

The Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie: What's the use for a developing Africa?

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Abstract

The original intention of the creation of the Francophonie was to bring together states sharing the French language as a vehicle of communication. However, the dynamism in global space has not only allowed the expansion of its borders by accepting new members, but more, it has also generated other institutions aimed at developing and strengthening the links among member-states of the organization. These structures include the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie (APF). Since its creation in May 1967, this fifty-year old institution has been intensively active in various fields. There has been great controversy in appreciating the activities of this body between those who are of the opinion that the organization has little to contribute to Africa's development and those who argue that la Francophonie is a reliable partner to Africa's development. These contradictory opinions have stirred our curiosity, leading us to question the contributions of this organization to Africa. In other words, how does the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie accompany Africa in its development process? To answer this question, we use the oral and written sources and convened the synchronic and diachronic approaches. According to our analysis, it appears that the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie has invested heavily in Africa in promoting and consolidating democracy, which is the foundation of sustainable development.

Keywords: Francophonie, institution, Parliament, democracy, development

Résumé

Initialement, la Francophonie est créée dans le souci de rassembler les Etats ayant la langue française en partage. Cependant, le dynamisme dans cet espace, a non seulement permis d'étendre ses frontières en acceptant de nouveaux membres, mais bien plus, elle a généré en son sein d'autres institutions visant à développer et resserrer les liens de la francophonie entre Etats membres. Parmi ces structures, figure l'Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF). Depuis sa création en mai 1967, cette institution aujourd'hui cinquantenaire s'est intensivement activée au sein de la francophonie, dans différents domaines. Cette fébrilité est sujette à controverses entre ceux qui la juge surfaite et inefficace pour l'Afrique et ceux qui trouvent en elle une nécessité pour le progrès du continent africain. Ces avis contradictoires ont attisé notre curiosité nous amenant à nous interroger sur les apports de ce parlement pour l'Afrique. En d'autres termes, comment l'Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie accompagne t elle l'Afrique dans son processus de développement ? Pour répondre à cette question, nous avons eue recours aux sources orales et écrites et avons convoqué les approches synchroniques et diachroniques. Aux termes de notre analyse, il apparait que l'Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie s'est énormément investie en Afrique pour la promotion et la consolidation de la démocratie qui constitue le fondement d'un développement durable.

Mots Clés : francophonie, institution, parlement, démocratie, développement

Introduction

The Parliamentary Assembly of *La Francophonie* (APF) was created in May 1967 with the initial aim of providing a platform for French-speaking parliamentarians. However, this organization has evolved from its original aim to embrace other non French-speaking states and this has greatly reshaped and developed its action. Today, many African countries are members of this association. Its actions and positions have given rise to some rejections and others to be enthusiastic about *La Francophonie*. These contradictory attitudes have sharpened our curiosity, leading us to question the relevance of this organization to a continent still in search of the best formula that will set its development process in motion. In other words, what is the contribution of the APF? How does it support African Member States in their development processes? To answer these questions, we have exploited the many data on the APF website, as well as some issues of "Parliaments and Francophonie", Xavier Deniau's book entitled *La Francophonie* and newspapers. This upstream work allowed us to organize our work around two main axes: the first axis is: the Assembly of Parliamentarians of the *Francophonie* and Africa; and the second axis is: the Assembly of Parliamentarians of the *Francophonie* and development issues in Africa.

1 - The Assembly of Parliamentarians of the *Francophonie* (APF) and Africa

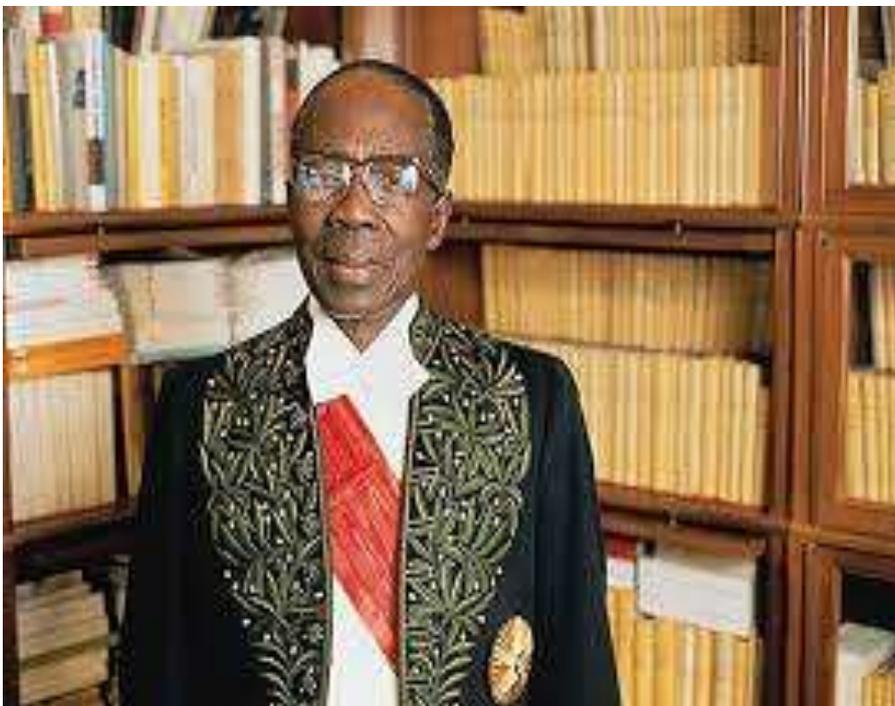
The Assembly of Parliamentarians of the *Francophonie* (APF) was created in an exceptional context characterized by numerous conflicts in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and by the socialization of the development issue in the world. These events influenced the purpose and evolution of this institution in which Africa occupies a pride of place.

1.1 - Birth, objectives and evolution

The organization was created after the independence of the French-speaking countries of Africa. The AIPLF / APF is the oldest institutions of the *Francophonie*. The APF gradually developed through its objectives and increased its members to eventually include non-French-speaking countries. The APF was created in the aftermath of the independence of African states. This was a transitional period during which newly independent states sought to assert themselves and to build and set their development goals on motion. Meanwhile, the former colonial power (France), sought to build its spheres of influence that encompasses its former possessions and possibly other states that it could recover. Initially therefore, this institution met its needs at its creation.

In May 1967, the International Association of French Language Parliamentarians (AIPLF) was initiated in Luxembourg at the instigation of Léopold Sédar Senghor, who argued that, "it is the people who, through their elected representatives, push the governments to move forward. The parliaments of all the countries where French is spoken should be brought together in an inter-parliamentary association."¹ The AIPF then had 23 delegates from countries of Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania.² Léopold Sédar Senghor is considered the father of the *Francophonie* and the Parliament. He was one of those who thought that France and her former colonies and other territories had to improve the conditions of their peoples to exist and to constitute a veritable pressure group in global politics. This illustrious man therefore, illuminated the institutions of the *Francophonie* with his presence and intelligence.

Below the image of Léopold Sédar Senghor³



Source :<http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20130626-aime-cesaire-centenaire-mouvement-negritude/>

¹ Léopold Sédar Senghor février 1966.

² apf.francophonie.org/présentation

³ <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20130626-aime-cesaire-centenaire-mouvement-negritude/>

On June 26, 2006, on the occasion of Senghor's 100th birthday, a symposium was organized in his honor during which the paternity of the *Francophonie* was attributed to him. The first president of this movement was Victor Bodson (1902 - 1984). This Luxembourgish Doctor of Law took over the reins of the AIPLF in 1967. The photo below represents Victor Bodson



Source :https://fr.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Bodson

The Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation (ACCT), which is the nucleus of the institution was created in 1970. It later became the International Organization of the *Francophonie* (OIF). In 1989, at the Paris General Assembly, AIPF took on a new dimension; it was recognized by the Heads of States of the OIF as the French-speaking inter-parliamentary union. In October 1993, AIPF was confirmed as the only inter-parliamentary organization of *la Francophonie*. In November 1997, in Hanoi, its charter was confirmed. It was the following year in July 1998, during the ordinary session in Abidjan that the organization's name was changed to become the *Assemblée des Parlementaires de la Francophonie (APF)*. It now includes 83 parliaments or sections. The current Secretary General is Jacques Krabal. This politician of the French leftist party was born on April 10, 1948.

The following image represents Jacques Krabal:



Source :<https://fr.m.wikipedia.org-jacques/>"jacques krabal

The APF is organized around four committees:

- The Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, which examines parliamentary questions of common interest. It gives the main orientations of the cooperation and deals with the questions of the right of freedom of democracy.

- The Committee on Co-operation and Development, which deals with issues relating to human development (health, population and poverty), sustainable development (energy environment and agriculture) and economic development through cooperation, the promotion of democracy and solidarity.

- The Committee on Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs.

- The Political Committee⁴

The original goal of the organization was to promote cooperation initiatives of any kind for the influence of the French language, which was the common good of all member states.⁵ These objectives have since expanded. Indeed, they consist today of representing the interests and aspirations of Francophone peoples in Francophone communities; promoting democracy, the rule of law of persons, especially within the Francophone community; bringing a political perspective to the authorities of the *Francophonie*.

⁴ Pascal Terrasse, Jean François Mancel, Jean René Marsac, 2015, Rapport d'information sur les financements et la maîtrise de la dépense, p. 275

⁵ Journal officiel de la République française du 1^{er} juillet 1989, p.8151.

It also intends to tackle all the questions of interest, particularly those relating to international political events, and to send opinions accordingly to the authorities of *La Francophonie*; to ensure that the declarations and resolutions adopted by the Conference of Heads of State and Governments of the countries sharing the French language, hereinafter called the "Summit", are implemented and executed by the International Organization of *la Francophonie* and operators in the required time, promote cooperation and strengthen solidarity within the Francophone community, while respecting the right to development; promote the international role of parliamentarians; contribute to the development and reciprocal knowledge of the cultures and civilizations of the peoples who make habitual use of the French language, without being of French culture and civilization and contribute to the influence of the French language.⁶

The APF is a forum for discussions, debates and recommendations and works closely with the OIF. Through its actions, it contributes to the well-being of peoples and member-states. It encourages the promotion of democracy and the strengthening of the rule of law, freedoms and political rights. It carries out various actions in the socio-cultural fields such as education, communication, the promotion of the French language. On the political front, it adopts resolutions on important issues which it tries to have adopted by the Conference of Presidents of the OIF, with a view to applying it in different Member States. To achieve this, several means are involved.

1.2 - The means of action of the Assembly of Parliamentarians of La Francophonie

In the great mission that it gives itself, the APF has a number of means for its action. As a representative institution, the APF uses various means and tools at its disposal. Among these means, the most important are seminars and internships. Indeed, the institution relies on training and retraining through internships to act in its space. This ensures the organization of seminars for parliamentarians and internships for parliamentary officials. Cooperation enables them to finance, exchange and share and, above all, reach out to the sensitive segments of society as well as women and young people. The programs that are numerous and some of which are real roadmaps that serve as a guideline in the implementation of their actions and development projects. We can cite, for example, cooperation for women through the network of women parliamentarians of *La Francophonie* and the Francophone youth parliamentary program.

Committees within the parliament study situations according to their specialization. The missions are just as important. We can mention the indefatigable election observation mission. The APF has the means to control government action.

Among these means, we have:

- The powers to draw government's attention to certain aspects of its policy, its actions or a situation that is beyond its control.⁷
- Organize debates which are the discussions in plenary session or in committee.
- Undertake parliamentary inquiries which are investigations made by a parliamentary group designated for a specific period or even on a specific question.⁸
- Auditions are a form of communication

⁶ Ibid, pp.8150 – 8151.

⁷ Mkwame N'Guessan, 2015, Rapport sur les moyens parlementaires de la centrale de l'action gouvernementale, Berne, p.12.

⁸ ibid

These different means constitute the tools and means that facilitate the work of the APF. This enables the organization to carry out benevolent actions.⁹

The APF draws its funding from annual subscriptions, calls for tenders and donations from certain members or individuals. With this funding, the APF can realize important social, economic and political projects. Considering the ability of action that the institution has, one is tempted to wonder the role of African countries in the organization.

1.3 - The place of Africa in the Assembly of Parliamentarians of La Francophonie

Parliaments in French-speaking Africa are present and quite active in the APF. By their number, they constitute an important group, but what is their position in the APF? Already at the creation of the institution, Africans were among the initiators of this initiative. Initially, the presence of French-speaking African countries within the AIPF, allowing them to consolidate their international legitimacy. This institution was an opportunity, a forum for them to share their parliamentary experiences in their respective countries. Today, the APF is divided its space of influence into four regions. Africa is one of those regions. This space makes it possible for African countries to elaborate projects specific to the region in order to represent the voice of the head of mission in the plenary assembly. Between 2013 and 2017, in the Africa region, five regional assemblies were held in the cities of Yaoundé (9-11 May 2013),¹⁰ Brazzaville (26-27 May 2014), Yamoussoukro (28-29 May 2015),¹¹ Bamako (May 26 - 28, 2016), Rabat (May 22 - 24, 2017). The APF is involved in many debates and socio-political actions in Africa, hence the interest of analyzing its contribution in the development process of Africa.

2 - The Assembly of Parliamentarians of La Francophonie and the question of development in Africa

The concept of development has been a western importation. This notion was introduced in Africa at the dawn of independence. Today, it is conceived as the set of mutations initiated in a region that promotes the well-being of the populations of this region. Numerous qualifiers have been attributed to this notion according to the orientation that we wanted to give it. Within the *Francophonie*, the development of African countries depends on the well-being of populations, stability, respect for human rights and good governance. We propose here to analyze, the contribution of the APF in the development, its efforts in the promotion of the democracy and finally we will appreciate its importance.

2.1 - Contribution of the Assembly of Parliamentarians of La Francophonie in the development of Africa

The desired stability sought by the APF has nothing to do with political change as a result of *coups d'etat*. Political changes through military take overs prevent investment by businessmen who do not want to take business risks during political unrests that regularly leads to instability and disrupts the start of development projects. On the other hand, stability must not be confused with political immobilize, which is harmful to development because it prevents change in the renewal of ideas generated by democratic alternation. The stability according to the APF will be a situation of

⁹ apf.francophonie.org/présentation, consulté le 03/03/2018.

¹⁰ apf.francophonie.org/commission, consulté le 03/03/2018.

¹¹ Ibid

peace and balance favorable to the workers, to the investors and thus allowing for blossoming populations.

Good governance encompasses various aspects. Good governance is defined as "a set of measures, rules, decision-making, information and monitoring bodies that ensure the proper functioning and control of a state, institutions or organizations that are public or private, regional, national or international".¹² To maintain that good governance is "the capacity of human societies to equip themselves with systems of representation, institutions, procedures, means, measures, processes of social bodies, capable of managing interdependencies in a peaceful way".¹³ In the light of the foregoing definitions, we can define good governance as the harmonious and balanced management of the state, populations, resources, goods and the environment in their different interactions. This form of management must include all stakeholders, both the State and the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). In this form of management, transparency is one of the foundations.

The protection of the environment has become a concern for African states. This is because their environments are deteriorating more and more due to global warming, human actions, and industrial exploitation of mineral resources and wood. The African Regional Assembly of the APF is lobbying, mobilizing funds to finance the management of the exploitation of Lake Chad, rivers Niger, Senegal which in the Sahelian zones and are real veins of survival for the local populations. The implementation of a national plan of the convention of fight against the desertification of the region of West Africa gave rise to the organization from 1 to 3 December 2009 in Lomé by the APF, of an awareness seminar for Francophone parliamentarians in the region. The protection of the equatorial forest is also one of the missions that this regional assembly takes. Considering that the equatorial forest is one of the main lungs of the world and the overexploitation that it is the subject, poses a serious environmental problem. This insofar as it affects the whole world but especially the neighboring populations. The APF is trying to sensitize the population on the urgent need to protect the African equatorial forest.

The APF has a whole Committee on Cooperation and Development devoted to human development, economic, social and the environment through cooperation. This commission regularly looks at the debt of poor member states.¹⁴ The efforts of the APF have been rewarded because there has been a clear growth in the member countries of French-speaking Africa. The following table illustrates this growth between the year 2004 and ten years later, that is to say in 2014.

Table showing the evolution of GDP and growth in Francophone Africa in 2004 and 2014

Years	GDP/ capita	Average growth
2004	850 dollars	3,4%
2014	1700 dollars	6,7%

Source : The table is based on the data from: www.assemblée-nationale.fr/14/rap-info/12746.asp

¹² www.toupie.org consulté le 03/03/2018

¹³ Base.d.p.h.info consulté le 03/03/2018

¹⁴ Apf.francophonie.org/commission-de-la-coopération.html

Despite these positive data, Arnaud Buissé argues that the evolution of these fundamentals is extremely slow and that many efforts remain to be made if the countries of Francophone Africa want to improve the living conditions of the populations.¹⁵ This in so far as these marginal evolutions are not perceptible in the basket of the housewife.

The APF also works in collaboration with some institutions of the world. It accompanies the realization of projects aimed at improving the living conditions in Francophone Africa. Thus, in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), France has, through its development aid policy, financed poor countries, many of which are members of the APF. This financing concerns socio-economic areas such as health, education, environment and economy which are the bases of development. As a result, between 2008 and 2012, the following amounts in euros were paid:

Table of France's donations to the MDGs in Africa

Payment in millions of euro	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Education	193	202	204	209	196
Health	27	33	29	29	31
Sustainable development	35	53	47	47	40
Agriculture and food security	63	42	49	45	50
Support for growth	23	17	22	17	18
Governance	39	33	31	35	31
Total	380	381	382	383	366

Source : www.assemblée-nationale.fr/14/rap-info/12746.asp

Through this table we observe that between 2008 and 2011 these donations have grown continuously. This aid is the support that France brings to the development policies initiated in developing countries through international institutions. This assistance has given rise to the financing of certain projects, thus accompanying French-speaking countries in their development process. These projects and funding are aimed primarily at improving the living conditions of the population. These better living conditions also require a participatory, transparent and common management of goods and people, hence the imperative need to promote democracy.

2.2 - The Assembly of Parliamentarians of La Francophonie and the promotion of democracy

Democracy is the very foundation of good governance, which has been advocated abroad and in African states since the second half of the 1980s. This democracy promotes openness, transparency and alternation, respect for freedoms and human rights. The APF since its creation has carried out actions in Africa that tend to develop or consolidate democracy. What are these actions? This is the question that seems to be emerging and to which we will give an answer.

Democracy is one of the values advocated by the APF. The democratization of Africa is one of the main concerns of the APF. Any violation of democracy whatsoever constitutes a serious violation of the very principles of the APF. This is how the APF intervened to call to order certain

¹⁵ Arnaud Buissé est sous directeur des affaires multilatérales et du développement à la direction du trésor en France. www.assemblée-nationale.fr/14/rap-info/12746.asp

member-states that violated these cardinal principles. Thus, the APF decried the fundamentalist attacks against northern Mali, which threatened to destabilize the entire Sudano-Sahelian zone.

At the 37th session of the APF held in Kinshasa from 05 to 08 July 2011, under the theme "peace, democracy and elections".¹⁶ The 2nd Vice President of the Pan-African Parliament the Honorable Françoise Labelle was invited. She took the floor to remind African states of the imperative need to implement democracy in their states to involve their people and to organize free and transparent elections. She also called on the APF to urge African member-states to ratify and respect all the tools implemented by the Pan-African Assembly, for the respect of human rights, governance and accountability democracy.

The interventions of the APF are often penal too. The assembly of some states that did not respect these principles was removed from the APF. As soon as the principle of law is reestablished, the assembly is again integrated as it was the case for Côte d'Ivoire, which was rejected because of the post-election crisis and then reinstated on 11 July 2012.¹⁷

In addition, the APF has since 1992 set up a mission to evaluate the conduct of elections in the member states and especially the African states. She is also sometimes responsible for preparing the elections. This participation allows the organization to support the elections and especially credibility results.¹⁸ The APF has fostered and promoted the emergence and development of democracy in Africa. It defends the idea that democracy is the basis of all state building.

2.3 - Assembly of Parliamentarians of the Francophonie: Need for Africa or instrument of control and defense of French interests in Africa?

To the question whether the APF is an instrument for the greatness of France or rather a necessity for Africa, the answer is nuanced. This for many reasons; AIPF / APF was created at a time when young, newly independent states in French-speaking Africa were seeking international recognition. In other words, African states were building their image internationally. Beyond this image to build, it should be noted that one of the initiators of this assembly is African. It is Senegalese Senghor. He was one of the singers and argued that the representatives of a people can lead him to improve himself. Moreover, we cannot rule out the fact that behind the French-speaking world hides a great France. The APF in Africa has made democracy its battle horse. The problem arises at the level of its conception of the term democracy, its interpretation and its implementation in Africa.

This democracy as initiated by the APF seems reduced to its only theoretical expression. Yet democracy must not focus solely on the organization and conduct of elections. Because such a democracy remains abstract for the majority of the populations which collapse on the weight of misery. Nor must it be a set of standards received in the West and clad in Africa. Africa must take

¹⁶ apf.francophonie.org/paix-démocratie consulté le 22/03/2018

¹⁷ apf.francophonie.org/présentation, consulté le 22/03/2018

¹⁸ Apf.francophonie.org/missions d'observation électorale

ownership of democracy and adapt it to the Cameroonian context. R.M. Christian Kabore says it in this respect: "democracy to consolidate must find its extension in economic and social measures."¹⁹

In other words, democracy must be socialized in Africa to make it more understandable and even more accessible. The democratization of Africa must take into account the problems faced by the mass of the African population. In particular, low living standards, food shortages, misery, disasters, poor quality of health care, rough education and, most of the time, maladjustment. In short, democracy as defended by the West and the *Francophonie* does not serve the interests of Africans. It should integrate the problems of African societies.

Conclusion

AIPF / APF was created during the first decade after independence. This creation worked to the advantage of both Africa and France. Its intension was to have strong control over people who lived under French colonial influence and extend to other new frounds. The APF tries to promote democracy within the institution but it remains unsuitable, unreal and distant for people who do not understand the western concept of democracy. For democracy to become a necessity for Africans , it would be necessary to adapt it or even Africanize it. It is only on this condition that democracy will put itself at the service of development. This is how the APF accompanies Africa in its development process.

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¹⁹ Roch Marc Christian Kabore est premier vice président de l'APF, président de la section burkinabè de l'APF et par président de l'Assemblée Nationale du Burkina Faso son pays. Son point de vue a été recueilli dans www.apf.francophonie.org/paix-démocratie. consulté le 22/03/2018

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