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Vice-Co-Chair

M. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1535)

[English]

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the committee motion of November 14, we are commencing a joint meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food to consider issues relating to world food supply.

It's our pleasure today to have Mr. James T. Morris, executive director of the United Nations World Food Programme since 2002. As head of the WFP, Mr. Morris oversees the world's largest food aid organization, which last year had emergency and development projects in 81 countries and fed 104 million people, with new contributions totalling \$3.8 billion U.S.

Mr. Morris is also UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's special envoy for humanitarian needs in southern Africa.

Mr. Morris, you appeared before the committee two years ago. We want you to know your work since then has not gone unnoticed in the Canadian Parliament. For example, in 2003 we tabled a report on HIV/AIDS and the humanitarian catastrophe in sub-Saharan Africa, a report prepared by our Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Development. The report drew very much on your assessment of the humanitarian situation on the continent, and on that of Stephen Lewis. I believe I speak for all of us here in saying we appreciate and support your candid and passionate advocacy for Africa, as well as the work you and your organization do around the world.

Welcome. We look forward to your ten-minute comments. Go ahead, Mr. Morris.

Mr. James Morris (Executive Director, United Nations World Food Programme): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to visit with you today for several reasons. The first is to express gratitude and a thank you, with as strong a feeling as I can possibly share. Canada is one of the World Food Programme's best friends, best supporters, and Canada is one of the best friends of people at risk around the world.

Canada helped to found the World Food Programme 41 years ago. In those 41 years, you've provided \$3.7 billion Canadian of support for us. Today, we have 120 Canadian employees, the largest contingent of any country outside of Italy, where we're head-

quartered. They are employees who give us remarkable strength and remarkable talent, including 12 employees at the very highest rank of the institution. You give us a special spirit, you're very thoughtful about our work, and the people who represent Canada to the World Food Programme are always superbly well prepared.

We're grateful for your country's commitment to basic health and education, to issues of HIV, to issues of child protection. We work with 10 to 12 Canadian NGOs, and we are as grateful for your support across the humanitarian community as we are for your support of the World Food Programme. Your commitment to the World Health Organization program, 3 by 5, is incredibly important.

I should pay tribute to your ambassador to Italy, who also represents you to the World Food Programme, Bob Fowler. He is a highly knowledgeable person on issues related to Africa, and he is one of those people who has made WFP better.

I also pay tribute to Ernest Loevinsohn. Ernest has given us unusual insight into issues related to nutrition and the use of micronutrients. He has helped us to focus on that small investment in micronutrients that we can add to the food we distribute, and that gives us powerful leverage to make us so much more effective.

Last year, we provided food for 104 million people in 81 countries. Our budget was something approaching \$4 billion with our work in Iraq. You supported us at the level of \$150 million. We're the largest humanitarian agency in the world and the largest program of the United Nations, and we are very focused on saving lives, protecting livelihoods, and playing a role where food is a factor in health care, where food is a factor in education, and where food is a factor in the achievement of the millennium development goals.

All 191 members of the UN have committed to the millennium development goals. From my perspective, this represents the humanitarian agenda for the world. In talking about cutting hunger and poverty in half, reducing infant mortality, being serious about HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, issues of maternal health, universal primary education, and issues of gender equity, food and nutrition are at the base of making progress on each of these, and you have helped us enormously.

Half of our work is in Africa and half our work is in countries that belong to the Organization of the Islamic Conference. We fed 56 million children last year. There are 840 million hungry people in the world, including 300 million hungry children. In my own view, if we're focused on cutting hunger and poverty in half as a world community by 2015, the most important focus we can have is eliminating hunger among the 300 million hungry children in the world. A third of those would be in India and China, and the other two-thirds would be in Africa, the rest of Asia, Latin America, the former Soviet Republics—the so-called CIS group—and the Middle East.

● (1540)

We are heavily engaged today in Darfur, and we're grateful your Prime Minister is going to go there shortly. Darfur cries out for a political solution. In fact, 1.5 million people have been chased from their homes in the most violent, horrific circumstances. They are now living in 155 camps in Darfur, plus 13 refugee camps in Chad. In the month of September, we fed 1,336,000 people. We'll feed 2 million in December.

Suddenly, people who were leading comfortable lives, by their own standards, find themselves without homes, without community, with no schools for their children, and with terrible health care and terrible conditions of water and sanitation. They want to go home. I must tell you that I visited there, and you've never seen people so frightened in all your life. But Canada has helped us with yellow split peas to feed people in the camps, and you've given us cash to buy sorghum locally. We're profoundly grateful for that help from Canada.

Your Prime Minister's going there will build on the fact that the Security Council met in Nairobi last week. The meeting in Nairobi was to focus on the Sudan and to keep the world political pressure on the Government of Sudan to return law and order and peace and security so that people can go home and begin their lives.

You've helped us in Haiti. We're feeding 602,000 people in Haiti. In some respects, Haiti is the most food-deficient country in all the world. It has the highest calorie deficit per capita of any country in the world, and it's a place that is just in one set of tragic circumstances after the other. We've been feeding 140,000 children under the age of three, and 602,000 in total. While we don't have good nutrition numbers, I would suspect that at least half the children in the country would be chronically malnourished. So your help there is very important.

With your help with school feeding in Africa, you've made it possible for us to feed 500,000 school children in Ethiopia, in Mozambique, in Senegal, in Mali, and in Tanzania. The power of providing a meal to a child to enable the child to go to school is the single most important investment we can make in the world's future, in my judgment. If you go to Japan, if you talk to people of our generation, they were all fed with meals at school after World War II. They would tell you that having the meal available made their education system work and produced the prosperous country that Japan is today. Well, the same issue applies to 300 million hungry kids who don't have a good school meal every day, and you're helping us to feed half a million kids in Africa.

And it disproportionately affects young girls. If you feed a young girl in school, and if she only goes for the five primary years, her life changes in the most extraordinary ways imaginable. She won't have children until she's 20 instead of having children at 12. She'll have two to three children, not seven or eight, and she has a whole different level of aspiration for the lives of her family. She's a better citizen and she's a better teacher. In Africa, where women produce 80% of the food, where women have 56% to 60% of the HIV infections, and where women give all of the care in the home, we know that all the progress that's been made on the social agenda in the third world in the twenty years has been related to educating women. It's very important.

Take your investment in Mali, for example. In Mali, because of the school feeding program that Canada is paying for, you have increased the percentage of girls enrolled in elementary school from 34% to 43%. You've done that quickly, and I hope you feel good about that.

● (1545)

I appreciate, sir, your reference to my responsibilities in southern Africa. The triple-threat crisis of southern Africa, in my judgment, is the most serious humanitarian problem in the world today. Two years ago, 15.5 million people were at risk of famine. We worked through that. Today the number of food-insecure people would be in the neighbourhood of five million, but it is complicated by the HIV pandemic. Further, the impact of HIV on destroying the capacity of government and civil society to respond to these problems has produced a humanitarian crisis of extraordinary consequences.

There's a country in southern Africa of 11 million to 12 million people, where the HIV-positive rate is more than 25%, where 920,000 children are orphaned because their parents have died of HIV/AIDS, and life expectancy has gone from 68 to 33. In the west we're accustomed to seeing it steadily ratchet up, but I can't comprehend what must be on the minds of the political leaders of a country who see devastation like that occurring. And food is at the basis of making progress on these issues.

Thank you for what you do for us. Thank you for what you do for my UN colleagues at UNICEF and WHO and the High Commissioner for Refugees. You are a part of a very special country. The respect and the trust and the confidence people have in the judgment of this country and the goodness of this country is quite unusual. I hope that you have some sense of appreciation of how valued you are as a member of the world community.

Thank you.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Morris.

I should also apologize. Ms. Spearman came in late and I didn't introduce her. Dianne Spearman is the director in the office of the deputy executive director, policy and external affairs department. Welcome here.

A voice: And a wonderful Canadian.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): And a wonderful Canadian, right.

All right, and we'll just go through the order. We'll begin with Mr. Day.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Morris, thanks to you also, not just for the work you do, but for reminding us that our tax dollars are in fact doing good work and reaching people in need. That's always encouraging. We'll certainly communicate that to our constituents. We appreciate that information.

It's important that people—constituents, taxpayers, voters—do understand that the UN is doing good work. There's a present cloud over the UN related to the Iraqi oil-for-food or food-for-oil scandal. We're all experienced elected people, so we do read carefully, with filters on, but if half of what we read is accurate, this could shake the UN to its very core.

We read about investigations leading to the highest political levels in France and Russia. We read about possibilities of it reaching to the highest levels in the UN itself. And also, those of us who know a little bit, not from experience but from watching, about...when a government is rocked by a scandal, the best thing to do is to make sure the process for getting to the bottom of it is absolutely transparent and that perpetrators are brought to justice.

So with your great experience and important experience in food distribution, in tracking how it's distributed, and realizing that you are not the lead person, the point person, at the UN in charge of looking into the oil-for-food scandal in Iraq, what can you tell us in terms of your degree of confidence that this scandal will be thoroughly investigated, that it will be transparent and that perpetrators will be brought to justice? Can you give us a sense of your level of confidence of that?

• (1550)

Mr. James Morris: Thank you for the question.

I have complete confidence in the leadership of the UN. Kofi Annan is an extraordinary human being. He's smart, honest, honourable, and I trust him completely. He's asked Paul Volker, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve in the U.S., to head a commission to look at this. This is a great tragedy. I wish to God it was called oil for humanitarian work. I would give anything if the word "food" was not in the title of this activity. A small percentage of the resources that were spent went for food. Much of it went for other humanitarian purposes and other infrastructure development.

Essentially, when the UN Security Council put sanctions against Iraq, they allowed Iraq the privilege of continuing to sell oil if the proceeds were used for humanitarian purposes for the benefit of the Iraqi people. The proceeds were to flow through the UN. The invoices were to come to the UN and the UN would pay them, but the contracts were negotiated by the Iraqi government.

The allegation is that the Iraqi government received financial consideration over and above the money spent on humanitarian

purposes for the privilege of selling the oil. The allegation is that people paid to have the privilege of buying the oil and that the companies that provided the food, the transport, or whatever they provided, also paid a premium back to the Iraqi government for the privilege of doing business with them. The notion is that the Iraqi government was benefiting in a couple of ways.

I'm confident that we will have good answers to this. The World Food Programme was only brought into this after the fact, after the first phase of the conflict in Iraq was completed. The Security Council then asked us to look at the contracts related to food, to renegotiate those contracts to take out the alleged premium paid to the Government of Iraq, if in fact there was one, and to negotiate whether or not those contracts could be fulfilled and delivered. In other words, if food was bought from country X, committed two or three years ago, was that contract still valid and could it be delivered upon?

My colleagues—headed by a Canadian, by the way, and he's in the room, Philip Ward—renegotiated \$1.4 billion in value of food contracts and got the transport rescheduled so the food ultimately got to the people of Iraq. Philip is a young man, and we had a team of very young people who were handed these contracts that were poorly drawn, would be an embarrassment to any average lawyer, and they took on the job of renegotiating all of them.

• (1555)

My sense is that the leadership of the United Nations is a group that deserves your trust and confidence as honourable people. You can trust Kofi Annan. He would never deliberately do anything inappropriate. I feel the same about Paul Volker. His reputation is on the line. He will work through this. They're under enormous pressure, I'm sure, from many of your colleagues and many of your peers in the U.S. and elsewhere around world.

I'll leave it at that.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Morris.

I should mention that because we've come together with the ag committee today, we're going to keep the questions and answers to about five minutes each, so we'll try to have short questions and short answers. We'll get as many in as possible.

Mr. Laframboise.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You have made the ambitious commitment of a 50% reduction in malnutrition by the year 2015. Do you sense that some progress have been made in the past few years? To reach that goal, by how much should countries increase the aid they are giving you?

[English]

Mr. James Morris: The fact of the matter is there are probably 40 million to 50 million more hungry people in the world today than there were 10 years ago. Thank goodness China has moved 250 million people, by their own standards, out of hunger and poverty over the last 25 or 30 years. Had China not made this remarkable progress, the numbers would be devastating.

We are not on a trend today that will meet the millennium development goal number one. We have to do some things differently. It relates to capacity of governments where the problem is most severe. If there are 840 million hungry people in the world, 230 million of them would be in India, more than a quarter; another 112 million would be in China; 200 million would be in Africa, probably 150 million in the rest of Asia, 50 million to 60 million in Latin America, and about that same number in the former Soviet CIS group in the Middle East.

My own view is to focus on children, to focus on feeding children, especially through school. Of the 300 million hungry kids, 115 million are in India and China. China is very focused on their kids, and India now has an agricultural surplus of 70 million metric tons last year. The rest of the world, and the rest of Asia, has to be focused on helping the people, the kids, the young people in Africa.

We can feed a child for a full school year for about \$35 U.S. in a place like Bangladesh, it's half that expensive. In North Korea, it's somewhere in the middle. So the trick is to help leaders of countries that have a nutritional deficit among children to focus on this issue, to commit talent and resources, and where it doesn't exist, the rest of us need to come in and help.

However you look at it, from my perspective, from the humanitarian perspective, from an economic perspective, from a political, military, security point of view, there just is no substitute for helping a child be fed, be well nourished, to go to school. It's the key to a child's ability to think and learn. It's a key to a child's ability to be productive and work. A child who's born to an unhealthy mother or who doesn't have good nutrition early in life never catches up. There is nothing you can do to remedy this. That's why it's so important to focus on children.

• (1600)

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Mr. Laframboise, you have two more minutes, if you want to ask another question.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Regarding the increase in the financial contribution of Canada, among others, would you be prepared to make some predictions or suggestions, without any obligation on your part?

[English]

Mr. James Morris: I must say I think Canada is an incredibly generous country, and I'm deeply grateful for the level of support it provides. I'm hopeful that Canada will continue to provide more support for work in development.

Your work in Ethiopia is incredibly important to preparing that country to deal with its next series of natural disasters. Where you've made an investment in communities in Ethiopia, they'll get through the next drought. It's the same with feeding children. There is no

more powerful development investment we can make than helping children have the tools to become able to sustain themselves.

Beyond that, the world generally has caused a substantial decrease in the amount of overseas development assistance that has gone for basic agricultural infrastructure. It's gone from 12% to 6%. Canada has started to turn that around, as has the U.S. and the U.K. There's just not much that can be substituted, once again, for having a functioning basic agricultural economy that produces food. It's the beginning of leading to all the other good things that a country aspires to economically.

My hope is that you continue to grow your support for development, that you continue to grow your support for feeding children, and that you continue to focus on investment in basic agricultural infrastructure, especially irrigation, as water is so important.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Morris, and thank you for being here today.

Your comments leave us with the distinct impression of how fortunate and blessed we are to be living in a land like ours. The support you've given to various initiatives in the past has been extremely important to us as law-makers and decision-makers in how we've become further involved in the crisis, as you've described it so aptly, throughout places...particularly in Africa.

As you know, our Prime Minister has been advocating a policy of responsibility to protect, in order to secure from failed or failing states opportunities for us to reduce the level of harm and perhaps address issues when states, in particular, seem incapable of delivering in the best interests of their civilized populations. I'm wondering if you might be able to give us some indication, given the concerns that have been raised about food being diverted for political reasons in countries like Zimbabwe, as to whether there is a way Canada can continue to prod that government—if we can say that—to ensure we have, at the end of all of this, an opportunity to address what is obviously a calamity before us.

At the same time, perhaps you could also address the issue of the use or the bringing forward of antiretroviral drugs throughout Africa. How successful have we been of late, particularly in responding to the pandemic of AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and the river disease, as you've expressed earlier?

• (1605)

Mr. James Morris: Thank you.

The World Food Programme in April this year provided food for 4.4 million people in Zimbabwe. That's more than 40% of the population. I'm confident that our food was not diverted to the military or for political use in Zimbabwe. I can't speak to how the food resources of any government might have been used, but we are very careful—not perfect; we make a lot of mistakes, no question, because the places where we work are very difficult. It's not like working in downtown Ottawa when you're working in North Korea or Zimbabwe. They're tough places.

We have a very sophisticated monitoring system. We work, by and large, through non-governmental organizations to do the distribution. We have 14 partners in Zimbabwe; when we started we had four. At the high point we had 14. We do very sophisticated, careful monitoring. In North Korea, for example—a place that would be among the more difficult to work—we average 513 monitoring visits a month. We have to get permission from the government and tell them ahead of time where we're going to go, but they only turned us down 1% of the time this year; three years ago, they turned us down 8% of the time. So we're making a little progress there.

I visited with President Mugabe face to face, man to man, about this subject. I asked him to be certain that his food from his government was being distributed according to the same standards as we distribute our food. We are narrowly focused on the humanitarian agenda. We leave all of the other political issues to others to resolve. We want to be sure that vulnerable people, mostly women and children, don't starve. He assured me that was the case, that his food was not being distributed with political preference. I told him we could do him a great favour by allowing the UN monitoring system to come in and monitor his food distribution, just as it monitors ours. He said that was an interesting idea and he'd get back to me. We have not visited since, but we give a high priority to this.

On the issue of antiretroviral drugs, the world is grateful to Canada because you have made it possible for drugs to be available to treat HIV/AIDS that are less expensive than has been the case. There are some places where antiretroviral drugs are available for less than \$150 per person per year. It used to be 10 times that, so that's progress. They're not universally available. This is a huge issue.

A place like Mozambique probably has \$150 million available to address the HIV/AIDS issue, but in terms of having the capacity in the country to do the distribution, to provide the medical support—and ARVs, just like any other medicine, are more effective if you're well nourished and have clean water—the whole package is not in place yet.

I think the U.S. President's fund has now distributed to somewhere between 25,000 and 50,000 people. The 3 by 5 program is committed to three million people by the end of next year, but they would still be in the several hundred thousand range. You've helped them. Your \$100-million gift was extraordinary.

• (1610)

My friend, Peter Piot, who runs UNAIDS, would tell you that food, nutrition, and clean water are the most important ingredients in the fight against HIV, and ARVs have minimal impact unless there is nutrition available. This has caused us to redesign our work in the 41 countries that have the highest HIV prevalence rates, distribute

different kinds of food packages, and do much more home care work in tandem with smaller local NGOs.

This is a very serious problem, ladies and gentlemen, for all the world. India now has the largest number of HIV-positive people in the world. For years it was South Africa, and India has just passed them. The prevalence rates in southern Africa go from 15% to 40% of the adults. Heaven forbid if those numbers were relevant for the large countries of Asia. Just think what that would mean to the world. This is unprecedented as a health problem.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Morris.

Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Mr. Morris, for being here today and providing the background in this discussion so far. I have three quick questions, and I really want the time to go to you to have a chance to address them.

The first is around the question of UN reform. I think your comments are very welcome about not demonizing the UN, but recognizing that much credit is due. I'm wondering if there are UN reforms that would be important in enhancing your work.

Secondly, specifically related to that, I think our very last meeting of this committee—not with the agriculture committee joining us, but the foreign affairs committee—was looking at the issue of UN reform. I don't want to speak on behalf of the committee at all, but some of us expressed concern—and I was one of them—about the possibility that Canada, in putting more and more emphasis on using the G-20—or I guess L-20 is now the term being used—could, even unwittingly, somewhat undermine the real multilateralism through the United Nations that is so desperately needed. I wonder if you might comment on that.

Thirdly, your comments about Canada's generosity with respect to ODA and food assistance are also appreciated. But some of us have been extremely concerned and very critical of the fact that Canada has allowed its ODA to slide and has finally just turned it around and started heading back towards 0.7%. I realize you're not here to bite the hand that feeds the World Food Programme, so to speak, but I wonder if you could comment a little bit about that. I think sometimes there's an implication that everybody has let it slide, so Canada is just with all the rest in having done so. I wonder if you could help put that in perspective.

Those of us who have been pushing and pushing for Canada to move toward its stated goal are a little concerned that we might see some complacency in response to your fulsome praise, when what is needed is to try to help increase the pressure somewhat. I don't mean to heap that burden on you, but I wonder if you might comment and put it in perspective.

Mr. James Morris: Sure. Thank you.

Canada is committed to providing \$150 million Canadian to us this year. Canada was our second-largest donor *x* years ago—the U.S., then Canada. Canada went from there down to a point where maybe you were giving us less than \$40 million. You've now come back to a point where you're giving the World Food Programme \$150 million Canadian. You are our fifth-largest donor. The U.S. is number one, the European Community is number two, Japan is number three, the U.K. is number four, and Canada is number five.

We do our denominations in U.S. dollars, which has not been a good thing this year, given the slide of the dollar with the euro. So what is the value of \$150 million Canadian in U.S. dollars, ballpark?

A voice: It's \$120 million.

Mr. James Morris: And the population of Canada is what?

A voice: It's 33 million.

Mr. James Morris: So essentially you're giving us about \$4 per capita of U.S. currency. Fair enough? Our average gift is \$2.02. The U.S. gave us \$2.75 per capita last year. Norway gives us \$11 per capita and is number one—the Nordics lead the pack.

So I come to you with begging hands, clearly. But the turnaround that Canada has done in the last two or three years for the World Food Programme.... I cannot speak to your overall ODA program. I'm aware of your commitment to increase it by 8% a year for a number of years, and your commitment for half of it to go to Africa. From my World Food Programme perspective, you are a wonderful donor. I hope it will continue to grow.

Is that a fair answer?

•(1615)

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Can you speak just briefly on UN reform and the G-20 or L-20 alternative?

Mr. James Morris: The UN clearly needs to reform. I cannot speak to the G-20 issue.

I've been, as I said, the Secretary-General's special envoy for southern Africa. In the eight countries of southern Africa—Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, and Namibia—the UN has 1,800 employees spending \$500 million. In these small countries, we have eight offices, eight programs. We're working very hard to pull the UN programs together in small countries into a single program, a single office, to strengthen the role of the resident coordinator leading the UN country team so that we act as one family, one response.

We overwhelm a small government. You have eight country directors in a place like Botswana, so the government has to respond to eight separate initiatives as well as the resident coordinator. Together we may have 30 donors, so there are 30 countries like

Canada that are relating to the government. The governments simply do not have the capacity to respond to that many players.

Beyond that, we need to pull together our administrative activities, our travel, our fleet management, our payroll systems, into a single enterprise.

The UN country teams, through the resident coordinator, report to the head of the UN Development Programme in New York. It's nonsensical to think that this will be a serious reporting relationship, a small country in southern Africa reporting in a way that is productive and accountable to somebody in New York City. I'm encouraged that the regional directors of all the UN humanitarian agencies have come together into a single enterprise.

The UN did a brilliant job in coordinating its response to the famine through something called RIACSO, headquartered in Joburg, that included the UN family, all of the NGOs, and many of the donor countries in a single enterprise. So I'm sort of optimistic.

I talked a little earlier today with your folks at CIDA about the work of WFP in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. We are feeding children, and we respond to catastrophes like Hurricane Mitch. But our work with children ought to be pulled together with the UNICEF work for children. We don't need to have two separate operations.

I'm a bit optimistic that you'll see some good things, but it does no good to talk about UN reform in the abstract. It happens on the ground, and that's where the coming together needs to occur.

•(1620)

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Morris.

Just by way of clarification, our meeting was scheduled to go until 5:30. Is it correct that you have to leave at 5 o'clock?

Mr. James Morris: No, I will be here until you're ready to finish.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): All right, perfect.

We'll go into the second round with Mr. Ritz.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Morris, Ms. Spearman, thank you for being here today.

As I understand, you have asked for this meeting, so we are at your disposal. I'm wondering, though, you used very careful language when you were talking about Mugabe and Zimbabwe and about food aid being provided. You didn't allude to the fact that it actually has gone out. You've met with Mr. Mugabe, and I take it from that you feel he's an honourable gentleman. He gave you his word that it's going out. I'm here to tell you that I have friends and so on in Zimbabwe—it's not happening, sir.

I'm wondering, what is the UN's recourse when that situation arises and you are told that he is hoarding food for the upcoming elections? What is your recourse as a body?

Mr. James Morris: I think either I misspoke or you didn't hear what I said. I said I am confident that the food provided by the World Food Programme is not being used for or diverted for political purposes. Our food is being directed to those who are vulnerable, who are hungry and most in need.

I said I'm not accountable for, nor could I represent to you, how the food of the Government of Zimbabwe is being used. What I said was that I asked the president, and he said, "Jim, my food is also being distributed without political concern". I said, "Sir, if that's the case, I can do you a big favour by providing for you the UN system, which monitors food distribution and verifies, is accountable for, how the food is being used. If you would allow me to make this system available to look after what you're doing, and if in fact what you're saying is accurate and we could verify that, it would be a good thing for you".

As I've said, I have not heard back from him.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Do you expect to?

Mr. James Morris: Probably not.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Okay.

So again, on my question as to recourse, there really is nothing you can do. Your food aid is moving into Zimbabwe, and you're quite comfortable with that, but you're saying there's another stream of food aid going through the government, government-to-government aid. There is very little production in Zimbabwe itself that's actually going back to the people—

Mr. James Morris: No.

I must say I'm as concerned about the situation in Zimbabwe as anywhere in the world.

The government has represented that it will have a maize crop this year of 2.4 million metric tons. It has suggested it will also have substantial sorghum and millet. The requirement to feed the people of Zimbabwe, I believe, is something in the neighbourhood of 1.6 million to 1.8 million tonnes. Last year they produced a crop of 800,000 tonnes.

A food assessment survey was started by FAO and WFP. We were not allowed to complete the survey; we were asked to stop and leave. But the preliminary information suggested that the best case would be that they would produce 950,000 tonnes this year. He's essentially said they'll do two to three times that amount. He has said to the World Food Programme that they essentially no longer need it. He's essentially said the same thing to the NGOs that work there.

We had 49,000 tonnes of food left in the country, and we've been distributing it to the most vulnerable people at 7,000 tonnes a month. I hope he's right. I hope their agricultural production is what he says it will be; it will be a good thing. I'm not a believer. I'm not optimistic. And I'm very uptight about when January suddenly comes around and large numbers of people need to be fed. Where's the food going to come from?

•(1625)

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Yes. Propaganda is not production, in other words.

The other question I had is this. You're saying Canada—

Mr. James Morris: Please don't misunderstand what I said.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: No, no.

You were saying Canada's contribution through your program is roughly \$150 million this year. We ramping back up to that point. Is that strictly cash or is that food and cash, a combination of the two?

Mr. James Morris: It's food and cash.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Have you a breakdown of what percentage of that is food and what is cash? We're sitting on an overabundance of food in this country. We have our own farmers who are going broke because we can't market a lot of that product.

It seems a little bit redundant to me that we'd be sending cash to countries when we have the foodstuff that we could sell and we have an overabundance. We could maybe put together \$300 million worth of foodstuff as opposed to the cash component of that. Would that be welcome, or is it just too hard to distribute?

Mr. James Morris: No, it would be very welcome. You give us more food than you give us cash, but you also pay the transportation. We operate on the principle of full cost recovery.

When somebody gives us something, they pay the full costs associated with distributing it to the ultimate beneficiary.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: That's fine.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Mr. Easter.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome.

You mentioned earlier that the basic agriculture infrastructure went down from 12% to 6% and is starting to come up again. I forget what the old saying was at one point in time in terms of world food aid, but one of the best things you can do is give a country or people the tools to feed themselves, and you'll solve the problem for a longer term. Just from my overview, I see there seems to be more emphasis on solving the problem by focusing on governance rather than focusing, I guess, on the importance of primary production in countries where you can assist in that regard.

I'm wondering if you might comment on that. What is the relative importance of contributing to agriculture and primary production development for solving the problem of hunger? I recognize that, yes, you have to put in food aid in a lot of situations as well, but are we not emphasizing enough primary production itself?

I guess that's what I'm asking.

Mr. James Morris: I think that's correct. Our principal job is to save lives and our second job is to protect livelihoods, then to provide food where it's a factor in health issues or provide food where it's a factor in education. A huge amount of what we do is food for work. We provide food that enables communities to build agricultural infrastructure, to build schools, to build roads.

Our principal focus is to help people to get on their feet, get out of the dependency relationship, get on their own. We have huge programs all over the world that provide food for people as they go through skill development, go through entrepreneurial training, go through agricultural skill acquisition. You would be astounded to see the training work that goes on in a place like Bangladesh, with millions of women learning a skill, a trade, to be more productive farmers. We provide the food so they can get from where they start to where they need to be. So I agree with you completely.

To go back to the Ethiopian story, we're investing in keeping people alive. We've dropped the amount we're investing in prevention, development, and mediation, which means that a place like Ethiopia, with its constant cycle of weather, likely won't be any better prepared the next time than it was the last time.

• (1630)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Yes. I've had a fair bit of involvement with Farmers Helping Farmers and with the start-up of those organizations, where we've sent people down to basically train people, work with people, give them assistance in that way. That's been very productive. But I do feel that as a country we've fallen short on that end. There's much more we could be doing. I think there's been a falling back on emphasis on the agriculture production side, and as a country we should be increasing that side more than we have been, without cutting back on the other area as well.

I'll turn the rest of my time over to Keith, Mr. Chair.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): You have about 45 seconds, Keith.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Never mind, then. He'll wait for the next round.

Mr. Morris might have something further to say...?

Mr. James Morris: No.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Mr. Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As we know, other groups are contributing in various ways. Are their efforts and yours, in the United Nations World Food Program, complementary? Do you work in cooperation? All sorts of organizations are helping in various areas where you also intervene. Are all these efforts being deployed in a parallel way, or are you working together with these various organizations?

[*English*]

Mr. James Morris: We work with 1,500 partners around the world. Some of them are very large NGOs, like CARE or the Red Cross. Many of them are very small NGOs that actually do the food distribution on the ground. Our job is essentially to procure the food and to arrange for the pipeline to bring it into a country. Then we rely on partners to do the distribution on the ground.

Now, in some places where there would not be an NGO community, or other circumstances would require, we would do the direct distribution ourselves. We always prefer to do it with a private group, not with a government. There are places where we have no choice but to work with the government, North Korea being one example.

We complement the other two UN agencies, FAO and IFAD. FAO is the technical assistance arm of the international community. Their job is to advise government on policy and technology and on how to do a better job of having an agricultural strategy. IFAD is a mini-World Bank, and deals around the world with financing agricultural development projects. We would have at least 100 projects in partnership with FAO and 40 to 50 with IFAD.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: You said earlier that it cost about \$40 to feed one person for one year. I believe that you are anticipating that you will need \$4 billion plus a few hundred millions to feed all the people that you were referring to earlier.

You also said that Canada was giving more food than money. When you talked about the cost, do they amounts referred to include only the actual cost of the food, or do they also include the administrative and distribution costs?

[*English*]

Mr. James Morris: I hope what I said was that the cost is about \$35 U.S. to feed a school child a meal around the world. There are places where it's less expensive than that. That's for a school year, 200 school days. We talk about it at 19¢ a day to feed a child. That includes all of our expenses. Frequently it will cost more to transport the food than it will cost to buy it in the first place. But it includes the warehouse; it includes the fortification, if we strengthen the micronutrient content of the food; it could involve ocean transport, and we would have 20 or 30 ships on the sea every day.

We operate the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service in places like Somalia, Sudan, and Angola. Our administrative expenses are 7¢. Seven cents of every dollar is used to run the operation, the rest of it goes to the field.

• (1635)

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Morris.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: You have mentioned that it was based on a school year of 200 days. However, the children are still hungry during they 165 days remaining.

[English]

Mr. James Morris: When we provide it, just like I suppose school lunches in Canada or the U.S., we provide a meal for every day the child is in school, and the other days are the family's responsibility.

Frequently, we will provide a take-home package of rations. If a girl hasn't been going to school, she's been staying home helping the family with wood, or with water, or with younger siblings, when the family sends the girl to school it's a financial sacrifice for the family. So we have a program where if the girl goes to school for 20 days in a row we'll give a package of take-home rations for the girl to take home to the family to help feed the family and help make up for what was lost when they sent her to school. But we're focused on feeding the child through school. We have other programs that might pick up the gap, direct distribution programs like the food for work programs, but the school feeding program is based on the school year.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Morris.

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Thank you, Ambassador Morris, for being here today, as well as your colleagues who have accompanied you. I'll not forget your comment two years ago when you said with respect to those suffering from HIV/AIDS that the most important drug they could have is food. It says it all. It says a lot.

We all want to meet the millennium development objectives, but I would suggest that of the countries you mentioned—and I'll get to Zimbabwe in a second—the cornerstone for addressing those millennium goals is security. Security is based on good governance. Therefore, we have to address the issue of good governance and therefore security in order to address all of what we want to accomplish.

We'll take the case of Zimbabwe, if I can, for a moment. Robert Mugabe, in my view, is committing genocide in slow motion. He's murdering a chunk of his population and he's withholding food as his choice of weapon. He's closing down NGOs through laws. He has a monopoly through his grain distribution system. So I ask you the following questions more in your capacity, Ambassador Morris, as the Secretary-General's special rep for humanitarian needs in southern Africa. What is the UN doing to address the lack of governance and security issues within South Africa that is so contributing to the crisis in that country?

My second question also relates to what the UN is doing with respect to the distribution of the Global Fund. President Bush said—and he's not the first person to say this—that he has significant concerns over the distribution of the fund. Perhaps you could give us an update and let us know what the challenges are to the proper distribution of the fund's resources to address the pandemic of HIV/AIDS.

• (1640)

Mr. James Morris: The Global Fund was set up separate and completely apart from the UN. It was mandated not to provide support to UN programs.

I had a visit not so long ago with Secretary Thompson, who's chairman of the Global Fund. I told him how important I thought it was, when the Global Fund makes distribution, they are thoughtful about issues related to food, hunger, and nutrition and that people who have nutrition competence participate in their review panels. But the Global Fund is not a part of UNAIDS; it operates separately and totally outside the UN parameter.

In response to your first question on the issue of security, this is the single biggest challenge the international humanitarian community has today. We have 135 duty stations that are on high-security alert by UN standards. You see a lady kidnapped and maybe murdered, the head of CARE in Iraq, you see people weekly abducted, or shot at, or abused in all sorts of places doing humanitarian work, not doing political work, not being a part of anything other than to see that people at risk have basic support as it relates to the humanitarian agenda: food, water, shelter. The bombing of the Canal Hotel last August changed humanitarian work. I think humanitarian workers always assumed that the blue flag would see that they were respected by all parties to a conflict. That clearly is not the case any longer.

We've spent over \$20 million in the last 12 months changing our security standards. We've put plastic covering on all of our windows, we've almost tripled the number of security officers in the field. Everybody has gone through training.

Hon. Keith Martin: It was really the security I was asking about, Ambassador Morris, in terms of security on the ground for the people, the civilian workers, not so much your workers, in the sense that having security on the ground enables people to plant their crops, enables you to distribute adequately, enables them to have an economy that's going to function.

Mr. James Morris: I can't answer your question, Keith. I just don't know.

The impact of conflict and violence has an enormous impact on food security. It has a disproportionate impact on issues related to children. In Liberia, 70% to 80% of the combatants were children 11, 12, 13 years of age. In northern Uganda, about 12,000 kids have been kidnapped. We've talked about the orphans issue in sub-Saharan Africa. What is happening to children in this part of the world is absolutely shameful. Your country has done as good a job as anybody in the world in terms of providing peacekeeping support. We could not feed, what, 700,000 or 800,000 people in Liberia until the peacekeepers came in. Ultimately we have access now to 11 of the 15 counties, but initially we only had access to Monrovia. The peacekeepers come in and all that changes.

But I don't think I'm the right guy to answer your question.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Thank you very much.

Earlier today, some of us met with the Prime Minister from Grenada, who was here obviously desperately in search for a response to the humanitarian crisis that has occurred in Grenada, as well as some other Caribbean islands. One of the issues that we didn't have a chance to explore further, but that was mentioned in discussion, was this issue of whether humanitarian aid goes directly to the government or whether it goes through coordinated bodies, the UN or other multilateralist bodies. You mentioned earlier a very strong preference of the World Food Programme for dealing with private agencies, as opposed to government.

Can you elaborate on that a little bit? I think we're trying to make sense out of what are the most appropriate ways in which to respond. And I'm not asking you to comment directly on Canada's relationship with Grenada, but just as a general question.

• (1645)

Mr. James Morris: If Canada decides to work directly with the Government of Grenada, you have the option of making a bilateral commitment of food or cash to them. They then have the option of distributing it through their own system, through NGOs, or through the UN system or some hybrid.

Generally, I'm a strong advocate of the multilateral system. The multilateral system is vastly superior in distributing food to people who are most at risk, with 80% to 90% of the food we distribute going to the poorest, hungriest people in a country. Less than half of the food distributed through the bilateral system goes to the hungriest, poorest people in a country or community. There are very few external political issues when you're dealing with someone like the World Food Programme. We have a very narrow focus on feeding the hungriest, poorest people in a country. We are not subject to other considerations, by and large.

We know how to identify where the hungriest, poorest are. We know how to transport food to them. We are very good at doing the logistical function. In Iraq, we had to lease 9,600 trucks to do the food distribution; in Darfur, we have at least between 400 and 600 trucks. We have an air service to help with air drops. We know how to get food to the hungry and poor and we know how to move the food. We will always be certain that for any food given to the people of country X from Canada in a bag that says, "A gift from the people of Canada to the people of X", with your country's flag on it, we will be able to come back and tell you precisely where the food went and what the outcomes and output were as a result of your gift.

We just have enormous expertise in distributing food. We understand the nutritional impact, and we understand all of the other issues that are important in seeing that it's done properly and that you get the biggest bang for the buck out of the gift.

I would say that much multilateral work doesn't live up to those standards or doesn't have the same series of objectives. If your objective is to get food to the hungriest, poorest, most vulnerable people in a country, you're better off doing it with somebody who knows how to do that.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Perhaps a related topic is that of tied aid. I wonder if you could comment on where we are with that today in relation to where we need to be.

Mr. James Morris: I'm not going to insert myself in your national debate.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: In a more general nature, then.

Mr. James Morris: We always prefer cash. Cash gives us the ability to buy locally, to buy regionally—80% of the cash we have we are able to use locally. It supports local markets, having a huge impact on transport, storage, and the cultural appropriateness of the food we're making available.

Having said that, we're very grateful for everything anybody does for us. If the United States and Canada did not give us the commodity, give us food, we would be out of business tomorrow. We know that of the 80 countries that help us, they all have their special approaches and special needs. It's a big job to generate the kinds of resources we're talking about. It takes a lot of political will, leadership, and cleverness to move these things through a budgetary process in any country. I understand that there are lots of footnotes in the political process, and I'm not about to second-guess them.

We're deeply grateful when we have cash and we're deeply grateful when countries make unrestricted multilateral commitments to us, saying "Use this to respond to the most difficult situations that are the most urgent, and you have this cash to work with". More and more of our aid is tied; at least 85% of what we have is directed.

• (1650)

Ms. Alexa McDonough: That's 85% of the aid.

Mr. James Morris: It comes to us and is given with a direction by the donor country on where they want it to go. It has been going up steadily, which means our hands are tied.

If a crisis is covered on CNN or the BBC, you're focused on that. But 90% of the people who die every day, of the 25,000 people who died today because of hunger, did not die in a crisis situation. They died in some place that was never mentioned by CNN. In Iraq last year, we had plenty of money to do the work in Iraq, yet a few miles away where people were really struggling, it was a tough fund-raising situation.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Morris.

We will now go to Mr. Boudria.

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you.

I'm glad you raised this CNN factor. It was a question that I asked our witnesses last week, on the extent to which we were more and more influenced by what many of us call the CNN factor. I think you've answered that question. In other words, more and more countries will focus their attention because of the outrage of the population or their own outrage, having focused on something because we saw it on television, which isn't necessarily where the greatest need occurs. Thank you for raising that.

Mr. Morris, you mentioned something in the early part of your presentation about India. Did you say that 50 million people are hungry at the same time as there's a national food surplus, or did I not hear that correctly—or greater than self-sufficiency, however it was put?

Mr. James Morris: What I said was that India now has a 70-million metric ton surplus, and of the 840 million people in the world who are poorly nourished and hungry, 232 million of them live in India.

Hon. Don Boudria: So it's worse. It's 232 million at the same as there's a net domestic surplus.

Mr. James Morris: That's correct.

Hon. Don Boudria: Thank you.

To change gears in the limited time that we have, because we're all interested in the tremendous knowledge that you bring to our committee, I want to ask a question about Haiti. I was there with our Prime Minister last week.

You said that Haiti is the highest calorie-deficient country in the world. You will know this far better than I do, but tell me if I'm incorrect in my assessment. A large part of the problem has to do with deforestation, which has caused complete erosion of just about anything that was worthwhile in the soil. The soil has now polluted the ocean around it, and we see the fish stocks dwindling as a result of the ocean being poisoned around the western part of the island of Española, so we have this tremendous deficiency.

Can I conclude from what you said later that there is a good partnership among you, the FAO, and others in terms of counselling on methods, to the extent that they can even work in Haiti for replanting and other erosion-saving measures? At least in the long term, there can be some kind of soil reclamation, if that's what it's called, or the planting of some crops that will regenerate top soil, and later there could be something grown. Is all of this taking place at the same time as you're doing the wonderful things in that country?

•(1655)

Mr. James Morris: I don't know the answer to your question, and I don't know if it's happening in Haiti. I'll find out and we'll give you an answer.

The issues that you raise on the environment represent the seventh millennium development goal. Once again, it speaks to the fact that if people are not hungry and are well nourished, the environment will be less degraded and less burdened to take care of the harsh life-saving strategies that people employ when they don't have food.

I would encourage you to take a look at what your country is doing in Ethiopia in terms of supporting the environment, working on issues related to water, soil conservation, and reforestation, and

how a very small investment of only a few tonnes of food per community has enabled a community to address these issues. By having these issues addressed, they get through a drought. It's a powerful example of a small investment. By the way, it also brings together extraordinary and emerging community leadership that is ultimately more important than anything.

I don't know if WFP and FAO have a partnership in Haiti for doing this. As you know, the agricultural ministry in Haiti was destroyed and nearly all the assets of the ministry were lost when the transition took place.

Hon. Don Boudria: As well as other ministries too, for that matter.

Mr. James Morris: Yes.

I don't know if we're partnering with FAO there, but I'll find out and let you know.

Hon. Don Boudria: Thank you.

Do I still have time?

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): You have seven seconds.

Hon. Don Boudria: Thank you.

The Co-Vice-President (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Morris, for coming to meet with us.

Given one of the comments you made, I take it that you've taken a hard look at what nutritional shortfalls there are in the world. You were talking about the calorie shortfall in Haiti. I'm sure that you looked at what the protein needs are, and other micronutrients.

I was just wondering, as an agriculture producer, how the UN views using genetically modified food products in your aid delivery, and also promoting GMOs in your infrastructure program needs in helping people get to some sort of level of self-sufficiency.

Mr. James Morris: When I'm asked this question, I usually preface it by saying how disappointed I am when I go to bed every night if I haven't had a chance to answer this question sometime in the day, so thank you.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): We look forward to your answer.

Mr. James Morris: Our policy is this—and I haven't answered it for awhile, so I had to think. When Canada gives us food or when we buy food from Canada, the U.S., or country X, we ask you to certify to us that this food meets the health and safety consumption standards for your own people. For what we're buying from you or what you're giving us, the authorities of Canada will certify that this is safe to be used by the people of Canada.

We then touch base with the UN and something called the Codex Alimentarius, which is the food safety entity of the UN, led by FAO and WHO. We say, does this meet your standards? We get an answer.

We then turn to country X that needs the food and we say, here's what we have; we have these representations from where it comes from and from the rest of the UN family that this is safe for human consumption; would you like to have it? They say yes, they'd like to have it, or no, they don't want this. If they say no, they don't want this, then we respect their right as a sovereign country to take that position, and we'll try to find food elsewhere in the world that they'd find to be acceptable.

The WHO, the FAO, and the WFP went on record a year and a half ago saying that we have no reluctance to provide GM food, that we are aware of no evidence of where GM food has been harmful to human health, and that we're very comfortable in distributing it. I went on to say that if I had the slightest personal apprehension that this was going to put anybody at risk, we wouldn't do it.

• (1700)

Mr. James Bezan: I'm glad to hear you say that, that you're staying in the science.

Mr. James Morris: I'm from the United States, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Food and Drug Administration all have carefully reviewed these issues and found there's no evidence that the stuff has ever caused anyone to have a health problem.

Where this gets tricky—and this is beyond our issues of concern—is that there are trade issues. You would be astounded at the mythology, the fiction, that has grown up around the vulnerability of somebody consuming a GM product, but nevertheless, as the guy said, don't tell me what I believe or tell me how I feel; I know how I feel. It's a huge issue for us, because the U.S. gives us the most cash of any country but they also give us a huge amount of food, and I assume it's the same in Canada. But when the farmer brings the produce, the commodity, to the county seat and puts it in the silo, they don't separate it—GM, hybrid, traditional. It just all goes into the same pot.

We frequently say, this may have GM content. Zambia said they wouldn't take it. Other countries have said, yes, we'll take it, but please mill it. Well, when you mill it, it adds 25% to 30% premium. There are some advantages to milling it. It takes the burden off women from having to do the hand milling and you're able to fortify it. But the people who give it believe the stuff is perfectly safe and they don't want to pay for the milling.

I'm talking too long.

Mr. James Bezan: The other thing I want to follow up on is that you say today versus 10 years ago that there are 50 million more people starving. What is your outlook as to what's going to happen over the next 10 years? What type of need does that present for the World Food Programme? What are some of the remedies out there to start making this turn the other way?

Mr. James Morris: The trend is still negative. The number of hungry people is growing. That means that this issue of agricultural capacity, investment in basic infrastructure, more relationships between western agricultural universities and developing countries.... It also means that we need to be heavily focused to see that children don't grow up hungry and severely disadvantaged so they can never recover. Somewhere you have to step in and break the

cycle, and my view is that breaking the cycle with the child is the most appropriate place.

Poor mothers produce poor children and poor children produce more poor children. All of us around this table, our lives were made different because we were well nourished and we had a chance to go to school. Those are the external factors that the public at large can help address. I hope when I come back in two years that Canada is helping to feed a million school children in Africa.

Feeding a child for a few dollars a year means that child's life will never be the same. You have changed that child's life in the most profound way possible. If you compare this to all the other investments we make, conflict and all sorts of other things, the leverage, the payoff, is so much more significant in changing the life of a human being, a child, early in life. I'm very focused on how are we going to feed these 185 million kids outside of China and India over the next 10 years, so that when we're together the next time, there are fewer hungry kids in the world.

• (1705)

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Morris.

Mr. Kilgour.

Hon. David Kilgour (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Morris, for coming. I came in late. Did you say in essence that there are 800 million continuously hungry human beings, permanently?

Mr. James Morris: There are 840 million hungry people today and 1.2 billion people in the world who live on less than a dollar a day.

Hon. David Kilgour: Hunger kills more than HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria together?

Mr. James Morris: That's correct.

Hon. David Kilgour: And I think you said a minute ago that 24,000 people a day die of hunger, three-quarters of whom are children.

Mr. James Morris: That's correct.

Hon. David Kilgour: Absolutely astounding.

Mr. James Morris: Just think what the headline would be in the paper today if forty-five 747s full of children went down. That happens every single day of our lives.

Hon. David Kilgour: Yes, it's astounding. We had a hunger lunch yesterday at a church I go to and these figures were discussed.

Two of my colleagues have raised Zimbabwe with you, and I am really concerned about the deliberate starvation that's going to go on. With the elections coming up in March, it's probably going to get worse.

Can I raise Darfur with you again? We're having a one-day session on Darfur on Thursday, or half a day. What would you tell a group of parliamentarians talking about Darfur more than what you've already alluded to today?

Mr. James Morris: I would say that this is a very serious situation. The world is replete with examples where a crisis like this occurred and the political will or the political capacity was not there to resolve the problem promptly, and 25 years later you found the same number of people living in refugee camps, with more people having been born in the camps than came there originally.

In other words, there were people who lived in refugee camps in Pakistan for years. There are refugees living in southern Algeria now from the western Sahara who have been there for 27 years. This cries out for a political solution. I'm very grateful that your Prime Minister is going there. For a person who is the head of a great country, the head of government, to go there and to draw the world's attention to these issues.... I'm grateful that the Security Council met in Nairobi last week to focus the world's attention on this.

This is a very serious situation, and until people have a sense of security that law and order is restored, that they can go home and not be treated in the most horrific...50,000 or 60,000 people have been killed. The brutality accorded to women is beyond comprehension. But ultimately the impact on children is...half the children are anemic, a quarter of the kids are malnourished. I've never heard the head of USAID.... He predicted that the best case situation is that 300,000 people would die in Darfur, in the worst case a million, and that ultimately this could only be resolved so people can go home.

Hon. David Kilgour: The *Washington Post* lead editorial yesterday, I think, said in referring to the December 31 limit for negotiations, and I'm just quoting one sentence:

Darfur's people cannot wait that long;

—that is, until December 31—

their catastrophe is immediate. The families that have been driven from their villages have no means to plant crops or raise animals; they depend on food aid

—I assume that's you in part—

that is hostage to the budgetary whims of Western governments and Sudan's murderous tendency to restrict aid workers' access. The death toll is already enormous. The commonly cited number of 70,000 victims is a monstrous sugarcoating of reality: It leaves out deaths in areas not visited by aid workers, nearly all deaths from violence as opposed to malnutrition and all deaths before March.

Eric Reeves, as an independent observer, says it's already approaching 300,000. Would you agree with that, with the *Washington Post*?

• (1710)

Mr. James Morris: Would I agree with 300,000 people?

Hon. David Kilgour: No, the thrust of the article.

Mr. James Morris: Oh, sure. Completely.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Kilgour.

Mr. Casey.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley): Thank you very much. Certainly your presentation has been most interesting to all of us, but I'd like to know this. Where do you live and where do you go to work? Where is your job?

Mr. James Morris: Rome.

Mr. Bill Casey: Where do you live? Do you live in Rome, too?

Mr. James Morris: Yes.

Mr. Bill Casey: Do you go to many of the countries where the World Food Programme is active?

Mr. James Morris: Sure.

Mr. Bill Casey: Do you go to all of them?

Mr. James Morris: Well, I've been to over half. I've only been on the job for 32 months. I travel 85% of the time. I spend as much time in the field as I humanly can. I spend a big piece of my time trying to encourage people to be more generous and do more so we can solve these problems.

Mr. Bill Casey: That's your mission here today, more or less, is it, to try to help us understand and maybe contribute more?

Mr. James Morris: My mission is to say thank you and to be sure that you have the best sense I can convey of how important your support is and how serious these issues are, but also to tell you as parliamentarians that the people who work within your government, in CIDA, and the people in your foreign service who relate to us are extraordinary. You address the issues that I'm focused on about as thoughtfully, professionally, and carefully as anybody in the world.

When I came, Canada's support was below \$40 million. Today, it's above \$150 million. I'm grateful for that, and I'm here to say thank you. But it also gives me a chance to work with the media and tell the story.

You know, the lives we lead.... My home is in Indianapolis, Indiana, not so far from here. We have no comprehension of how hundreds of million of people live. I have three children and six grandchildren. They've had wonderful lives. I struggle to understand why there would be 300 million kids who struggle every day of their life just to make it to the next day.

I'm a retired businessman. Somebody asked me to do this job. It clearly wasn't what my wife had in mind for this particular part of our life, but this is important. Somehow this world, which has the capacity and the wherewithal and the goodwill, needs to do more. If we each do a little more and everybody does something, we can make progress, substantial progress, in addressing these issues.

Mr. Bill Casey: Our notes say you buy about \$1.6 billion worth of food a year. What are the main commodities you buy, the top five commodities?

Mr. James Morris: Those would be wheat, corn, rice, soybeans, pulses, vegetable oil, and we would buy some salt and some sugar, blended foods, high-protein blended foods.

Mr. Bill Casey: What percentage of your contributions are cash and what percentage are food?

Mr. James Morris: It's about fifty-fifty, but it's a bit misleading because that includes the cash that comes to us in support of the commodities given to us. If Canada gives us a bushel of wheat, Canada pays for the transport of that wheat to wherever it's going. Sometimes that's in kind, but generally it's in cash, and so we count that as the cash contribution.

• (1715)

Mr. Bill Casey: What percentage of Canada's contribution is cash and what percentage is commodity? Do you know?

Mr. James Morris: Canada is substantially in kind.

Mr. Bill Casey: Would you know the percentage, roughly?

Mr. James Morris: We'll get it for you.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Also, looking at those figures, is there any meat given out, canned meats or anything like that? I realize that so many of the nations you talked about, India and others, probably wouldn't be receiving meat, but is there meat?

Mr. James Morris: Some. We generally don't deal with anything that is perishable. I know canned meat is not perishable, as long as it's stored. Spain just gave us \$15 million of canned meat. We get canned fish from some of the Nordic countries. We're very grateful for that. We generally don't. Meat would be a very small part of our program.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Have we found the statistics that Mr. Casey had asked for? No.

Please continue.

Mr. James Morris: Most of what Canada gives us is commodities. You pay cash to transport the commodities. For example, in Darfur you've given us yellow split peas, very important, but you've also given us cash to buy sorghum. There was quite a good amount of sorghum available in Sudan. It's ironic; the rest of Sudan had a great harvest last year, and it was just lost in Darfur. So you've given us cash to buy....

According to my colleague, it's 90-10, as I'd thought. So about 10% is cash.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you, Mr. Sorenson.

Ambassador Morris, it is so utterly maddening to see this happening day in and day out. Frankly, I don't know how you get up in the morning. I'd be so disheartened. But it must be extremely gratifying to continue the fight.

With respect to Russia, China, and particularly India and the CIS, and where they are on the geometric cusp—where Africa was ten years ago on HIV rates—I have a real fear that unless there is political will to address the burgeoning HIV cases in those regions, we're going to have an enormous humanitarian, economic, and security catastrophe on our hands. Perhaps you could let us know what's being done to try to engage governments more to deal with this growing problem. As I said, they are at the rate where perhaps Africa was ten years ago.

Second, what can we do as a country to address the issue of food security in the world? Do we need an early warning system that

monitors various parameters with respect to the inputs into food security? Does that exist? And if that doesn't exist, should we not have one? It seems to me it would make a lot of sense to be able to watch the world, measuring various parameters that go into the issue of food security. Where we know that areas are moving into a certain red zone, if you will, then the flags go up, and we can start to address those, depending on what the inputs are to affect that food security problem.

There are really two questions there. Thank you.

Mr. James Morris: I do believe the leaders of the countries you mentioned now understand how serious the HIV/AIDS issue is. I said that India now has the largest number of HIV-positive people in the world. It passed South Africa sometime in the last six months. The UNAIDS board will meet in Moscow in March. It's interesting that it will meet there.

UNAIDS would tell you that the single most important issue in the fight against HIV/AIDS is educating children aged 5 to 15. It's important that school curriculums have educational programs for children of 5 to 15, and that makes school feeding work in Africa all the more important. School feeding enables kids to go to school and be successful, to learn, to listen, to think.

On the early warning system issue, I think Canada has supported the development of lots of progress in this area, especially in Africa. The use of high tech is growing in terms of being able to monitor various criteria that sort of indicate what's on the horizon. Canada has given us money for an early warning system related to nutritional deficiency in Darfur. Canada has made money available to help us with 70 projects to do nutritional assessments and to adapt nutritional programs unique to a community.

• (1720)

Hon. Keith Martin: Do we have a worldwide system, Ambassador Morris, looking at the world, in terms of an early warning system internationally for food security?

Mr. James Morris: Yes, it's called FEWS NET. It's largely a phenomenon of the USAID, but I'm sure you're a part of it. A lot of the intelligence agencies have been a part of this, as well as the development agencies. Country by country, countries have been developing their own early warning systems.

I'm not an expert on this, but it used to be that food assessments were done looking at crop production issues. You can't do a food assessment today without looking at hundreds of issues. Like everything else, it's advanced substantially.

I'll get information to you that gives you a more thorough answer.

The Co-Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): We will wrap this up really quickly. Ms. McDonough may have the last question, and then I'll go back to our co-chair, Mr. Steckle, for some closing comments.

Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Thank you.

Mr. Morris, you may be familiar with a quotation from a Brazilian archbishop, whose name I can't say I remember, who once said, feed the poor, they call you a saint, but if you ask why the poor are hungry, why they don't have food, they call you a communist.

Given the herculean work you do and the enormous sensitivity of it, I think I understand your diplomacy in responding to some of the questions we've raised. It's not at all our intention to put you on the spot, but if I understood correctly, you indicated that your preference would be for cash, but in fact Canada's contributions are 90% in kind and only 10% in cash. Your preference would be for untied aid, but—and please correct me if I'm wrong—85% of Canada's aid is in fact tied. You are grateful for the increase in Canada's ODA, but the reality is that we're at 0.27%, I think, not at the 0.7% that supposedly is our declared objective.

In view of the horrendous need out there, I'm asking what your advice would be to a multi-partisan committee of Parliament around how Canada could respond in a more satisfactory way to the dying and starving millions with whom you are currently working.

Mr. James Morris: Thank you.

What I said was that 85% of the support that comes to the World Food Programme from all our donors is directed.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Okay, thank you.

Mr. James Morris: I also said we prefer cash. Cash gives us flexibility. It allows us to buy locally, and buying locally has lots of advantages for us. I also said we are profoundly grateful for everything anyone does for us. If Canada and the U.S. did not give us food, we would not be in business.

Canada has given the World Food Programme in the last 41 years \$3.7 billion Canadian in value, and that's quite remarkable. Canada has given us as much talent to do our work as any country in the world. The guidance we get from CIDA and from your foreign ministry is as exceptional, outstanding, and reliable as that from any place in the world. You would be very proud of the quality of work the people who represent Canada offer to the World Food Programme.

Having said all that, the needs are enormous. We all have to do more. When my wife Jacqueline and I write our cheques at the end of the year for charitable work, we have to do a little more. If we all do a little more.... In my judgment there's nothing more reprehensible or shameful than having 300 million hungry kids in this world. It's just not acceptable today, when you see how the rest of us are going to spend the rest of the evening. For us to do what needs to be done—and I don't care whether you do it through the World Food Programme, through Canada Care, Canadian Oxfam, the grains board—we just simply have to do more.

You've turned the Canadian trend around, and you're back to where you once were as one of the most important players. By the

way, you've bought something very valuable for your country in doing this. You are highly regarded, highly respected, highly admired for being a place that just does the right thing, and with as little self-interest as possible. My dad told me there's no substitute for reputation, and you've got a good one.

My hope is you'll do more. Everywhere I go I'm going to ask people to do more. I'm working very hard to get China, India, Russia, and Saudi Arabia to do more. One of your colleagues, Ernest Loevinsohn, earlier in the day asked me what Canada could do to help make the case for this with the rest of the world. When your Prime Minister says to the Prime Minister of X that these humanitarian issues are important, that carries a lot of weight. When you have a chance to be an advocate for those who desperately need you, that's a good thing.

Clearly I'm hopeful you'll do more, but I'm also here to tell you I'm very grateful for what you've done over the last several years. The trend is extraordinary in my little corner of the world.

• (1725)

The Co-Chair (Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.)): Mr. Morris, I think I speak on behalf of all of us who were here and are still here this afternoon in thanking you for your forthright presentation. You've been very complimentary to us as Canadians. While we appreciate that, we've also been challenged to do more. As a grandfather, as a father, and as one who is approaching Christmas and seeing the abundance all of us have—in fact, the overabundance—I think we need to take this challenge to our respective communities and our churches, each one of us, as we respectfully carry out the kind of mission I think you've set us on today.

I've had the opportunity to travel to some of these underprivileged parts of the world. Some of my family are working in that part of the world today, so I know firsthand what is going on there. As to what is going on in Darfur today, I think you've just reinforced what we already knew, but we needed to hear it again.

We look forward to another presentation; hopefully there will be many millions fewer to feed the next time we meet. Thank you very much again for coming to us, for inviting yourself. You're always welcome to come to meet with us.

Today has been one of my easiest meetings, sitting with an able co-chair today—we share two different chairs on various committees.

And our thanks go to Dianne Spearman, who has come with us. You are Canadian, I understand.

• (1730)

Ms. Dianne Spearman (Director, United Nations World Food Programme, Office of the Deputy Executive Director): Yes.

The Co-Chair (Mr. Paul Steckle): Thank you for coming. Keep your good influence working for us and helping those people who need our help most.

Thank you very much.

The meeting stands adjourned.

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