnering with Canada on issues such as technology transfer and water management. He also expressed a desire to work more closely with Canada's parliamentary committees on foreign affairs. The Ranking Member of the Health Committee thanked Canada for its development assistance to Ghana, including its historical support to eradicate guinea-worm disease. He also communicated an interest in working with Canada in the area of maternal, newborn and child health.

During the discussion, the delegation engaged with the Ghanaian parliamentarians on a broad range of subjects. This included a conversation comparing the committee structures in Canada and Ghana, and an exchange on the subject of staff and resources available to parliamentarians in both countries. A discussion also ensued about the need to break down barriers for women interested in becoming involved in politics in both the Canadian and Ghanaian contexts.

5. Meeting with the President of Ghana

The delegation visited Flagstaff House – the Office of the President of Ghana – for a meeting with His Excellency President Nana Akufo-Addo, and the Honourable Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. The meeting began with comments from Mr. Oliphant, who provided an overview of the Association and its objectives in Ghana. Mr. Oliphant also recognized Ghana for its important regional and global contribution to peace and security through its steadfast support for United Nations peacekeeping.

The Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration thanked the delegation for visiting Ghana, before introducing His Excellency the President. President Akufo-Addo welcomed the delegation to Ghana and thanked Canada for its longstanding development support. He discussed the values that Canada and Ghana share as well as their mutual strategic interests. President Akufo-Addo noted that Ghanaians have always viewed Canada as an ally, and he encouraged Canadian companies to deepen their investment in the country. He also expressed an interest in deepening Ghana's engagement with its francophone neighbours in West Africa and in building on the francophone links that Ghana and Canada share. President Akufo-Addo noted that Ghana is an associate member of La Francophonie and indicated that he wants to encourage more people to learn French in Ghana. Finally, His Excellency discussed the essential role that Parliament has played in the development and consolidation of Ghana's democracy.

6. Screening of the Documentary Film *Giants of Africa*

The delegation participated in a screening of the film *Giants of Africa* at the High Commissioner's Official Residence. The film was directed by Canadian documentarian Hubert Davis, and centres on a program founded by Toronto Raptors General Manager Masai Ujiri that uses basketball to educate and enrich the lives of at-risk African youth. In particular, the film highlights youth camps organized in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda in 2015 that aimed to help youth to develop both basketball and leadership skills.

Following the screening, Kweku Essien, Business Development Advisor for Giants of Africa, spoke about the organization's 2017 camps, which took place in Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Senegal. Next to speak was a former participant in one of the Giants of Africa camps in Ghana, who discussed the value of the program for his leadership development. Members of the delegation then had an opportunity to network with other participants at the screening and to hear their thoughts on the role that sports can play in youth empowerment.

7. Meeting with Business Groups

The delegation held a working breakfast on the subject of business and economic development in Ghana with the following participants: Abena Ntrakwah-Mensah, Ntrakwah and Co.; Professor Joe Amoako Tuffour, Office of the Vice President; Alex Nortey, Aksa Ltd.; Nana Osei-Bonsu, Private Enterprise Foundation; James Asare-Adjei, AGI; Frederick Attakumah, Asanko Gold Ghana; Professor Ken Agyemang

Attafuah, National Identification Authority; Edward Ashong-Lartey, Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, Office of the President.

The group engaged in a wide-ranging discussion about the key business opportunities and challenges in Ghana. The delegation heard, for example, that Ghana's oil and gas, mining, and infrastructure sectors present particular opportunities for growth. Renewable energy and hydroelectricity were two other areas highlighted as potential growth sectors that could benefit from Canadian expertise and partnership. Regarding business challenges, the delegation was informed that Ghanaian industry lacks sufficient skilled labour in the industrial sector. Several participants suggested that Ghana needed to develop industry-based certification programs for different vocations that could train young people in alignment with global standards. More generally, it was noted that vocational training schools are often viewed as being inferior to traditional academic programs in Ghana – a mind-set that several business leaders at the meeting suggested needed to change.

Participants also highlighted challenges relating to the adequate supply and distribution of electricity. The delegation was told that Ghana has some of the highest costs for power in sub-Saharan Africa. Delegates heard that the Government of Ghana has made the availability of electricity a national priority, along with ensuring that rural parts of the country receive a more reliable power supply.

Finally, several participants spoke about the emergence of women in Ghanaian business. While women continue to be significantly underrepresented in business leadership roles, the delegation heard that this is slowly beginning to change as a new generation of women enter the workforce.

8. Drama Production by Act for Change

The delegation had the opportunity to attend a drama production put on by Act for Change, a youth-led NGO that uses workshops and interactive theatre to bring about positive change. Many of the productions by Act for Change address issues relating to sexual and reproductive health, teenage pregnancy, early, child and forced marriage, as well as HIV and AIDS. Also in attendance for the performance were young people from Jamestown and Nima – two low income communities in the greater-Accra region – as well as civil society stakeholders, including Right to Play. Act for Change received a Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) grant from the High Commission in 2016 in support of its interactive theatre projects relating to child, early and forced marriage in Ghana's Eastern Region.

This particular play focused on a young woman who became pregnant after feeling pressure to engage in sexual activity with an older man. After revealing her pregnancy to her family, the young woman was expelled from her home. Forced to live with the increasingly hostile father of the unborn child, the young woman decides to end her pregnancy by ingesting a homemade chemical.

Following the play, the audience engaged in an interactive session in which they were invited to share their views and to re-enact parts of the performance with the goal of achieving a better outcome. Through their interaction, young members of the audience

were encouraged to explore and reflect on the themes of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and teenage pregnancy.

At the completion of the interactive session, the delegation had the opportunity to visit the Nima-Maamobi Community Library. The library is one of several supported by the Osu Children's Library Fund (OCLF) that was established by Canadian Kathy Knowles. OCLF helps to build and stock libraries as a means of promoting learning and literacy among Ghanaian youth.¹⁸OCLF also offers literary classes for people of all ages that have not received formal education, and provides a limited number of high school scholarships to young people.

9. Roundtable on Peace and Security

The delegation participated in a roundtable discussion on peace and security issues at the Official Residence of Canada's High Commissioner with the following participants: Dr. Emmanuel Akwetey, Executive Director of the Institute for Democratic Governance; Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, Ghana's nominee to the International Criminal Court (ICC); Brigadier General Emmanuel Kotia, Deputy Commandant of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KA IPTC); Dr. Franklin Oduro, Ghana Centre for Democratic Development; Baffour D. Amoa, West African Action Network on Small Arms; and Apostle K. N. Opoku Onyinah, the Church of Pentecost.

The discussion began with each participant speaking about the factors they believe explain why Ghana has been able to maintain peace and stability over the past few decades in a region that has experienced significant political strife. Among the factors identified were Ghana's respect for diversity, tolerance for different ethnic and religious groups, and efforts to promote political inclusiveness. It was noted that young Ghanaians have no memory of the country's legacy of coups and political violence, and those that do, do not wish to see a return to that era. Religious leaders and chiefs were also credited with playing an important role in keeping the peace during times of heightened political tension, including elections campaigns. Moreover, the delegation heard that civilian control of the military is a doctrine that is respected and enshrined in Ghana's constitution, with the President serving as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. At the same time, some concerns were raised about the politicization of Ghana's security institutions, including the police force.

Notwithstanding its largely stable environment, participants highlighted some potentially troubling security threats facing Ghana. Delegates were informed that terrorism is a growing threat in West Africa. The terrorist attacks on a restaurant in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso that killed 18 people a week before the Association's visit was highlighted as one recent example. The proliferation of small arms was also identified as a growing concern. The delegation heard that small arms are moving South from Libya across the Sahel and into Ghana and neighbouring countries. Brigadier General Kotia said that Ghana and its neighbours must enhance border harmonization and security as a means of countering this threat. Finally, piracy was highlighted as an emerging concern. Pirate attacks off the coast of West Africa reportedly doubled in 2016, with two-thirds of those

¹⁸ For more information on the Osu Children's Library Fund (OCLF), see: [Osu Children's Library Fund, About OCLF.](#)

attacks having been launched from Nigeria. The delegation was told that a lack of maritime harmonization amongst West African navies was one challenge that needed to be better addressed.

10. Meeting with Brigadier General Emmanuel Kotia, Deputy Commandant of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre

Following the peace and security roundtable, the delegation met with Brigadier General Emmanuel Kotia to gain a better understanding of the work of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre. KAIPTC is one of three institutions designated by ECOWAS as a regional centre of excellence for the delivery of training and research in the areas of conflict prevention, management and peacebuilding. Brigadier General Kotia indicated that, to date, over 11,000 military, police and civilian personnel have participated in more than 400 courses on diverse aspects of peace support operations. On an annual basis, he said that the centre runs about 30 courses and trains about 2,000 personnel. Brigadier General Kotia spoke about the variety of programs that the centre runs, which include courses on violent extremism, counter-terrorism, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), child soldiers, and security sector reform.

The delegation engaged in a discussion with Brigadier General Kotia about United Nations Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. Brigadier General Kotia indicated that the KAIPTC administers courses on gender and peacekeeping, and noted that Canada has provided earmarked funding for programming in that area. He also spoke about the international partnerships that KAIPTC maintains with institutions such as the United States Military Academy at West Point and academic institutions in the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

11. Meeting with Civil Society Organizations

The delegation participated in a discussion about human rights with representatives from the following civil society organizations (CSOs):

- The [Solace Brothers Foundation](#), established in 2012 to support the promotion and protection of human rights in Ghana, including for LGBTI people.
- [Women in Law and Development in Africa](#), whose mission is to empower women by promoting their rights, increasing their participation and influence at the community, national, and international levels through initiating, promoting, and strengthening strategies which link law and development.
- The [Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights](#), formed to combat HIV/AIDS in Ghana, and to promote equality and diversity in Ghana.
- The [POS Foundation](#), which focuses on promoting youth development, human rights and social accountability for collective development.
- The [Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations](#), a national umbrella organization that advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities.
- The [Human Rights Advocacy Centre](#), a non-profit, research and advocacy organization set up to advance and protect human rights in Ghana.

Following introductory comments in which each representative discussed their respective organization's work and priorities, the delegation engaged in a discussion with participants about the human rights situation in Ghana.

Delegates were informed that Ghana is preparing to participate in its third cycle of the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In anticipation of that UPR, a number of Ghanaian CSOs have submitted briefs that have raised concerns about aspects of the human rights situation in Ghana. One particular area of concern that participants highlighted was the treatment of the LGBTI community in Ghana. The delegation was informed that, while some people can speak freely about LGBTI rights in Ghana without fear of arrest, members of the LGBTI community still face routine discrimination and systematic harassment by police and other authorities. Participants also mentioned that several senior Ghanaian parliamentarians and government officials have made discriminatory statements relating to LGBTI rights.

A discussion also took place on the subject of the rights of people with disabilities. Delegates heard that, while social attitudes about the rights of people with disabilities are beginning to change, serious gaps in the law remain. For example, the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations noted that the country's *Disability Act* lacks sufficient protections for children and women with disabilities. People with disabilities are also under-represented in public positions. Delegates were told about a draft Affirmative Action bill that would seek 30% representation for women in public positions, but which lacks specific targets for people with disabilities.

The delegation was informed that more work needs to be done in Ghana to educate people about their rights and the rights of marginalized groups. For example, the delegation was informed about the issue of Albinism and heard that discrimination against people with Albinism in Ghana remains a problem. Gaps in the implementation of international treaties and conventions on human rights were also highlighted as a concern.

12. Visit to Elmina Castle and Village

The delegation visited the castle and fishing village in Elmina, a small town located about 150km west of Accra. Built in 1482 by Portuguese traders, Elmina Castle was the first European slave-trading post in sub-Saharan Africa. Following its capture by the Dutch in 1637, the castle became a key point in the trans-Atlantic slave trade until the slave trade was abolished by the Dutch in 1814. In 1872, Elmina Castle was ceded to the British. Control over the castle was transferred to Ghana upon the country's independence in 1957.

The delegation walked through the former slave dungeons, and saw the "door of no return" through which slaves left to board the ships that would take them on the journey across the Atlantic. The visit provided the delegation with an opportunity to better understand this tragic and terrible period in the history of Ghana and West Africa.

Today, Elmina's economy is sustained by tourism and fishing. Following the tour of the castle, the delegation visited Elmina's market and saw the many traditional pirogues – or fishing boats – that line its lagoon. This visit allowed delegates to gain an

appreciation of the economic and cultural vibrancy of present-day Ghana, and of some of the socio-economic challenges that the country continues to face.

REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

A. Political Background

The Gambia's most recent presidential election was held in December 2016. For the first time, several opposition groups rallied in support of one candidate, Adama Barrow, to face off against President Jammeh. President Jammeh came to power in 1994 after staging a coup. On 2 December 2016, in a surprise result, Adama Barrow was declared to have won the presidential election with approximately 46% of the vote compared to 37% for Yahya Jammeh. Mr. Jammeh promptly, and unexpectedly, conceded defeat that day and pledged to assist Mr. Barrow in the transition. Less than a week after conceding defeat, however, Mr. Jammeh began questioning the results of the poll and calling for a new election. This came only a few days after The Gambia's Electoral Commission revised the results of the election, stating that Mr. Barrow won 43% of the vote compared to 39% for Mr. Jammeh, rather than the tallies initially reported.

International reaction was swift. The United States, Senegal, the African Union, and the European Union, among others, called on Mr. Jammeh to respect the election result and to facilitate a peaceful and orderly transition.¹⁹ On 23 December, ECOWAS initiated mediation efforts in an attempt to persuade Mr. Jammeh to respect the election results. ECOWAS also threatened to use military force if he did not leave office before 19 January 2017 – the date that Mr. Barrow was scheduled to be inaugurated as president. On 17 January 2017, Mr. Jammeh declared a state of emergency, and the National Assembly (which at the time was still controlled by his party) extended his term by three months. However, by this point, Mr. Jammeh was beginning to lose support, with six government ministers having resigned earlier in the month.

On 19 January 2017, Mr. Barrow was sworn in as President of The Gambia in Senegal, where he had been residing as the crisis was unfolding. That same day, with Mr. Jammeh still refusing to relinquish power, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2337, which endorsed the decisions of ECOWAS and the African Union to recognize Mr. Barrow as President.²⁰ Later that day, troops from ECOWAS member states crossed the border into The Gambia from Senegal, and a Nigerian warship entered Gambian waters. Two days later, following renewed regional mediation efforts, Mr. Jammeh agreed to leave office and to go into exile in Equatorial Guinea. With ECOWAS military support, President Barrow returned to The Gambia on 26 January to begin his mandate.

B. System of Government and Governance

The Gambia is a multi-party presidential republic. The President is directly elected by single member plurality vote for a five-year term. Currently there are no presidential term limits in The Gambia. However, President Barrow has pledged to introduce limits

¹⁹ [Gambia leader Yahya Jammeh rejects election result](#), BBC News, 10 December 2016.

²⁰ United Nations Security Council, [Resolution 2337 \(2017\)](#), 19 January 2017.

that would see no future President rule for longer than two five-year terms.²¹The President is both Head of State and Head of Government and appoints a cabinet of ministers. The Gambia has a unicameral National Assembly composed of 58 members. Of the 58 members, 53 are directly elected in single-seat constituencies by single member plurality vote. The President appoints the other five members. Members of the National Assembly serve five-year terms. Currently, 6 of the 58 members are women (10.3%).

The Gambia's rankings on global indices that measure governance, democracy and corruption reflect the extent to which former president Yahya Jammeh led an authoritarian government. The Gambia is classified as "not free" by Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2017 survey (which looks at the conditions in The Gambia in 2016). The Economist Intelligence Unit ranked The Gambia 143rd out of 167 countries on its 2016 Democracy Index. President Barrow said that he would restore respect for human rights and democracy in The Gambia. He pledged, for example, to release political prisoners and end detention without trial.²²He also stated that he would restore media independence, which was significantly curtailed under President Jammeh.

C. Economic and Social Development

The Gambia has a small economy that relies predominantly on agriculture, services and remittances. The agricultural sector employs a majority of the labour force and is based largely on the cultivation of groundnuts, millet, rice, maize and sorghum, as well as livestock, forestry and fish products. Overall, agriculture contributes about one fifth of GDP. The industrial sector in The Gambia is underdeveloped and accounts for less than 5% of GDP. It mostly involves small-scale companies involved in agro-industrial activities, such as the processing of groundnuts and fish.

The Gambia has experienced sluggish economic growth in recent years. Real GDP contracted by about 4.3% in 2011, but rebounded to grow by 5.8% in 2012, and 4.8% in 2013. In 2014, the economy grew by less than 1% as a result of reduced rainfall and the decline in tourism revenue because of the Ebola outbreak. The World Bank estimates that the economy again grew by less than 1% in 2016.²³Economic forecasts for 2017 remain underwhelming. The Economist Intelligence Unit estimates that real GDP will grow by only 1.1% in 2017 mainly because of the ongoing slowdown in the tourism sector, which has suffered from the recent political instability.²⁴

The Gambia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Overall, The Gambia ranks 173rd out of 188 UN-recognized territories on the 2016 Human Development Index, a ranking that puts it below the average for sub-Saharan Africa.²⁵Poverty in The Gambia is widespread. According to the World Bank, approximately 48% of the population lives

²¹ "[New Gambia and the Remaking of the Constitution](#)," Women's Torch, 23 June 2017.

²² David Perfect, "The Gambian 2016 Presidential Election and its Aftermath," Round Table, Vol. 106, No. 3, 2017.

²³ World Bank, [Gambia, The](#).

²⁴ EIU, "The Gambia," Country Profile, accessed 24 July 2017.

²⁵ The Gambia's HDI of 0.452 is below the average of 0.523 for countries in sub-Saharan Africa. United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], [Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone](#).

on less than US\$1.90 per day, based on 2010 statistics.²⁶ Underlying the high incidence of poverty is a lack of economic diversity. Over 60% of Gambians rely on agriculture for their livelihood.²⁷ This makes the country highly susceptible to environmental shocks, such as erratic rainfall, drought and crop shortages, as well as volatility in food prices. According to the World Food Programme, about one tenth of The Gambia's population is food insecure, and about one in three Gambians are vulnerable to food insecurity.²⁸

D. Canada-The Gambia Relations

Canada and The Gambia established diplomatic relations in 1966, soon after the country gained its independence in 1965. However, relations between the two countries have historically been limited. Canada's diplomatic relations with The Gambia are represented by its Embassy in Dakar, Senegal. Trade between Canada and The Gambia is minimal. In 2016, bilateral merchandise trade between Canada and The Gambia amounted to approximately \$1.6 million, composed of \$1.42 million in exports from, and \$167,000 in imports to, Canada.

Canada does not maintain a significant development assistance program in The Gambia. In 2015–2016, total Canadian aid disbursements amounted to \$2.62 million. In 2015–2016, the Embassy of Canada in Dakar financed three projects in The Gambia through the Canada Fund of Local Initiatives on the prevention of child, early and forced marriage, and programming related to gender in the media.²⁹

MEETINGS IN THE GAMBIA

1. Meeting about Press Freedom and Human Rights

The delegation's first meeting in The Gambia was on the subject of the media and human rights and included the following participants: Alota Ahmed Aloa of the Centre for Media Research in Africa (CENMEDRA); Saffiatou Colley of the *Daily Observer*; and Almami Fanding Taal, former High Court Judge and now lecturer at the University of The Gambia.

The delegation was told that the media landscape in The Gambia is fragile. Newspaper circulation is small and news outlets are struggling financially. Many journalists left The Gambia during Yahya Jammeh's presidency, and many of those who remained in the country practiced self-censorship during that era. Delegates heard that, today, people are beginning to express themselves more freely, and that there has been a profusion of new radio stations since Jammeh left office.

During the discussion, the participants talked about the human rights situation in The Gambia. The delegation heard that women, members of the LGBTI community, and people with disabilities remain discriminated against in law and in practice. It was explained that serious legal reform is needed to bring The Gambia into compliance with

²⁶ World Bank, [Gambia, The](#).

²⁷ International Fund for Agricultural Development, [Investing in rural people in The Gambia](#), March 2016.

²⁸ World Food Programme, [Gambia](#).

²⁹ Embassy of Canada to Senegal, [Canada–The Gambia Relations](#).

the range of international human rights conventions. There was also discussion regarding the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the country. While former President Jammeh enacted laws to ban FGM, delegates were informed that the practice remains common in many parts of the country.

2. Meeting with the Independent Electoral Commission of The Gambia

The delegation visited the offices of The Gambia's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for a meeting with its Chairman, Alieu Momarr Njai; its Chief Executive Officer, Samboujang Njie; and two electoral commissioners. The meeting began with a discussion about the IEC and the 2016 presidential election. Chairman Njai explained that human error was responsible for the discrepancy between the election results initially announced by the IEC on 2 December 2016 and the revised results announced three days later. The initial results had Adama Barrow winning the election with 46% of the vote compared to 37% for Yahya Jammeh; the revised results put the total for Mr. Barrow at 43% and Mr. Jammeh at 39%. Chairman Njai said that, while miscounting was responsible for inaccuracies in the initial reported tally, that error did not change the result: Adama Barrow won the presidency fairly.

The delegation engaged in a discussion with the IEC about The Gambia's electoral system and a range of related issues. Chairman Njai said that the IEC is working to bring all of The Gambia's political parties together to discuss electoral reform. He stated that The Gambia is coming out of an era that saw Yahya Jammeh rule for 22 years, and that the country's electoral laws require updating. He noted that one area of possible reform relates to candidate registration fees and deposits. In 2015, President Jammeh enacted legislation to increase the deposits required of candidates for presidential and parliamentary elections. Chairman Njai indicated that other reforms may also be required regarding campaign financing.

The IEC commissioners responded to a question about the role of women in the political system by saying that women have historically not been encouraged to participate in Gambian politics. Delegates were reminded that women hold only about 10% of the seats in the National Assembly. The commissioners shared that the IEC has encouraged Gambian political parties to adopt targets or quotas for female nominees to the legislature.

Finally, the delegation was shown an example of how Gambians vote in presidential elections using a ballot drum and marbles. In the last presidential elections, each of the candidates had their photos attached to drums painted in their different campaign colours. People voted by slipping marbles into the drums of their preferred candidate. Once the marble is dropped, a bell attached to the inside of the drum sounds to signify that a vote has been cast. Chairman Njai said that this system of voting has been very effective in preventing voter fraud, and is accessible to people with reading impairments. He noted, however, that the 2016 presidential election may have been The Gambia's last using the ballot drum system if a new electoral law is passed before the next vote.

3. Meeting with the Honourable Mariam Jack Denton, Speaker of the National Assembly

The delegation visited The Gambia's National Assembly for a meeting with the Honourable Mariam Jack Denton, Speaker. Also present for the meeting was Dodou C. M. Kebbeh, Clerk of the National Assembly, along with several members of the newly elected National Assembly. Speaker Denton opened the meeting by welcoming the delegation to "the new Gambia." She said that the country is seeking a new beginning, one based on democracy and respect for human rights. She expressed a desire for The Gambia to re-engage with the international community, including with Canada and Canadian parliamentarians. For his part, Mr. Kebbeh talked about the connection between St. Mary's University (SMU) in Halifax and the University of The Gambia. He said that thousands of Gambians have benefitted from the support that SMU provided in helping to establish the University of The Gambia.

Mr. Kebbeh said that, following 22 years of authoritarianism, The Gambia today requires the international community's support more than ever. He stated that The Gambia needs a robust parliament and strong governance institutions and frameworks if it is to succeed. In this regard, he said that The Gambia was appealing to Canada and other democracies for parliamentary support. Mr. Oliphant explained that, while the Association was not part of the executive branch of government, it would relay the message. He said that Canada wants to see The Gambia succeed in building a vibrant democracy and to re-engage with the international community. Senator Andreychuk also discussed the possible opportunities for collaboration that could exist between Gambian parliamentarians and others within the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

During the discussion, the delegation heard about some of the issues and opportunities that the new National Assembly is faced with. Speaker Denton noted that the National Assembly is busy establishing its committee structure, including a new committee on human rights, democracy and constitutional matters. She also noted that the National Assembly is establishing a women's caucus. Speaker Denton explained that training for parliamentarians will be critical. She said that of the 58 members of the National Assembly, all but three are first-time parliamentarians. The delegation was told that training for new members on issues relating to budgets and legislative oversight of the executive branch will be priorities for the National Assembly's administration.

4. Meeting with the Honourable Fatoumata Tambajang, Vice President and Minister of Women's Affairs

Delegates met with the Honourable Fatoumata Tambajang, Vice President and Minister of Women's Affairs, to learn about the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for The Gambia. Vice President Tambajang began the meeting by providing background on the events leading up to Mr. Barrow's electoral victory. She explained that for most of Yahya Jammeh's presidency, the opposition was fractured and weak. This changed, however, two months before the December 2016 election when eight opposition parties rallied behind Mr. Barrow's candidacy for president. Vice President Tambajang highlighted the important role that civil society, the international community, and ECOWAS in particular, played in upholding the results of the presidential election after Mr. Jammeh disputed the outcome.

Vice President Tambajang noted that it took a significant amount of time for President Barrow to form his government because the cabinet is composed of members of different parties. However, she indicated that the government has actively embarked on a national development plan and begun to implement legal, judicial and governance reforms. For example, she explained that The Gambia was working with the CSO community on a framework to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. She also indicated that the government wants to strengthen the National Assembly and build the capacity of the public service. On the state of civil-military relations, Vice President Tambajang said that reforms are being undertaken and that the ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG) was recently extended for another 12 months.

Vice President Tambajang explained that the government has undertaken consultations on the launch of a national truth and reconciliation commission. She said that such a commission would be a difficult and emotional undertaking given that President Jammeh's administration committed serious human rights violations during its tenure. She also underlined that the government recently launched a commission to investigate the management of some public enterprises, and the assets and financial transactions of Yahya Jammeh and his associates. Vice President Tambajang clarified that Mr. Jammeh is alleged to have shipped millions in assets out of the country in the final weeks of his presidency. She also commented on the presence of "ghost workers" on the government payroll, i.e. names of people that were not associated with any actual civil servant position.

Regarding the economy, Vice President Tambajang said that The Gambia is receiving budget support from the World Bank and the European Union (EU), and has recently signed trade facilitation agreements with the World Trade Organization. She described how the government is encouraging foreign direct investment, wants to relieve the tax burden on businesses, and intends to modernize the agricultural and fisheries sectors. The government is also seeking debt cancellation from several donors and Vice President Tambajang expressed an interest in working with Canada in the area of sustainable development. Finally, the Vice President commented that The Gambia is engaging with its diaspora community and encouraging them to return to the country. She noted that the government is also working with the EU and the UN to address irregular migration from The Gambia to Europe.

5. Meeting with the Honourable Abubacarr Tambadou, Attorney General and Minister of Justice

The delegation met with the Honourable Abubacarr Tambadou, Attorney General and Minister of Justice, for a discussion about issues related to justice and the rule of law in The Gambia. Minister Tambadou referred to the current situation in The Gambia as hopeful. He noted, however, that while The Gambia has succeeded in restoring democracy, the challenge now is to consolidate peace and undertake reform. He said that this will not be an easy task, given that the government has inherited what he referred to as a broken country. Under President Jammeh, Minister Tambadou described how there was no true rule of law and the Ministry of Justice was largely used as a political tool to serve the administration's interests.

Minister Tambadou remarked that his ministry has identified a number of short- and medium-term priorities. This includes an intention to undertake a constitutional review process. The ministry also intends to look at reform of the prison system, as well as other security sector institutions. Minister Tambadou stated that consultations on the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission have been completed and the ministry is now working on the final report. He noted that the consultations explored ways that the proposed commission could re-build trust between citizens and state institutions and bring about post-conflict justice. Minister Tambadou also indicated that his ministry would be launching an investigation into former President Jammeh's finances.

During the discussion, Minister Tambadou responded to questions about youth empowerment, the practice of FGM and the ICC. The delegation heard that youth constitute the largest demographic in The Gambia. Minister Tambadou said that the youth unemployment rate remains high and that young people need quality education and jobs in order for The Gambia to succeed as a country. Regarding FGM, Minister Tambadou indicated that, while President Jammeh signed a law banning the practice, it remains common. He noted that traditional and cultural practices such as FGM are deeply entrenched in Gambian society. At the same time, Minister Tambadou suggested that change is occurring due to the efforts of people such as Vice President Tambajang and the Honourable Isatou Tourray, Minister of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment, who he referred to as effective advocates against FGM.

Finally, Minister Tambadou noted that President Barrow reaffirmed The Gambia's commitment to the ICC, reversing a decision by Yahya Jammeh to withdraw from the Court. He expressed hope that this decision, along with the ruling by South Africa's High Court to block the South African government's attempt to withdraw from the ICC, will lend support to the institution.

6. Meeting with Members of the National Assembly

The delegation had a working dinner with five members of The Gambia's National Assembly: Alhagie Mbow, National Reconciliation Party; Ya Kumba Jaiteh, nominated member; Majanko Samusa, nominated member; Dawda Kawsu Jawara, United Democratic Party (UDP); and Saikou Marong, UDP. The meeting provided an opportunity to interact with both elected and appointed members of the National Assembly from different political parties and backgrounds. The Members described the coalition agreement that brought President Barrow to power, and about the composition of his cabinet. President Barrow's cabinet is composed of the members of six opposition parties. Delegates were told that managing the diverse interests and expectations of the cabinet will be one of President Barrow's main challenges.

There was also discussion about the representation of women in the National Assembly. Delegates were informed that three of the five presidential appointees to the National Assembly were women, which includes Speaker Mariam Jack Denton. Despite these appointments, however, women remain significantly under-represented in the National Assembly, holding only 6 of 58 seats. Ms. Ya Kumba Jaiteh noted that she is

involved in a newly-established Women’s Caucus in the National Assembly that is exploring ways to encourage women to become more involved in elected politics.

7. Meeting with David Jeng, Startup Incubator Gambia

The delegation had a working breakfast with David Jeng, Business Support Coordinator with Startup Incubator Gambia (SIG). SIG is a Gambian social enterprise that has received funding from the United States and other international partners, which supports the development of young Gambian entrepreneurs by providing business support services, resources, and training. SIG also manages a co-working space for young entrepreneurs, with cubicles, computers, high-speed Internet, and a conference room with a capacity for 25 people. Since its inception in 2015, SIG has trained 62 entrepreneurs and invested in more than 50 startup businesses.³⁰

After providing some background information on SIG, including its mandate and objectives, Mr. Jeng talked about some of the challenges facing Gambian youth. He noted that approximately 40% of youth in The Gambia are unemployed and many are struggling to obtain a quality education. Mr. Jeng also explained the specific challenges facing Gambian entrepreneurs. Interest rates for bank loans are more than 28% and many young people lack the necessary collateral to obtain a loan or line of credit. Reliable electricity and internet service are other challenges that entrepreneurs face, particularly those in rural communities. Mr. Jeng said that SIG is looking to expand its network to rural parts of the country. It is also prioritizing the work of women entrepreneurs, who currently make up about 40% of SIG’s client base.

8. Meeting at the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in The Gambia

The delegation met with Madi Jobarteh, Program Manager at the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in The Gambia (TANGO). TANGO is the umbrella organization of NGOs operating in The Gambia. It was founded in 1983 by a group of NGOs with the objective of streamlining their efforts to avoid duplication and increase efficiency. Today, TANGO has a membership of more than 80 national and international NGOs working across the country in areas related to health, education, women’s empowerment, peace-building, agriculture and access to credit, among other activities.

³¹Mr. Jobarteh explained that TANGO’s primary purpose is to promote and enhance NGO operations in The Gambia through capacity building, and to serve as an advocate on behalf of the NGO community in the country.

Mr. Jobarteh offered background information of the evolution of NGO work in The Gambia over the past few decades. He noted that the NGO community in The Gambia was unprepared for how to respond to the coup that brought Yahya Jammeh to power in 1994. At that time, he explained that NGOs in The Gambia were largely involved in the delivery of goods and services, and not engaged on issues of human rights. He said that the environment for civil society was repressive during the Jammeh years and that many NGOs were pushed to the periphery and forced to work secretly. Mr. Jobarteh

³⁰ For more information, see: Startup Incubator Gambia, [Home](#).

³¹ For more information, see: The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO), [About Us](#).

indicated that this began to change over the past five years, as civil society recognized a need to engage in human rights-related work. TANGO started organizing bi-monthly policy dialogues as well as a radio show where human rights and development challenges could be discussed. Still, he argued that people did not feel free to express themselves, including journalists, many of whom would engage in self-censorship.

In response to questions from the delegation, Mr. Jobarteh clarified that the environment for free expression has changed for the better since President Jammeh left office. At the same time, he noted that many in the NGO community are concerned that things are not moving quickly enough. He commented that Gambian civil society wanted not only regime change, but also systemic institutional change. In this regard, Mr. Jobarteh expressed some concern about ethics and perceptions of conflict of interest with the new parliamentarians. While hopeful, he noted that he continues to monitor potential abuses of power. Finally, Mr. Jobarteh discussed the security sector, and noted that security sector reform would be critical to re-building the public's trust in the Gambian police and military.

9. Meeting with Ade Mamonyane Lekoetje, United Nations Resident Coordinator in The Gambia, and representatives from UN Agencies

The delegation met with Ade Mamonyane Lekoetje, United Nations Resident Coordinator, and UNDP Resident Representative in The Gambia, along with representatives of several UN Agencies. These agencies included the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). An advisor to the Government of The Gambia on consultative justice also participated in the meeting.

Ms. Lekoetje began by providing a broad overview of some of the challenges facing The Gambia and areas where the UN is offering support. She noted that about 95% of the members of the National Assembly are new to the legislature, which presents challenges related to training and oversight of the executive branch. She also talked about several harmful cultural practices, such as FGM and early, forced and child marriage, which she said were undermining development. Ms. Lekoetje explained that the birth rate in The Gambia's remains high and that the majority of the population is under 25 years old. She said that more education is needed on the subject of reproductive rights and family planning. Ms. Lekoetje also commended Canada for highlighting the specific development challenges faced by women and girls in its new feminist international assistance policy.³²

The delegation heard from UNICEF that quality education is a significant challenge in The Gambia where rates of school drop out remain high. Access to proper sanitation

³² In June 2017, the Government of Canada released its Feminist International Assistance Policy. That policy stated that "within five years, investments in programs that will specifically target gender equality and the empowerment of women will represent 15% of Canada's \$2.6 billion bilateral development assistance, up from 2% in 2015-16." According to the policy, "Canada will ensure that no less than 50 percent of its bilateral international development assistance is directed to sub-Saharan African countries by 2021-22." For more information, see: Government of Canada, [Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy](#).

services at school and in rural communities is another challenge that requires attention. It was also noted that many young Gambians are attempting to make the long and dangerous journey across the Sahel and into Libya with the goal of reaching Europe in search of better economic opportunities. The WFP representative explained that about half of Gambians live below the poverty line and that rates of acute malnutrition and stunting are unacceptably high. Delegates were told that WFP is working with the Government of The Gambia to address food insecurity.

The delegation engaged in a discussion with the UN agency representatives on several aspects of the development situation in The Gambia, including on the subject of HIV/AIDS. The delegation was informed that the prevalence of HIV in The Gambia is approximately 1.7%. While below the overall average for sub-Saharan Africa, the delegation was told that the prevalence of HIV was much higher among certain segments of the Gambian population, including female sex workers. Stigma, discrimination and access to antiretroviral treatment are all problems associated with HIV/AIDS in The Gambia. The delegation was told that better education and sensitization in The Gambia surrounding the HIV/AIDS epidemic was required.

MEETINGS WITH REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS BASED IN THE GAMBIA

1. Meeting with Gaye Sowe and staff at the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa

The delegation met with Gaye Sowe, Executive Director of the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) and the following staff members: Eric Bizimana, Legal Officer; Désiré Bigirimana, Legal Officer; Brice M. Djeugoue, Publication and Communication Officer; and Fatmata Jangana, Finance and Administration Assistant. IHRDA is a pan-African NGO that promotes awareness of human rights in Africa and works to improve the effectiveness of the African human rights system. Since it was established in 1988, IHRDA has litigated over 35 cases in more than 16 countries in Africa on a pro bono basis. It is also involved in capacity building programs that “seek to sensitize litigators and civil society actors on the importance of human rights and the various means by which redress can be obtained following their violation.”³³

Mr. Sowe told the delegation that the IHRDA currently has nine cases before the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which include cases related to the death penalty and the right to freedom of association. It also has two cases before the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights relating to the human rights situation in Mali, along with two cases relating to situations in Cameroon and Malawi before the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.³⁴ Mr. Sowe discussed the training and capacity building work in which IHRDA is involved. He also noted that the organization was beginning to work with the Gambian police service to develop a human rights training manual. Delegates were also informed that the IHRDA is working

³³ For more information, see: Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA), [Who We Are](#).

³⁴ For more information on pending and decided cases in which IHRDA is involved, see: [IHRDA’s Legal Work](#).

with the Gambian government to develop objectives and establish the structure for the forthcoming truth and reconciliation commission.

During the discussion, Mr. Sowe and IHRDA staff members responded to questions about transitional justice, and early, forced and child marriage. The delegation heard that Gambians are beginning to see improvements in the justice sector, but that progress since the election has been slow. He noted that people are anxious to see the truth and reconciliation commission get started. The delegation was told that marriage under 18 years old is illegal in The Gambia, and that people involved in decisions to marry children face serious prison time. However, in practice, it was noted that early, forced and child marriage still occurs in many parts of the country.

2. Meeting at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

The delegation met with Dr. Mary Maboreke, Executive Secretary, at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), along with several staff members. ACHPR is a judicial body that was established in 1986 under Article 30 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights that is tasked with promoting and protecting human rights in Africa. The Commission is also responsible for interpreting the African Charter and considering individual complaints of violations of the Charter.³⁵

Dr. Maboreke provided an overview of the ACHPR's structure, mandate and recent work. She explained that the Commission is composed of 11 commissioners elected by the AU Assembly from a list of experts nominated by states parties to the Charter. The mandates of the commissioners are for six years and are renewable. Of the 11 commissioners, seven are female. Dr. Maboreke discussed some of the ACHPR's recent fact-finding missions, including to Zimbabwe, where it went to examine action that was taken in 2015 by the government to bulldoze thousands of homes in low-income communities.

Dr. Maboreke also discussed the activities of the ACHPR's working groups and Special Mechanisms, including the Working Group on the Death Penalty and Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings in Africa, and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women. She noted that the ACHPR works closely with other AU bodies, including the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, as well as the Pan-African Parliament. The delegation heard that the ACHPR holds two ordinary sessions per year and may meet, if needed, in extraordinary session.

The delegation participated in a discussion with Dr. Maboreke and ACHPR Secretariat staff on a range of issues, including the rights of the LGBTI community in Africa, due process and the rule of law, and sexual- and gender-based violence. In addition to these topics, the delegation was informed that several other issues are emerging as areas of concern in Africa. These include, for example, pre- and post-election violence, and the victimization of populations during police and military counter-terror campaigns. Delegates were also told that the rights of people with disabilities are emerging as a more salient issue across Africa, as are environmental rights and the rights of indigenous peoples with respect to the extractive sector.

³⁵ For more information, see: African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, [About ACHPR](#).

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Association's mission to Ghana and The Gambia provided an opportunity to learn about two countries in West Africa at different stages of political, economic and social development. One country – Ghana – recently experienced its third consecutive peaceful transfer of power between political parties in elections that were considered free and fair. The other country – The Gambia – is less than a year into a new era that brought a democratically-elected government to power after 22 years of authoritarianism. The Association's mission allowed it to gain an up-to-date, detailed, and unvarnished picture of the situation in both countries through meetings with a range of government officials, parliamentarians, and members of civil society. It also allowed the delegation to reflect on areas where Canada can deepen its partnership with these countries from both a bilateral and multilateral perspective. The sections below outline the Association's key observations and conclusions from its mission to Ghana and The Gambia.

A. Republic of Ghana

The Association's 2011 report on its mission to Ghana – its last visit to the country – referred to Ghana as “a beacon of stability in the region.”³⁶ The report further reflected on the strength of Ghana's democracy, the potential of the country's economy, and the positive work being done to improve development outcomes. These same points remain as true today as they did when the Association visited Ghana six years ago. In the period between the two missions, Ghana has continued to rank atop regional indices as one of the best governed countries in sub-Saharan Africa. It has also made important socio-economic progress, including rising to the status of lower middle-income country. Moreover, Ghana has continued to assert a leadership role in Africa through its work in the AU and ECOWAS and by playing an outsized role in UN peacekeeping operations.

The delegation heard about the value that Ghanaians place on the strength of their democracy. Ghana is located in a region that has seen significant political strife and violence over the past few decades. Throughout its meetings, the delegates were informed that Ghanaians guard their democracy closely. They want to ensure that they do not experience the kind of instability that has afflicted their neighbours or revert to the past when Ghana experienced political violence. The delegation was pleased to hear from President Akufo-Addo about the value that he places on the importance of Parliament. As a former Member of Parliament, it was clear that President Akufo-Addo understands the essential role that parliamentarians have in holding the executive to account.

This indispensable role of Parliament was underlined during the Association's meetings with the Speaker of Parliament and other Ghanaian parliamentarians. This was affirmed in meetings with civil society representatives. The Speaker told delegates about the incremental progress that has been made over the past two decades related to the training of parliamentarians and in building the committee structure of Parliament. The

³⁶ See: Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association, [Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting its Bilateral Visit to Nigeria, Ghana and Togo](#), 2011.

delegation saw first-hand evidence of this during its meetings with members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and Select Committees on Health and Foreign Affairs. In particular, delegates were impressed with the extent to which members of these committees expressed a desire to work together – across party lines – in pursuit of the public interest. The delegation was also encouraged with the willingness with which Members of Parliament, including the Speaker, are looking to Canada as a partner in the areas of good governance and parliamentary democracy. The Association believes that Canada should seize on this interest and enhance its engagement with Ghana and its Parliament.

One area where delegates heard that Ghana has work to do is in increasing the number of women represented in Parliament. Fewer than 13% of Ghanaian parliamentarians are women. Though the figure represents a slight increase in female representation from Ghana's previous Parliament, the delegation heard that more effort is required to empower women and to eliminate barriers for female participation in elected politics. The Association agrees, and underlines that all countries, including Canada, need to do more to ensure that legislatures are more reflective of the people they represent.

The human rights situation in Ghana was another important theme of the Association's visit. Delegates were informed that Ghana is participating in its third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The delegation heard from CSOs that the treatment of the LGBTI community in Ghana will be an issue that will feature prominently in Ghana's UPR. It was informed that members of LGBTI communities in Ghana continue to face discrimination, harassment and, in some cases, violence. Delegates also heard about legal shortcomings in Ghana relating to the rights of persons with disabilities, especially protections for children and women with disabilities. The Association encourages the Government of Canada to engage with Ghana on the issue of LGBTI rights and the rights of persons with disabilities during the UPR process and in other bilateral and multilateral fora.

While not a focus of the Association's visit, the development situation in Ghana was another topic that came up frequently. Canada's long-time support for Ghana through many partnerships, as well as direct development assistance, is greatly appreciated. The delegation heard that Ghana made progress on several Millennium Development Goals, including those related to poverty reduction, sanitation and primary school enrolment. At the same time, issues related to maternal, newborn and child health, the empowerment of women and girls, and rural poverty, among others, were highlighted as ongoing concerns. Despite the country's status as a lower-middle income country, the delegation heard from Ghanaian parliamentarians that continued support from Canada and the international community is required for Ghana to move to the next level of economic development. The Association agrees and urges the Government of Canada to continue to support Ghana as it works to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and other development objectives.

Finally, Ghana's potential as a regional economic power, and commercial partner for Canada, was underlined during the Association's mission. The delegation heard that Ghana's economy has become increasingly diversified over the past decade, as its nascent oil industry has come on stream. At the same time, youth unemployment was highlighted as an ongoing concern, which could be exacerbated as Ghana's large youth

population enters the workforce. The Association encourages the Government of Canada to look for ways to deepen Canada's trade and investment relationship with Ghana. This could include deepening bilateral cooperation in sectors such as renewable energy and electricity, which delegates were told could benefit from Canadian expertise.

The Association underscores the good will that exists between Canada and Ghana. This good will is built on many years of political, economic and development cooperation, as well as strong people-to-people relations. Throughout the Association's mission, it met with a number of Ghanaians that had lived, travelled or studied in Canada, or had a close relative who had. The Association believes that these personal relationships present another avenue for engagement. The Association also welcomes the establishment of the Ghana-Canada Parliamentary Friendship Association and looks forward to working with this association closely in the future.

B. Republic of The Gambia.

The Association's first visit to The Gambia occurred at a pivotal moment in the country's history and underscored the importance of parliament-to-parliament engagement. Coming out of 22 years of authoritarianism, The Gambia has begun its transition into a new era that would see it re-engage with the international community. The Association was told repeatedly from the Government of The Gambia and members of the National Assembly that this is a "new Gambia." Those in the CSO community painted a more circumspect picture. From civil society – including human rights organizations and advocates – the Association was told that significant progress is required on a host of issues before The Gambia can claim to have consolidated the change that began with the election of a democratic government in December 2016.

One of the areas where decisive change in The Gambia has occurred is in the National Assembly. All but three of the 58 members of the National Assembly are new to the legislature. As the delegation heard, the composition of the National Assembly presents both opportunities and challenges. While the membership of the National Assembly clearly represents a break from the past, it also creates challenges related to training and oversight of the executive branch of government. The Speaker of the National Assembly told the delegation that the training of new members would be one of her priorities. She also indicated a desire to work with Canada on establishing training modules for Gambian parliamentarians, including relating to the role of members in committees. Cautious optimism was expressed about the reforms that have occurred within the National Assembly after more than two decades of authoritarianism. Yet, the Association was told that building the capacity of the legislature and of the Gambian government will be crucial to the country's success. It urges the Government of Canada to support The Gambia in this regard.

One of the most frequently discussed topics during the Association's mission to The Gambia related to the subject of transitional justice. The Gambia has recently concluded consultations on the establishment of a forthcoming truth and reconciliation commission. The Gambia's Minister of Justice and Attorney General told the delegation that the commission would seek truth and justice, rather than retribution. He and other people underlined for delegates the important role that the commission could play in re-building

trust between the public and the state after this confidence was so badly broken during Mr. Jammeh's presidency. The Association requests that the Government of Canada, and Canada's Embassy in Senegal which is accredited to The Gambia, closely follow the work of the truth and reconciliation commission. The Government of Canada may also wish to consider providing financial support to the commission.

Another area of potential partnership between Canada and The Gambia relates to the development situation in the country. The Gambia is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 173rd out of 188 countries on the UNDP's *Human Development Index*. During the Association's mission, it heard about the many socio-economic challenges that the country faces. These include a high incidence of poverty, chronic food insecurity due to a susceptibility to environmental shocks, and poor economic diversity. The Gambia has also suffered in recent years from a loss of human capital, as thousands of young people have left the country as migrants in search of better economic prospects in Europe.

The Association believes that significant and sustained international support will be required for The Gambia to meet the long-term development challenges that it faces. Some of this support is starting to arrive. After years of international isolation, The Gambia has begun to receive new international assistance and loans, including from the EU and IMF, over the past year. For Canada's part, in 2015-2016 total Canadian international assistance to The Gambia totalled \$2.62 million. This assistance was largely provided through partnerships with Canadian, international and multilateral organizations, as well as through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives fund managed by Canada's Embassy in Senegal. The Association is cognizant of the many demands on Canada's international assistance budget and of the constraints thereunder. However, following years of limited relations, the Association believes that the time is right for Canada to re-assess its engagement with the Gambia, including from a development perspective.

Finally, the Association believes that there may be opportunities for Canada and The Gambia to work more closely together at the multilateral level. Under President Barrow, The Gambia has applied to re-join the Commonwealth, and cancelled former President Jammeh's decision to withdraw from the ICC. The Association commends these decisions. It encourages the Government of Canada to work with The Gambia as it re-engages with the international community, including through the United Nations and – once The Gambia is readmitted – the Commonwealth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the delegation express their appreciation to the staff of the Canadian High Commission in Accra for their hard work and dedication in organizing the Association's program in Ghana. In particular, they express their gratitude to High Commissioner Heather Cameron, Bertha Desmennu, Public Affairs and Programme Officer, and Pasquale Salvaggio, Counsellor (Political and Public Affairs), for all of their work in making the Association's visit to Ghana a success.

The delegation also extends its thanks to Catherine Nadeau, First Secretary (Political and Public Affairs) at Canada's Embassy in Senegal, for her efforts in organizing and facilitating the Association's mission to The Gambia.

The Association would also like to thank all of those it met with in Ghana and The Gambia for sharing their valuable insights and experiences.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Raynell
Andreychuk, Senator,
Co-Chair,
Canada-Africa Parliamentary
Association

Robert Oliphant, M.P.,
Co-Chair,
Canada-Africa Parliamentary
Association

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Mission to the Republic of Ghana and the Republic of The Gambia
DESTINATION	Accra, Ghana and Banjul, The Gambia
DATES	August 25 to 30, 2017
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator, Co-Chair Hon. René Cormier, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Robert Oliphant, M.P., Co-Chair Ms. Mona Fortier, M.P. Mr. François Choquette, M.P. Hon. Mike Lake, P.C., M.P.
STAFF	Ms. Josée Thérien, Association secretary Mr. Brian Hermon, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 106,348.39
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 12,280.01
HOSPITALITY	\$ 1,902.41
PER DIEMS	\$ 3,002.13
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 692.60
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 897.95
TOTAL	\$ 125,123.49