

REPORT

OF THE DELEGATION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATIONS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ON THE STUDY VISIT TO FRANCE

(7TH- 10TH JULY 2014)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A seven-member delegation of the Parliamentary Friendship Associations Management Committee embarked upon a four-day study visit to the French Parliament from 7th to 10th July 2014 to study the functioning of Parliamentary Friendship Associations. The Chairman of the Committee, Hon. Alfred Agbesi, led the delegation. Attached, herewith, is the list of the delegation.

The delegation left Accra on Saturday, 5th July 2014 and has, since, returned to file this report.

1.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

As part of its terms of reference, the delegation was to inquire into the

- (i) Formation of Parliamentary Friendship Associations with particular regards to:
 - (a) Who can form a Friendship Association
 - (b) Who can chair a Friendship Association
 - (c) How many Friendship Associations can a Member join or chair

- (d) Who selects the chairman
 - (e) By what criteria can a Friendship Association be accepted
- (ii) Funding of Parliamentary Friendship Associations
 - (iii) Reporting on the activities of Parliamentary Friendship Associations

1.2 BACKGROUND

The Parliamentary Friendship Associations Management Committee was established by the leadership of the Sixth Parliament under the directive of the Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Edward Doe Adjaho, upon the recommendation of the Head of the Department of Parliamentary Relations and Protocol. This recommendation was encapsulated in a proposal for the effective management of Parliamentary Friendship Associations by the said Department to enable Parliament realize the full benefits of its efforts in Parliamentary diplomacy.

A previous study visit to the Czech and the French Parliaments embarked upon by the said Head of Department and two of the staff of the Department had revealed the importance of Parliamentary Friendship Associations in creating an elaborate network of friendship among Legislatures of countries which sought to create them which network facilitated the aggregation of support for those countries at international fora. It also promoted the implementation of foreign policies of countries and, generally, enabled the deepening of the processes of Parliamentary diplomacy with the view to sharing best practices through effective exchanges, while helping to identify and implement solutions to the many problems which transcend national frontiers within the international system.

Having been established to streamline the creation and management of Parliamentary Friendship Associations in Ghana and to ensure the strengthening of existing Associations to guarantee their continuous existence beyond Parliamentary terms, the Parliamentary Friendship Associations Management Committee sent out the delegation to study best practices in that field in order to help produce guidelines to regulate the creation and functioning of those Associations in Parliament.

2.0 DELIBERATIONS

While in Paris, the delegation held extensive meetings with very high profile legislators and staff of the French National Assembly and the Senate over the four-day period.

Among the said dignitaries were Mrs. Laurence Dumont, Vice President of the National Assembly, Mr. Robert Denis del Picchia, Vice Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Armed Forces, Mr. Guillaume Larrivé, President of the France-Ghana Parliamentary Friendship Association in the National Assembly, Mr. Jacques Legendre, President of the France-West Africa group of the Senate, Mrs. Dominique Meunier-Ferry, Head of the Parliamentary Relations and International Studies Department, Mr. Francois Duluc, Head of the Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Department, both of the National Assembly, Mrs. Dinah Desjardins, Counselor in charge of the Protocol and International Relations office of the Senate and Mr. Thierry Deilhaes, Deputy Administrator of the Interparliamentary Cooperation Department of the National Assembly.

The delegation is grateful to the French Ambassador to Ghana, His Excellency Mr. Frederic Clavier and his deputy, Ms. Cecile Vigneau, who took interest and made painstaking efforts in arranging the visit.

The delegation is equally grateful to officials of the Ghana Embassy in France, especially, the Charge d’Affairs and the Head of Chancery who made elaborate arrangements to extend due courtesies to the delegation and ensured that the delegation was well accommodated and was able to attend all meetings as scheduled.

3.0 OBSERVATIONS

The delegation made a number of significant observations which are indicated below:

3.1 PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATIONS – THE MOTIVATION

The activities of Parliamentary Friendship Associations have not been traditionally among the core activities of the French Parliament.

However, over the years, especially beginning in the after-math of the Second World War, through the independence wave of the 1960s to the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Parliamentary Friendship Associations have become a major tool in the pursuit of the international relations of the French Parliament.

They have been seen to foster:

- (i) The development of relationships and linkages between Legislatures to reinforce and promote the growth of democracy in all spheres of life by providing the Parliamentary dimension to relations existing between France and other countries at the level of the Executive Arm of Government
- (ii) The promotion of inter-parliamentary cooperation for the effective exchange of projects and best practices.
- (iii) The promotion of bicameralism as the French Parliament is of the considered opinion that bicameralism promotes stability given that the National Assembly and the Senate often work in unison to deliver the mandate of the legislature. This is believed to ensure that all areas of interests are reflected in the decisions of the Parliament while both Houses serve as a check on the excesses of each other and thereby ensure that legislative decisions and output are devoid of suspicions, ill-will and devious tendencies within the state. Indeed, the introduction of bicameralism was to check the excesses of the Parliamentary Sovereignty, the delegation was told.

3.2 ORGANISING PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATIONS – THE ROLE OF THE BUREAU

Having regard to the important place Parliamentary Friendship Associations occupy in the international relations of the French Parliament, the Bureaux of the two Chambers of the Parliament exercise oversight over their formation, their funding and their functioning.

The Bureau is the top Management body of each of the Houses of Parliament. It comprises the President, the Vice Presidents, the Questors and the Secretaries.

As part of the work of the Bureau, they authorize the establishment of Parliamentary Friendship Associations upon receipt of a formal application from a Member or a group of Members of Parliament. They provide the requisite funding for the activities of Friendship Associations, receive reports of the Associations and generally provide guidelines for the organization and functioning of the Associations.

In the Senate, while the Bureau works directly with the Division of Protocol and Inter-Parliamentary Relations to oversee the creation and operations of Parliamentary Friendship Associations, in the case of the National Assembly, that function is delegated to the Delegation of the Bureau under the leadership of the First Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly. The delegation of the Bureau presents reports to the Bureau and seeks the Bureau's authorization on matters of policy.

3.3 FORMATION OF PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATIONS

At the beginning of each parliamentary term following general elections, the Bureaux reorganize the existing Parliamentary Friendship Associations. In the case of the National Assembly, at a meeting with the Delegation, Leaders of the Political Parties in Parliament first agree on which party group is to chair which Friendship Association through negotiations. The Chairmanship positions are, thus, not shared according to party strength but in accordance with a pre-determined formula which

may, nonetheless, be influenced by party strength and the level of importance attached to particular Associations by reason of their ideological leanings, among others.

The leaders of the party groups are then requested to designate Members of their Party Caucuses to fill the chairmanship slots so allocated whilst advertisements are made by the Division of Inter-Parliamentary Relations responsible for Parliamentary Friendship Associations to enlist members into the various Associations.

Once the Associations are formed, they then hold meetings and elect, from within their respective membership, vice chairmen reflective, in number and opinion, of the Associations' party composition and their numerical strength. In recent times, as the delegation was informed, some Members of Parliament express interest to be secretaries and are so appointed.

In the case where a new Friendship Association is to be created, an interested Member or a group of Members of Parliament must formally apply to the Bureau, through the Delegation which application must certify the three broad criteria set out to justify the creation of Parliamentary Friendship Associations.

These criteria are as follows:

- (1) The country must have a Parliament
- (2) The country must be a Member of the United Nations, and
- (3) The country must have diplomatic relations with France.

Given the approval of the Bureau, Party Group leaders negotiate to determine the group that will chair the particular Association. The leader of the party group then appoints the chairman and the Bureau acting through the Inter-Parliamentary Relations Division enlists Membership through an appropriate recruitment advertisement.

The Association then meets and elects other office holders as they may deem necessary having due regard to the Association's size, the different shades of interest represented therein and the strength of the political groupings in it. The same process applies to the Senate except that the Bureau of the Senate works directly with the leaders of the caucuses to establish and manage Friendship Associations.

It is important to note that the French Parliament identifies another group of Associations which are similar to the Parliamentary Friendship Associations but which do not meet all the criteria as indicated above. However, they operate as such and are officially recognized. These are called International Study Groups.

3.3 ACTIVITIES OF FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATIONS

In line with their objectives, Parliamentary Friendship Associations operate both formally and informally to facilitate the effective exchange of information about each other's country.

Principal among the activities of Friendship Associations are the visits they embark upon to other countries and the foreign delegations they receive.

For reason of limited funding, they are regulated, albeit, differently in the two Chambers of the French Parliament.

In the case of the National Assembly, the Delegation of the Bureau responsible for International Relations must, at the end of the year, receive all requests for out-bound trips and the list of intended in-bound visits for the following year from all Friendship Associations and make recommendations to the Bureau for approval. This recommendation is often in accordance with priority considerations, the dates of previous similar engagements and budgets on the proposed activities as well as the level of activities within the group in the context of diplomatic and parliamentary relations with the country in question. It must be indicated that for reason of the principle of reciprocity, proposals for hosting of delegations are easily recommended for approval if the French Chapter of the Friendship Association had previously embarked on a visit to the other country or vice versa.

Visits hosted in France are usually organized in two parts; the first part covering up to three days are held in Paris where official meetings with key personalities are organized and the second part is held at the Constituency of the Chairman or a Vice Chairman of the Friendship Association in order to boost trade and cultural relations with the country in question. Activities of Parliamentary Friendship Associations include embarking on goodwill visits, hosting foreign delegations, meeting with key personalities in their respective areas of operation and attending local programmes in furtherance of relations with their foreign counterparts.

The National Assembly funds the activities of the Parliamentary Friendship Associations. Due to budgetary constraints, sponsorship of out-bound trips and

hosting of delegations are limited to a maximum 15 each in a year and Friendship Associations are entitled to one out-bound trip and the hosting of one delegation in a term. However, Friendship Associations with Germany and the United Kingdom are permitted to host programmes annually.

Also, elaborate funding arrangements are made which require the host Parliament to be fully responsible for the board and lodge of the visiting delegation at all times. For out-bound trips, the rule of the National Assembly in respect of the composition of official travels applies. The rule limits the number of Members of Parliament travelling on official assignments to four for trips beyond 5 hours and six for trips less than 5 hours.

In the case of the Senate, the Bureau works directly with the Division responsible for Protocol and Parliamentary Relations. The Bureau meets once in a month to consider, among others, the recommendations of the said Division in relation to the management of Parliamentary Friendship Associations.

Just as what pertains in the National Assembly, Friendship Associations of the Senate are entitled to undertake a major activity once in a term of three years.

However, unlike the National Assembly which fully funds the trips of the Friendship Associations, the Senate only finances 75% of the total cost of trips with Senators contributing to the remaining 25% from personal sources. The

expenditure of the accompanying official is, nonetheless, the responsibility of the House.

Besides, Senators are required to pay dues annually for their Membership of Friendship Associations which is managed by their leadership and which forms part of their sources of funding.

Sponsorship of delegates on out-bound trips and the hosting of delegations are capped at 10 each in a year for all Friendship Associations.

OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATIONS

(i) Contacts with Foreign/French Personalities

The Associations hold meetings with personalities from other countries and France such as Foreign Ambassadors in France, French Diplomats, French and foreign specialists on the various countries, etc. to boost relations between the French Parliament and those of other countries. Meetings of this nature which are often held over lunch or breakfast are fully funded by the Parliament upon request whenever necessary.

(ii) Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation

Friendship Associations also take the liberty to recommend and promote cooperation activities to be undertaken by the French Parliament with foreign Parliaments. These could include exchanges of study visitations and related matters.

Such projects of cooperation could also introduce territorial dimensions to the friendly relations and this can be used to promote the setting up of relations between local communities of the countries involved such as twinings between towns of similar sizes and other characteristics.

3.4 ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF THE STATE

It was observed that while there was no written agreement or instruction to support it, the involvement of representatives of Parliamentary Friendship Associations in the delegations of Presidents of the French Republic, the Presidents of the National Assembly and the Senate as well as Ministers of key Ministries such as Foreign Affairs and Trade on all official trips to other countries had become the norm. The reason is that by the nature of their work, members of Parliamentary Friendship Associations have vast amounts of information about the countries they deal with and also tend to attract a great deal of goodwill to themselves through the rather expansive network of friendship that they build in the course of their interactions with the political class of the countries they deal with.

This goodwill, regardless of their political leanings, is brought to bear on such trips to make them a resounding success. The delegation was told that the presence of a representation of Parliamentary Friendship Associations on such trips have always tended to give the Mission a face of inclusiveness and therefore, stability and this augur well for negotiations and the image of France generally.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the afore-mentioned observations and in pursuance of the objectives of the visit, the delegation hereby makes the following recommendations for adoption in Parliament for the effective management of Parliamentary Friendship Associations.

4.1 DESIGNATION OF AN APEX MANAGERIAL BODY

The establishment of the Management Committee to oversee the running of Parliamentary Friendship Associations is consistent with best practices as it is similar to the French Parliamentary Delegation on International Relations in character. In much the same vein, there is the need to establish an apex body similar to the concept of the Bureau to give policy direction and legitimacy to the work of the Management Committee. This apex body must involve the leaders of the House including the Speaker which body must sit periodically and yet regularly to consider issues relative to the management of Parliamentary Friendship Associations, among others.

For reason of the absence of such body in the current structure of Parliament, it is recommended that a meeting of the Speaker, the Deputy Speakers, the Majority Leader and the Minority Leader, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Management Committee and the Clerk to Parliament, to be known as the Forum be convened, at least, once every quarter to review and validate the work of the Management Committee.

It will be the responsibility of the Forum to approve a set of guidelines to regulate the establishment and the operations of Parliamentary Friendship Associations. It will also be responsible for reviewing reports of the Management Committee on applications for setting up Associations, for approving funds for the activities of established Associations and, generally, for reviewing the annual reports on Parliamentary Friendship Associations.

It shall also be the duty of the Forum to ensure the recomposition of the Management Committee at the beginning of each term of Parliament. The Forum shall further review the list of existing Associations at the beginning of each term of Parliament and authorize their recomposition in line with the established guidelines.

4.2 GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATIONS

The Forum shall make guidelines to regulate all aspects of the establishment and operations of Parliamentary Friendship Associations on the recommendation of the Management Committee.

For the avoidance of doubt, it is recommended that the guidelines should, among others, include the following:

(i) Establishment

A Member of Parliament or a group of Members of Parliament may initiate the establishment of a Friendship Association with the legislature of a country upon the submission of a written application to the Forum through the Management Committee. The Forum shall admit the establishment of an Association on the

recommendation of the Management Committee subject to the fulfillment of the set criteria.

The proposed criteria shall include the following:

- (a) That the country in question is a democratic country recognized by the United Nations.
- (b) That it has a Parliament, and
- (c) That Ghana has diplomatic relations with that country

Where the Forum accepts the application, the Management Committee shall arrange to meet with the leadership of the Caucuses to determine which Caucus will chair the Association.

The allotment of the Chairmanship to the various Associations shall be determined on the basis of the prevailing ratio in relation to the Caucus representation in the House except that where a Caucus provides the chairperson, the vice chairperson shall be from the other Caucus.

The Management Committee will then obtain the names of their chairpersons from the Caucus leaders.

The Department of Parliamentary Relations and Protocol, acting on behalf of the Management Committee, shall advertise to enlist members into the Associations.

In a situation where the Parliament of a country sets up a Friendship Association with Parliament of Ghana and notifies us accordingly, the Management Committee shall, following the set criteria as afore-indicated, proceed to recommend the grant of authorization to the Forum for the set up of a Ghana Chapter of the Association.

Subsequent to the grant of the requisite authorization, the said Committee shall arrange to meet with the leaders of the House to determine which Caucus is to produce the chairperson. On the advice of the Management Committee, the Parliamentary Relations and Protocol Department shall advertise for the enlistment of members into the Association.

The Clerk to Parliament shall then be requested to provide an Assistant Clerk or any suitable officer from another department who has good administrative and report writing skills to serve as Secretary to the Association.

(ii) International Study Groups

Where a Member or a Group of Members of Parliament initiate the establishment of a Parliamentary Friendship Association with the Legislature of a country which does not meet the criteria as set out in paragraph 4.2(i) the Forum shall authorize the formation of an International Study Group on the recommendation of the Management Committee. This is consistent with the French Parliament system and will enable Parliament obtain more information about that country which will promote trade and other economic relations between Ghana and the country in question.

(iii) Operations and Financing

Once formed, the Association shall hold meetings, at least once every month during sittings of the House to deliberate on emerging issues in the legislatures or countries of their jurisdiction or to learn about the legislatures and the countries concerned. Such activities may include meetings with experts, Diplomats of the countries'

Embassies in Ghana or Diplomats of Ghana Embassies in those countries or officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration.

The Associations may also arrange to participate in observing the National Day Celebrations of the countries in a bid to learning more about the countries and also widening the network of contacts in those countries. The Associations may further plan to embark on visits to those countries while arranging to invite visiting delegations from the countries concerned. Thus, the Associations may make contact with the relevant personalities that they may deem necessary with the help of the Parliamentary Relations and Protocol Department.

The programmes of the Associations shall be captured in their workplan which shall be lodged with the Parliamentary Relations and Protocol Department for the review of the Management Committee. Subject to the availability of funds, the Management Committee shall recommend not more than ten Associations to embark on trips outside Ghana and the hosting of not more than ten delegations in Ghana. This should be with the caveat that the composition of a delegation shall not be more than four Members of Parliament for a long trip of at least 5 hours and not more than five members of Parliament for a short distance trip of less than 5 hours.

Minutes of Meetings of Associations shall be kept by the Secretaries and a report submitted annually to the Management Committee through the Department of Parliamentary Relations and Protocol. Nonetheless, special reports shall be submitted whenever an Association embarks on a foreign trip or receives a foreign delegation. Such reports shall be submitted not more than two weeks after the event and in the case of annual reports, not more than four weeks after the end of the year.

An attendance register shall be kept for all meetings of the Associations.

As much as possible, Parliamentary Friendship Associations shall provide the needed leadership and support in engaging with legislatures and countries under their jurisdictions in respect of technical cooperation.

**(iv) PARTICIPATION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATIONS IN THE
OFFICIAL VISITS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND LEADERSHIP OF
PARLIAMENT**

The Forum shall encourage the Executive to introduce the concept of adding Members of Parliamentary Friendship Associations in the official foreign visitations of the President of the country and Ministers of State in the spirit of building capacity of the House while strengthening the bonds of cooperation between the Executive and the Legislature in pursuit of Ghana's foreign policy.

As a commitment to ensuring that Parliamentary Friendship Associations play their rightful roles in Parliamentary diplomacy, it is further recommended that all goodwill visits embarked upon by the Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament, Deputy Speakers and the Leaders of the House should have slots for representatives of Parliamentary Friendship Associations.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Democracy has undergone various challenges and yet remains thriving. Recent global phenomena such as the collapse of the Berlin wall and the Arab spring have helped in deepening the processes and strengthening institutions of Parliamentary democracy. However, emerging issues around the world require that all democratic countries strengthen, further, their capacities and build stronger networks to be able to apply best practices and contribute to solving the current major problems which

tend to be more trans-territorial and yet have more devastating effects for individual countries of the world. It is an indisputable fact that parliamentary diplomacy provides the key to solving these problems while equipping individual states with the requisite tools and the technical know-how to deal with the various challenges that confront their nations and the world at large.

It is the considered view of the delegation that Parliamentary Friendship Associations are very vital and strategic tools in pursuing parliamentary diplomacy. It is for this reason that the delegation prays the adoption of the recommendations as discussed to enable Parliament derive optimum benefits from its Friendship Associations.



HON. ALFRED AGBESI
CHAIRMAN



RICHARD KWAME ACHEAMPONG
SECRETARY

LIST OF DELEGATION

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|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| HON. ALFRED AGBESI | - | DEPUTY MAJORITY
LEADER |
| HON. DOMINIC BINGAB ADUNA NITIWUL | - | DEPUTY MINORITY
LEADER |
| HON. EMMANUEL KWASI BANDUA | - | CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE
ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS |
| HON. ISAAC OSEI | - | RANKING MEMBER,
COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS |
| HON. HAJIA ALIJATA GBENTIE SULEMANA | - | MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT |
| MR. RICHARD KWAME ACHEAMPONG | - | CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE
AND HEAD OF THE
PARLIAMENTARY
RELATIONS & PROTOCOL
DEPARTMENT |
| MRS. ANTHONIA-GLORIA FRENCH-OKINE | - | SENIOR PROTOCOL
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DEPARTMENT |

