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**Tuesday, November 7, 2006**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson**

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Tuesday, November 7, 2006

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)):** Good afternoon, committee, ladies and gentlemen. This is meeting 27 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today we're very fortunate to have a delegation from Africa with us. We have many different countries represented. In fact, some of the delegation are meeting with ministers and departments at the present time. They will be coming and going, and they will be joining us, hopefully, shortly.

We're pleased to have, first of all, the honourable Steve Akorli, Ghana's Minister of Roads, former deputy minister, and chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Public Accounts in the Parliament of Ghana. He also is the co-chair of the Africa-Canada Parliamentary Strengthening Program.

I'm not going to read through all the bios.

We also have Mr. Augustine Ruzindana, chair of African Parliamentarians' Network Against Corruption.

We have Mr. Abou Soule Adam, MP, chair of the finance committee in the National Assembly of Benin. He is also the chair of the Southern Africa Regional Poverty Reduction Network.

We also have with us Mr. Samson Moyo Guma, member of Parliament and vice-chair of the public accounts committee in the Parliament of Botswana.

Welcome to Canada. Welcome to Parliament, and welcome to the foreign affairs committee. Our committee is the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. We have been conducting research and a study on how we deliver humanitarian aid around the world. That was more in the spring.

Part of the same study, the same undertaking, is democratic development. How do we build the principles of democracy in countries around the world? How do we help promote democracy and the values that Canadians have come to appreciate, the values of freedom, the values of human rights, the values of rule of law? That is what this committee is looking at.

We welcome you here. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about who you are and what you're doing here. If you have comments specific to our study, we would welcome them as well. We'll give time to you, and we want to make sure that we leave time so that the committee members can ask some questions and have those questions answered.

Again, welcome, and the time is yours.

**Mr. Augustine Ruzindana (Parliament of Uganda):** My name is Augustine Ruzindana. I come from Uganda. I am chair of the African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption.

The network was formed largely through Canadian assistance. We first came here to Canada through the Parliamentary Centre with the Laurentian seminar program.

I attended the first one with Steve and a number of other colleagues—some are in parliament and some are out of parliament now. I attended the next one as a resource person, and then the first African-held event out of the Parliamentary Centre was held in Kampala in February 1999. The theme of that event was the part played by parliament in controlling corruption. At the end of the workshop, members who attended—and they were from ten African parliaments—decided to form a network that would keep them linked to each other, exchanging information, exchanging experiences, and that's how the African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption was founded. Without the input of Canadian aid, it would not have been possible.

Since then, a number of other interlinked networks have been formed. There is a gender network, which is based in Dakar. There is a poverty reduction network, which is based in Accra, and there is a newly formed one on AIDS. So there are four networks that are interlinked and they are mainly assisted by Canadian assistance. Because they have been in existence for some time, we have assistance from other countries, from DANIDA, from the World Bank, and so on. But the seed was planted by Canada.

Basically, what we are doing is sensitizing members of parliament and the institution of parliament itself on how to utilize the oversight function to control corruption. Traditionally, parliaments have not been involved in the fight against corruption, or the role that they played was not interpreted as a role against corruption. So when we started this network, we tried to show members of parliament that through the various roles—like the one we just witnessed now, a question time, for example—through committees of parliament, through examining budgets of government, examining the report of the auditor general, members of parliament, and the institution of parliament, we can utilize it to fight corruption.

We have, over the years, had a number of projects. The most recent one we have had is a pilot project on the African Union convention against corruption, which requires certain things to be done by parliaments within Africa, like the domestication of offences that are outlined within the convention. We have had pilot projects in three countries—in Ghana, in Zimbabwe, and in Uganda—and they have studied the institutional mechanisms, the legal mechanisms that are in place in those countries that either facilitate the occurrence of corruption or prevent corruption.

• (1540)

The other networks do the same—the poverty reduction network, the gender network, and now the new one on AIDS.

The Parliamentary Centre has a project in Kenya. It's for the parliamentary strengthening project for the Parliament of Kenya. There is another project in the Sudan, there was a project in the Parliament of Ethiopia, and so on. All of these are for the strengthening of democratic institutions and democracy.

I have other colleagues. I shouldn't take a lot of time, but I'd like to end with the comment that Canada is playing a useful role, at least with regard to the African continent, in strengthening democracy. Of course, it can do a lot more, but the coming of NEPAD and so on, and the funds that were made available—the first input that was made available was \$500 million—is what our networks are benefiting from. I'm sure Parliament had to approve those funds, and we are therefore grateful for the input Canada is making into the democratization process in Africa.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your comments. Again, I'm not certain of the order you want to go in, but whoever has any other comments, go ahead.

**Hon. Steve Akorli (Parliament of Ghana):** Thank you very much.

I'm Steve Akorli, from Ghana. I was a member of Parliament in Ghana for 12 years. I retired, voluntarily, in 2004. I am associated with the African-Canadian parliamentary strengthening program, and I became the co-chair of the coordinating council. The program is running a course of four years. The management of the program thought my experience was still valuable, and that is why I'm here with you. Maybe if it extends and they still find me useful, you may see me in the future.

Canada has helped Africa a lot. I want to particularly zone in on Ghana. In 1992 we had to break away from a military regime and get into a constitutional government. Those of us who offered ourselves as guinea pigs to Parliament—Parliament having been in abeyance for more than 15 years—were completely without tools. Out of the 200-member Parliament, there were only two people with previous experience; 198 people were completely new, including me.

It took a country like Canada to come to our aid in building our capacity. Within two years, we were able to live up to the task of passing constitutional bills as well as building the framework to make Ghana the solid democracy it is now.

We are now in our fifteenth year. The climate in Ghana, now, about elected government is that it's better than the best military

regime. Going back is not a foreseeable agenda. Going forward and building on our democracy is an agenda that we have set for ourselves. We are so happy about the role Canada is still playing, especially in this program in which I'm on the coordinating council.

Over the years, we've benefited. As a result of the three or four networks that Augustine just talked about, Ghana's parliamentary capacity and oversight in the areas of financing and poverty-related issues has deepened a lot.

The issue of gender activism has been elevated to a level you cannot imagine. The civil society within Ghana has come up with what it calls a "gender manifesto". It looks at what can be done for women, to move from where they are to where they can have access to land, credit, and things that will give them a bigger voice.

These are the offshoots of the democratic experiment we have done over the past 15 years. We are very grateful to Canada for it.

There is a sister program directed at the Parliament of Ghana. I happen to be a beneficiary of that program too. It is in place now, and it has built the capacity of a lot of members of Parliament.

In order to make life better for our children and our children's children, our hope and aim is that we rise to the level of the Canadian Parliament and uphold the same values of freedom, good governance, and transparency that have brought you to where you are today.

We thank you for the support we have received. We are grateful.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Obed Bapela (National Assembly of the Republic of South Africa):** My name is Obed Bapela. I'm a member of Parliament, still active, in South Africa.

I am in my ninth year as a member of Parliament—first for five years in a provincial Parliament, in a province, and now for four years in the National Assembly.

I was a member of the foreign affairs committee from 2002 until last year. Fortunately, I was promoted to a higher position, which I'm occupying now, called the House chairperson—it is an assistant speaker, but we decided to call it otherwise in South Africa—responsible for international relations of Parliament as an institution and for executing its mandate and programs.

I also belong to a group with the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, which is looking at ruling parties and opposition parties forming some kind of dialogue in the southern region in east Africa. All parliaments will be brought together to talk about issues of common interest, such as transparency and people with vulnerabilities, such as the weak and the disabled and youth. How can we, as parliaments, play a role in terms of lifting their standards in society? There are quite a number of programs we are involved in. It's just a loose association of some sort that is sponsored by that body.

In our Parliament, the main sponsors, unfortunately... CIDA has played a role, and Canada continues to play a role in South Africa—before the apartheid regime came down, Canada was so visible and opposed apartheid—on issues of capacity building, particularly for non-governmental organizations, capacity building for organizations, departments. But the leading funding currently is EU funding, which is doing a lot of capacity building continuously, while we also still benefit from Canadian funding in terms of those programs, particularly for non-governmental organizations and civil society.

It is the view, I think, of the Canadians—and which is working very well for us—that we need a very strong civil society movement. We also need very strong non-governmental organizations that can play a role in the oversight of society. Parliament is playing an oversight role, as an institution, over the executive. Civil society NGOs play a role in terms of facilitating and giving support, and also in ensuring, therefore, that society and democracy benefit everybody. I think that program has to continue in that direction, because it is beneficial to a number of us, particularly to those who are in government and those who are in Parliament who are able to engage with a civil society that is informed and a civil society that is sharp and that is ready and able to follow up on very critical situations in our country.

I thank you.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to our final presenter. Would you please introduce yourself?

**Mr. Samson Moyo Guma (Parliament of Botswana):** My name is Samson Moyo Guma.

I just want to make a correction. I'm not a deputy chairperson of the public accounts committee. I'm a member of the public accounts committee and also a member of the finance and estimates committee of Parliament.

I'm here at the invitation of the Parliamentary Centre.

I'm a member of Parliament in Botswana, but my main areas are finance and looking for partnerships with various countries in terms of how we can assist each other in economic growth.

I'll not really be focusing a lot on issues of governance. To us, it's a work in progress we have been in for the past 40 years, and we believe that we're quite stable. There is quite a lot of room for improvement. But our main focus, as of now, is issues of growth—economic growth—and not, per se, along the lines of asking for donations or finding donors. We're looking for partners in the areas of economic growth and for investors in exchange programs. I'm here, basically, on a benchmarking exercise to see how certain things are done, and if possible to go out there and maybe sell our country as much as possible.

We're very stable as a country, politically and economically. Basically, our main area, our main emphasis, and our main concern touches on the issues of finance. I'll want to listen as much as possible and answer as many questions as you may throw at us.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Guma.

We will go to the first round of questions. The official opposition gets the first round.

Mr. Wilfert.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to welcome all of you to the committee and to Canada.

I want to first of all make a comment and then ask a question.

I had the pleasure in 1997, as president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, to go on a speaking tour of Ghana on the formation of the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana, NALAG. You pointed out the change from military rule in 1992. At the time, one of the challenges Ghana had was to build a democracy with real roots. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which is supported in its international work by the Canadian International Development Agency, was asked if we would undertake a project to establish a national municipal organization in Ghana.

It was one of the most rewarding experiences I've had, because I got to talk to leaders, people in the business community, and people on the street about the experiment of democracy that was taking root in Ghana. That experience at the local level seems to have helped Ghana move forward to a stable democracy.

As a parliamentarian, how were you able to deal with the issue of democracy and development? How did you deal with the fact that you really started out with a transition from military rule to a democracy, where traditionally a very powerful executive was very dominant versus a legislature, in terms of trying to get that right balance? Ghana is one of the success stories in Africa—regrettably, there are some that are not—in being able to strike that balance to empower members. You went through some of the issues on oversight, corruption, etc., which are very important, but how did you go about that process?

Can you then tell us what lessons you have learned there that might be of some assistance to this committee as we move forward in our deliberations on development and democracy?

• (1555)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. Akorli.

**Hon. Steve Akorli:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Yes, I'm glad you have been in Ghana and have seen the problems of the transition and most especially the very dominant executive that a young Parliament had to deal with.

Indeed, because of our history, if you look at the arms of government as we traditionally know them, Parliament is the weakest of the three brothers. It's the weakest of the three brothers because each time there is a military adventure, the executives themselves incorporate the legislative power, as well as the executive power. Of course, the judiciary will always be there to do their bidding.

When Parliament was re-established, it came in as a toddler and had to really fight with a very dominant vision. It is a problem we are still grappling with. To be very honest with you, we have not overcome it. We've not overcome it because one of the disservices the constitution we are now using imposes on us was that even though we were trying to go to an executive presidential system, part of the constitution looked at blending the executive and the ministers together.

The other thing was that the president, who had enormous executive powers, was also given the mandate to select some of his ministers from among members of Parliament. The result was that he picked very powerful ministers from Parliament who were serving in his cabinet and at the same time voting and debating on the floor of the House, influencing people who were there in the House.

Because of the opposition, and you know that our development of Parliament has such a weakness, you now need to depend on some of those ministers to push the government agenda.

Mind you, the MP is the same as a development agent, as well as a legislative agent. That poses a lot of problems, and we are still trying to grapple with it.

What we're now doing, and what civil society is helping us to do, is to propose that part of the Constitution needs to be amended, especially this aspect, such that if we're going to have an executive president, let him bring all his ministers from outside Parliament. Parliament will then be free enough and people will be free enough to think.

What happens now is you are a member of Parliament, and because you are hoping that one day you'll become a minister, decision-making in relation to the executive on the floor of the House becomes impaired. We are still grappling with that problem.

Our way forward is together with civil society. Proposals are coming and very soon our constitutional review will be seen.

But quite apart from that, there are oversight functions that, as we grow and begin to learn and know what we can do, are beginning to take on a little more shape and they're beginning to bite a little more and cut down the powers of the executive.

It's not as dominant as it used to be, but it's definitely still powerful simply because members of the executive are also members of the legislature. Somehow or another, they influence the legislation in various ways. That is the problem.

Thank you.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There is sometimes a gap when we switch languages. But you are African parliamentarians, and in most of your countries, you speak several languages. You must appreciate the resources we have so everybody can participate in the discussion in his or her own language.

I would like to talk more specifically about corruption with Mr. Ruzindana, from Uganda. Mr. Ruzindana, you said you worked a great deal on the issue of corruption. We are working right now on a report on Haiti and more specifically on Canadian assistance in Haiti. Corruption is one of the issues on the top of our minds. Could you share your experience with us to help us in our discussions, and tell us what was the nature of Canada's assistance, more particularly as concerns the fight against corruption? I would also like to know what are the means you used to correct this problem. I guess this process must still be ongoing. So, my two questions are on Canadian assistance, on what you had to do as a Ugandan and what are the results you achieved up to now.

I want to emphasize corruption is not just an African issue. We recently had our own corruption problems. In a democracy, we should always look for new means to have our governments behave in a transparent and open way and we have to be on the lookout for the failings that can lead to wrongdoings. I would like to have your comments on this.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Barbot.

[*English*]

**Mr. Augustine Ruzindana:** Thank you, honourable member.

At the beginning I said that we formed a network of parliamentarians against corruption. It's actually the first network of parliamentarians that was formed in the world against corruption. Subsequently, others have been formed, including GOPAC, which was formed later. The African parliamentarians network is the first that showed that members of Parliament could be involved in the fight against corruption.

Partly it was my background. Before I went to Parliament in 1996, I was the Inspector General of the Government of Uganda, charged with fighting against corruption. That is similar to anti-corruption commissions in other countries. When I went to Parliament, I found that there was a role that Parliament plays, the oversight role, and I thought it was not playing that role fully. So I tried to see how the oversight role could become an anti-corruption tool and how Parliament could itself, as an institution, be utilized in the fight against corruption.

You asked how Canada had assisted us. Canada assisted us in forming the network. We came together, members of Parliament from ten African countries—basically, at that time, members who were in the budget committees and in the public accounts committee. I was, at that time, chairman of the public accounts committee and the finance committee. Because of our role, we had seen through reports of the Auditor General, through examining the budgets and how they are managed, that Parliament could ask questions that would lead to unearthing acts of corruption.

In my role as chair of the public accounts committee, we introduced an innovation in our public accounts committee, and it is still continuing now, that when we were sitting as the public accounts committee, we also had police officers sitting with us from the criminal investigation department, so that if the committee found any established criminal elements in their investigations, the police officers could immediately open a case file. They could continue their investigations and continue reporting to us, and if they found that indeed a crime had been committed, they would assemble enough evidence to charge the culprits. Then they would go ahead with the court process, and so on, and we would report accordingly to Parliament.

For all of this, actually the stimulus came from interaction with the Parliamentary Centre of Canada. Our initial funding was both funding from the World Bank and from CIDA through the Parliamentary Centre. Since then, we have continued to receive funding from CIDA.

We now have a network in 18 parliaments in Africa, and there are about six coming on board. A lot of the funding is Canadian funding, so Canada has actually assisted us in being able to transform the parliamentary role of oversight into an anti-corruption tool.

• (1605)

So you will find that where the chapters are—we call it APNAC—where the network is, members who are in the public accounts or their various sector committees do look at the elements that may be connected with corruption in their particular work.

We have now added another concern, in addition to corruption, and that is corporate social responsibility, particularly with regard to revenues from minerals, oil, timber products, and so on, because there are a number of corporate social responsibility initiatives, which we think our countries can benefit from.

As I said, we are receiving funding from CIDA, and this too is benefiting from Canadian assistance.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We're going to try to keep to our time here. These are seven-minute rounds, which include questions and the answers.

Mr. Obhrai, please give very concise questions, and we'll get the answers at the same time.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** Thank you.

Of course I met all of you yesterday. We talked about international development, but what I really want to talk about today is your role as parliamentarians in another important element. You talked about corruption. You talked about capacity-building for your parliaments yesterday, for oversights, and everything, but one area I think parliamentarians in Africa have totally missed is their input into the human rights situations in Africa.

The African Union is now becoming weaker by the day. It is not becoming stronger. It's quite a concern, because we are putting a lot of emphasis on the African Union to resolve many of the issues, for example, in Zimbabwe, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. The list goes on and on. We are looking at the African Union, but what's

happening is that the leadership in Africa is not strong enough yet to maintain that.

What level do you set as parliamentarians? There is one level now, and you're going down on this thing here. How are parliamentarians of the African nations taking this strengthening of the African Union—the pan-African issue—to ensure security and stability in the region?

You're all interconnected. All the colonial borders we had don't matter; you're all interconnected. We have the Congo thing, the Burundi thing, and this thing here.

**The Chair:** Hurry and ask the question, please.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Let me ask; it's very important.

So I want to see what role you can play as parliamentarians at this level to strengthen the pan-Africanism, the African Union.

**The Chair:** Maybe we'd better get the answer, Peter, and we'll try to get you on the way back. We don't have a lot of time here.

**Mr. Augustine Ruzindana:** To whom is that question directed?

**Mr. Obed Bapela:** Do you want to answer?

**Mr. Samson Moyo Guma:** Yes.

I'm quick to respond to this one because you raised the issue of Zimbabwe, and we are their neighbours. I happen to come from a constituency that is right at the border of Zimbabwe. We're always accused of not helping our Zimbabwean brothers. We hear from the international community that those in the neighbouring countries must be at the forefront of assisting and resolving the "Zimbabwean crisis"; I put that in quotation marks.

Although we are doing that, perfectly, our policy in Botswana is that you can choose anything in life, but you cannot choose your neighbours. You can choose where you want to stay, but the neighbourhood is a problem. The problem is much bigger than just the issue of shouting and making noise. We are engaging our neighbours very seriously, but the problem is much bigger. Again, to a large extent, there is an influence as well from external forces far beyond the boundaries that we have or that our neighbours have.

Our belief is that at times we have to approach things differently. We have to treat each case on a case-by-case basis, depending on which country we're dealing with. You'll find Zimbabwe in the situation where it has a colonial past, its own history. You have Zimbabweans themselves with internal issues as well, and a lack of honesty from both sides, ruling and opposition. I'll give you an example.

When there were tribal issues, tribal conflicts, in the beginning, and Robert Mugabe massacred about 20,000 Zimbabweans, the Ndebele people on the other side, the Zimbabwean people never said much. They kept quiet. When he went ahead and started to move and to restrict the white community—the "third class", as he called them—again they were very quiet on the other side.

Now he has gone further, to now become a mad fellow. You are dealing with Mugabe as a person but you're also dealing with the regime itself—the strong secret service that has been trained overseas and the other international agencies that are involved in destabilizing the country. The problem is much bigger than just what you can point to in Robert Mugabe.

It becomes worse if big countries like Germany, the U.K., and the United States isolate Mugabe, say they don't want to talk to Mugabe. You have to realize that you're dealing with a maniac here. When you're dealing with a person like that, and you're not engaging him in a discussion, he could massacre the very same.... What do we do with the refugee problem we're facing? What do we do with an economy that is just about to collapse?

So what we ourselves then do, and have to do, is treat each case as it comes. We have to treat each of them on a case-by-case basis so that we don't run the risk of having civil war again, when problems become much bigger.

In short, we believe in a dialogue. We have to engage our neighbours as much as possible. We're sick and tired of wars. We're sick and tired of rebuilding. We believe, in southern Africa, that we have to engage our neighbours as much as possible, and with respect.

• (1615)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I know that others would like to answer on that as well. It's a very complex problem. I'm disappointed that we have only one hour, because this is key testimony, especially in answer to some of the questions here.

So I hate to cut anyone short, but perhaps you can incorporate some of your answers to Mr. Obhrai's questions into your answers to Madam McDonough's questions.

Madam McDonough.

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

It's frustrating, because there are probably two dozen questions we would love to ask. You may have noticed, I just turned to my very capable parliamentary assistant and asked him how many countries there are in Africa, 53 or 57, because it occurred—

**Mr. Samson Moyo Guma:** Fifty-three.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Fifty-three? He got it right. I had it wrong; I said 57.

But here is my point: I really appreciated your response, because in all humility, Canadians have a very hard time taking any responsibility for the misdeeds and misadventures of the only neighbour we have, which is the U.S. So it's understandable you can't be responsible for 52 other countries on a day-by-day basis, although lots of people try to make various governments feel responsible for their neighbours.

I have a couple of questions. One is with respect to NEPAD. There was some criticism in the early discussions about the launch of NEPAD, about it not being as thoroughly grounded in the experience

and in the aspirations of African nations as it might have been. I'm wondering if you have any comments on that at this point.

We're about to have an opportunity to ask questions of our Minister of Foreign Affairs in the next hour. If you had the opportunity to look him in the eye across the table, knowing he is a new minister, not responsible for whatever early omissions there might have been, what would you want to be asking our foreign affairs minister about NEPAD in its current iteration, and where it might go?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Obed Bapela:** I know that we are pressured by time, and I fully agree that we should have had more time. I'll just deal with both questions as raised.

The latter one is on the issue of the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament, and where they are in terms of human rights. These bodies are new. One was formed in 2000, reconstituted from the OAU into the African Union, with a new leadership and a new vigour to ensure that only those who are building strong states and strong democracies would be members and that as soon as you come into power through a coup, your membership would be suspended immediately—unlike the OAU, which allowed that type of situation to exist.

The Pan-African Parliament is still in its first five years, at its formative stage as a non-legislative body. After five years there will be a debate—and, in fact, it has started now—to make it a legislative body thereafter. Currently it doesn't have any powers in terms of legislation.

Thirdly, there is a challenge of finance, generally. Many member states do not contribute their fees to the African Union, so it is weak as a result. It can take decisions, but it will not be very powerful in executing some of the decisions. There are very few countries on the continent that are able to carry the coffers.

Let's take the African mission in Sudan; currently it's South Africa and Nigeria alone that are carrying that body. That is why there is a call for other nations to come in and contribute, and obviously to support what we have in Sudan around the issue of the United Nations resolution, which they do not like.

A lot of African countries have supported the resolution that it has to go. Once you do that, then they rush to the Arab world and say, "Arab brothers, look what is happening in the United Nations". It's as complex as that, as my colleague was saying.

It's not a simple matter, but the issue of finance is a bigger issue. Niger is coming on board in terms of beginning to contribute to us some of the resources. They will not be giving money, but it will be equipment, vehicles for the mission to be able to cover Darfur, because the current region we're dealing with in Sudan is Darfur. In South Sudan there is peace. There is a United Nations peacekeeping force, and no problem about it. The northern government is not even raising an issue about it. They're only protecting Darfur.



When you look at the nitty-gritty and ask “why Darfur”, it's that there's talk about the biggest uranium find being found in Darfur. They will accuse the west and say the west wants Darfur because of the uranium in that particular area, and therefore they will not allow anybody to come in because it is their own resource.

So, on the issue of the AU and PAP, they are new bodies, but also quite a number of these are poor people; they are highly indebted, poor countries that we still have in Africa, unfortunately, and some of the debt cancellation that was committed to by rich nations has not yet happened. It has not yet been cancelled, and those countries are still trapped.

A lot of budgets in Africa are 60% or 50% aid that comes into a particular country. This means that country has not yet even recovered to build its own revenue and be a stand-alone and be able to contribute to the continental body that needs to be strengthened in order for us to be able to then implement programs such as NEPAD and so forth.

However, the NEPAD program is still continuing. It may not be grounded fully, in nation-to-nation terms; however, in terms of its being known, generally it is known. Then, parliaments are now beginning to engage at the Pan-African Parliament around the establishment of a commission on NEPAD. In every parliament there will be a commission of some sort for a debate or an engagement with civil society and the people of the respective parliament. They could also begin to follow on that.

There is a lot of transformation also taking place within the AU, because after establishing at the executive level—the ministers of foreign affairs level—now they are looking at the five commissions. They have just opened with commissioners, and the commissioners have to build. NEPAD is going to be removed as a stand-alone, to be included as part of the commission type of program.

• (1620)

Therefore, there's a lot of work and institution building taking place on that continent, and I think that is why you see it as weaknesses, whereas we see it as a building process. Also, it will need some type of partnership from the rich nations really to see that succeeding. With this peer review mechanism, the nations themselves will be able then to introspectively consider whether their democracies are working and then determine how they can rebuild, remodel, and modernize their nations, so that indeed the continent goes into those brighter days that we all visualize. Unfortunately, I could elaborate more, but due to time—

• (1625)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Was there anyone else on that one, on NEPAD? No.

We just have time for one or two very quick, concise questions. I'm going to take two, from Mr. Goldring and Mr. Martin, and then we're basically out of time. They have to be 25-to-30-second questions with the answers.

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Mr. Akorli, you mentioned Ghana coming in the past, since 1992, from a military regime to a democracy that is relatively stable and prospering. Bringing a democracy from that, with a relative basis as you had

mentioned—two people with experience on it—there must have been a shortage of political infrastructure. In bringing this democracy forward, was part of that process training to incorporate the political themselves to political party development, for the politicians to be sensitized to representation from the community level forward? Did you have some of that type of assistance too, or would that type of assistance have been helpful on the road and looked for in the future?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Martin, proceed very quickly, and then we'll get both answers.

We'll just get the other question. Please keep track of what that question was and answer them both together.

Mr. Martin.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Thank you.

Thank you again for being here. The essential question I have is this. What does one do with despotic leaderships? In Angola, the \$6 billion surpluses, those moneys, are going into the hands of the leadership. In Zimbabwe, Mr. Mugabe is murdering his people. Ethiopia and Eritrea are engaging in a proxy war in Somalia.

What do you recommend, perhaps through the AU or other subregional organizations, must be done in order to rein in these leaders who are absolutely pillaging the resources of their country and sometimes murdering their people? And what can Canada do to support that process?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Martin, and thank you for keeping it short.

I want to go back to Mrs. McDonough as well. She also asked a question, and you may want to incorporate it into your answers. We have our foreign affairs minister attending this committee in the next hour. Part of her question, I think, if I can paraphrase it, would be this. If you were speaking to the foreign affairs minister, and perhaps you already have, what specific questions in regard to Africa would you be asking him?

Those are the three questions: Mr. Goldring's, Mr. Martin's, and that other one from Ms. McDonough.

Go ahead.

**Hon. Steve Akorli:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to start with the institutionalization of the political parties and their capacity to be able to enforce or enhance our democracy.

Yes, a lot has been happening, as I said, because we started anew. A lot of institution building had to take place, and the NDI and some other organizations working in the area of building political parties are a real help.

As of now, as I speak, there is established in Ghana what we call an IPAC, an inter-party yearly consultation, which is supported by Denmark and the Netherlands, and they are helping to build capacities in our political parties. The result is that the bickering that you have seen among political parties between 1992 and 1996 has died down considerably.

Indeed, but for that, the 2004 election could have been in some kind of turmoil, but because of the existence of this kind of IPAC and consultations within parties.... There is an institute, what they call the party chairmen forum, where they meet once every month to look at issues that are bothering them. There is what we call the general secretaries of parties meeting, which comes quarterly. All these things help. A think tank called the Institute of Economic Affairs is in charge of doing this.

So as we grow the parliamentary democracy, so also is the political party growth coming along. The result is that a lot of dialogue is going into our democratic structures rather than into bickering and war. That is the issue there. But of course, learning processes go on for quite a time, and it will take some time before we succeed.

Now, on the issue of our human rights generally, Zimbabwe and what's happening in Somalia, these two areas are a big concern to Africa. But I think in the past few years a lot has happened in Africa, and if nothing else, the institution that we call the African peer review mechanism has toned down the excesses of a lot of militant leaders in the sense that your neighbours, your peers, are ready to hold you to account and sometimes chastise you, and in certain extreme cases, if you even contemplate coming by any other means apart from democratic means, they are ready to jettison you.

So we think the APRM.... The reports coming in on the first few countries that offered to be peer-reviewed have been, I think, quite encouraging in helping others to offer themselves for peer review. We in Ghana happen to be one of the very first countries to offer ourselves for peer review, and the results are not as bad as people might think. In fact, it has really encouraged a lot of other countries.

So human rights issues are being confronted. Zimbabwe and Somalia are peculiar cases, and maybe we will have to talk with a lot of foreign or international relations aspects to be able to work on these. Because to me, the Zimbabwe issue has just moved from...it's not merely a human rights issue. That's somebody who I think is a megalomaniac and has gone.... Maybe we need a psychiatrist to work on people of that nature.

As for Somalia, that's another story altogether, and maybe we would need a whole day to talk about it.

•(1630)

**The Chair:** Well, we'll have to have you back.

**Mr. Augustine Ruzindana:** I think the question to the foreign minister would be...although there is emphasis on the fact that NEPAD is of African origin, there is something that is always omitted, which is that there was in small print some \$64 billion expected to underwrite it, and that was not supposed to be forthcoming from the African continent. That does not seem to be discussed at all. It is glossed over or never talked about.

There was an implicit understanding of that being underwritten by the developed countries, and the developed countries are talking only about the part to be played by the African countries, without assuming that they have a part to play.

**Mr. Obed Bapela:** That's one of their omissions in the G-8, which Canada is a part of.

**The Chair:** It's too bad you're so far away and we have so little time. As you may notice, our minister is here. We have certainly appreciated your testimony here today. I think it has helped us understand it a little more. We get stats and figures and we hear information, but when it comes from those who are there on the ground and understand the trials and frustrations involved in democracy building, especially on the African continent, we very much appreciate your input.

We're going to suspend. We'll ask the minister to make his way to the table.

Thanks again.

•(1630)

(Pause)

•(1635)

**The Chair:** We're pleased in our second hour today to welcome Minister MacKay, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to our committee. I'm not certain how many times he's been here. It seems as if we're seeing a lot of our ministers lately, and we appreciate that. We appreciate your willingness to come.

These are the main estimates that we're here to discuss today. We welcome your comments, Mr. Minister. You are well aware of how this committee operates. We thank you for being here. After your comments we'll go to the first round, with ten-minute questions from each. Because we have votes today we'll be watching the time very closely. They may even be cut short to about eight minutes so that everyone gets an opportunity.

Minister MacKay.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm delighted to be here again.

As you can see, I have officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs with me as well. Doreen Steidle is assistant deputy minister. Peter Harder is deputy minister. Gérald Cossette is with us on passport matters, which he may want to address.

Colleagues, distinguished members of this committee,  
[Translation]

I am pleased to appear once more before this committee.

•(1640)

[English]

I want to address the issues around our main estimates for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

[Translation]

The estimates, and the Report on Plans and Priorities, represent the department's business plan for the current fiscal year. I do not intend to take you through it page by page.

Instead, allow me to say a few words about the department in the context of Treasury Board policies and the government's fiscal priorities, particularly in the context of value for money and a results-based approach to planning, expenditures, management and accountability.

[English]

Mr. Chair, the department's budget is \$1.9 billion. Questions immediately arise: What do Canadians get for their money? Does it need to be spent? Is it well spent? How is the department handling the spending review that the government instituted for all departments?

Let me begin with the last question. The department has achieved all the budget reductions imposed on it, including the Budget 2006 reduction of \$70 million that was inherited from the previous government. We are certainly doing our share in the new government's expenditure reduction program as well, and we will continue to do our share.

Having said that, I'm not going to list item by item how these expenditure reductions have occurred; you have that information, and we're pleased to answer any specific questions.

I do want to offer some perspective, though, on the significant role Canada plays on the global stage and how my department makes that role possible. Canada is a G-8 country and a NATO member with global responsibilities. We are influential with the United States and our allies because of that global role. That is why the United States of America listens to Canada. It's not only because we happen to be neighbours; our voice matters there. Friends can disagree respectfully and constructively, and we're able to accomplish much more in that environment.

Our global role also takes us into the heartland of international decision-making, negotiations, and networking. Besides the G-8 and NATO, this includes the United Nations, the Organization of American States, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation—APEC, the Commonwealth, and La Francophonie, to mention a few. There are a total, I believe, of 60 organizations of which Canada is a member, 40 of which directly touch foreign affairs.

We are certainly global in our perspective, Mr. Chair. One in five Canadians was born abroad, and 2.7 million Canadians live outside Canada, which naturally results in an increased demand for consular, passport, and commerce services. Canadian direct investment abroad reached \$465 billion in 2005, and grew by 3.9% each and every year in the period from 2001 to 2005.

This is, of course, very much to our advantage, but we are facing a more complex and dangerous international security environment, and we must try to shape and influence geopolitics, geopolitical shifts, and the growth of new powers in the east.

[Translation]

Canadian security and prosperity depend on global economic and political developments, and on the quality and depth of our engagement with them.

Let us get to the heart of the matter. What are the department's strategic objectives? What do Canadian taxpayers get for their money?

[English]

Canada's strategic objectives fall into four main areas, Mr. Chair: security for Canada and Canadians; prosperity for Canadians;

advancing our values and humanitarian actions globally; and service to Canada and Canadians.

Often overlooked is the department's value-added role in supporting domestic priorities through international action. DFAIT is the only government department that connects Canada's international and domestic interests across a whole range of programs and policies—for instance, our national security, supported by international agreements; counter-terrorism work; international law enforcement; global health issues; environment; and of course responding to foreign-based threats to security, such as combating the sources of terrorism themselves in places such as Afghanistan.

Our domestic prosperity is supported through Canada's international trade policy and programs; our sovereignty, through international law and relations with key partners; our federation, by integrating provincial representatives abroad. You would know, Mr. Chair, that this is increasingly happening, in that many of the Canadian provinces now have consuls and representation abroad with which we are interacting.

The welfare of our citizens through consular, passport, and commercial services, of course, is also our responsibility, as is our public health, by participating actively in pandemic preparedness worldwide. Indeed, the Government of Canada at large is supported by DFAIT through the department's provision of coordination and host functions for other government departments with interests and programs abroad.

Let me illustrate. The department enables the specialized work of 20 other partner departments and agencies, from Agriculture Canada to the RCMP. From these common services come greater economies and greater efficiencies in the use of taxpayers' money. In today's world, many parts of the government are involved internationally, as are the provinces, territories, and municipalities. The department's support is therefore an important feature of modern Canada in a globalized economy without borders.

Let us turn to the next question: How does DFAIT achieve results? The department pursues Canada's strategic objectives through policy development at home and representation abroad. That is, lobbying for Canada's security and prosperity interests directly; active participation in key international institutions and agencies; pursuit of important bilateral relations; and through the implementation of key programs aimed at advancing our priorities and our interests.

● (1645)

[Translation]

In carrying out these responsibilities, how does the department ensure value for money? It does so through improved accountability, risk management and modern comptrollership and the implementation of Treasury Board guidelines and policies.

As you know, our party was elected on a platform of enhanced accountability, and this philosophy is applied in all areas.

[English]

The department is ensuring improved accountability and risk management by better aligning resources with priorities and interests. That has been a common theme. The department has developed country and regional strategies as well as multilateral strategies for the organizations in which Canada participates. These are not for the department alone, but increasingly are whole-of-government strategies. These strategies specify the outcomes expected as well as the outcomes sought of each Canadian mission abroad, including those attached to multilateral organizations. And they contain assessment criteria by which performance and results can be evaluated. They also help allocate, and reallocate where possible, funds and resources.

One of the best examples we've seen in recent years was the evacuation of Lebanon, where many departments, including our own, reallocated resources to deal with the specific crisis at that time. Mandate letters assign the heads-of-missions' objectives to the broad government-wide agenda, as well as to performance management assessments and the achievement of results. In addition, the department has categorized missions in accordance with the level and intensity of Canadian interests and priorities.

Category one missions represent Canada's interests with the greatest political and economic importance to Canada. By contrast, category four missions represent very specific Canadian political and economic interests. A separate category covers crisis response missions and operations, which are high intensity but often of limited duration.

[Translation]

In other words, the department is constantly evaluating the size and composition of missions and the resources they require in terms of results for Canadians, in terms of value for money, and in terms of furthering Canada's interests and priorities.

In fact, Treasury Board has recognized the department's efforts in constantly re-evaluating DFAIT's property portfolio for opportunities to reduce costs and rationalize space.

• (1650)

[English]

These kinds of actions are set against a backdrop of unprecedented security demands for Canadian officials and mission staff abroad. Certainly it is dangerous work at times. Think of Kabul, Beirut, Port-au-Prince. Think of the more than 40 Canadian missions requiring armour-protected vehicles. From 2001 to 2005, 16 mission evacuations were required, involving over 200 Canada-based staff and their dependants.

One of the lasting memories I have shortly after being sworn in to this portfolio was being shown a picture by my deputy minister, Mr. Harder, of an armoured vehicle that had been fired upon with a bullet hole just behind the driver's door. So there are certainly reasons to invest in the protection of our officials abroad. That happened in Nigeria.

These examples and many others in the documents that have been tabled for this committee constitute, in my view, solid evidence of continuing efforts to be responsible to what matters for Canadians,

results that count in advancing Canada's interests and priorities through international action and value for money in achieving them.

Let me turn briefly to the department's strategic priorities, the pursuit of which is after all what this business planning is all about.

As you will see in the report on plans and priorities, these strategic priorities are as follows: greater collaboration with the United States and increased cooperation with all hemispheric partners; a more secure world for Canada and Canadians, safer from the threats of failed or fragile states, terrorism, transnational crime, and weapons of mass destruction; a revitalized multilateralism, responding to the new challenges of globalization and putting outcomes ahead of processes; greater engagement with like-minded partners in the G-8 as well as emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China; strengthened consular and passport services able to respond rapidly and flexibly; increasing Canadian awareness of the challenges and opportunities presented by global commerce; more secure access for Canadian business to global markets through the negotiation and implementation of commercial agreements; assistance to Canadian business to compete successfully for global opportunities; the promotion of Canada as a global competitive location and partner for investment, innovation, and value-added production; and finally, a foreign ministry that is recognized as modern, agile, and robust.

These priorities guide the day-to-day work of the department and they factor directly into the country strategy and the head-of-mission mandates and performance management agreements of the department's executives, both in headquarters and abroad.

Of course, there are also the priorities of the moment, which any government and any foreign ministry must respond to: crises and circumstances that erupt with little warning and situations of national concern that a government is called upon to manage on the spur of the moment.

I am thinking here specifically of the evacuation of Canadians from Lebanon, the dreadful tsunami of late 2004, or the hurricanes Katrina and Wilma. I am thinking expressly of the continuing demands of Canada's most important combined military, humanitarian, and development operation in decades, an operation that has required sacrifice, effort, resolve, and resources, human and financial. I am speaking of our mission in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

Other international issues will continue to dominate our foreign policy, security, humanitarian and commerce agendas on a day-to-day basis.

All these issues will be approached according to our philosophy, to support freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

[English]

The economic growth in China, India, and post-Castro Cuba; consolidating fragile democratic gains in Haiti; Iran's nuclear program and UN sanctions; the rise of authoritarian populism in Latin America; multiple crises in the Middle East and quintessential rogue state North Korea; and Sudan's humanitarian crisis and the inability of the international community to respond—all of this requires our need to ensure that we continue to respond appropriately.

Finally, on the commerce side, a pressing issue that has required a great deal of attention and received a great deal of attention is our need to ensure that the border with the United States remains open to commerce and closed to security threats.

Mr. Chair, as I said at the outset, it's a complex and changing world, and Canada's interests and values are at stake. Canada needs to influence and shape this world the best way we can, in a positive fashion. My message to you today is that Canadians are getting a great deal from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the budget it receives. They are getting engagement and standing in the world. They are getting real value for this money, and real results in a way that is documented publicly and can be seen by everyone—and those are the documents that have been filed with you.

With that, Mr. Chair, my senior officials and I will be pleased to respond to any questions the committee members might have. I thank you for your attention. I appreciate your patience, and I look forward to your questions.

[Translation]

Thank you to each and all of you.

•(1655)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Just for the committee's information, because of the bells and because we know we're going to be going for votes, normally at the end of the debate on the estimates, we have the votes to pass the estimates. Otherwise, they're deemed adopted by November 10. We will wait on that until tomorrow perhaps, if that's all right with the committee. At least we have the Afghanistan briefing tomorrow, so there may be an opportunity to do that tomorrow. We won't be doing it today.

We're going to cut back to about eight minutes for each round, and we'll begin with Mr. Martin.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Thank you, Mr. MacKay, Mr. Harder, and staff. We really appreciate your diligence in being here. You've come many times, and we're grateful.

I'll just ask my questions, so that my colleague Dr. Patry will be able to ask some questions. But first I have a plea.

Minister MacKay, I believe the Canada Fund has now been transferred under your purview. I would just make a plea that you double it. It's the best bang for your buck that your ambassadors and high commissioners have on the ground. In my view, it is probably the most effective aid mechanism we have. It's really extraordinary, so if you can afford it and can double it, that would be great.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** I appreciate that comment. I've seen the Canada Fund at work, and you're absolutely right. It's a tremendous contribution that Canada makes, and the officials who are operating that fund are doing superb humanitarian work.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** And your high commissioners and ambassadors will give you a double thumbs-up.

My questions, Minister, are these, and if you can't answer them but can get the information for the committee, that would be great. They're as follows, and I'll just fire them off.

What has happened to the stabilization and reconstruction task force? I understand that it's only focusing on Afghanistan, Sudan, and Haiti. What is going to happen in terms of those funds for countries like Uganda, Somalia, Congo, and countries in West Africa that are now trying to dig themselves out from under years of conflict?

My second question: Is there any funding left, and what are those funds for conflict prevention and child soldier rehabilitation? I know that is close to your heart.

Why was public diplomacy gutted to the tune of \$11.8 million, and why was the foreign policy research gutted by \$1.3 million?

Also, on weapons of mass destruction, that program has been decreased from \$107.8 million down to \$85.9 million, and will drop down to \$138,000 by 2008-09. This is for the removal and securing of weapons of mass destruction, a very important program.

Lastly, on the PRT for Afghanistan, if you could tell us what moneys are going in for what, that would be great.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Patry, we'll take your question now, and then we'll have—

Mr. Minister, we'll try to get as many answers as we can. We're going to watch the time, but we may need the department to answer some of those.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Chair, in response to Mr. Martin's request, let me say at the outset that if we are not able to give the facts and figures here at our fingertips, we will certainly respond and have the information for the committee post-haste.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Patry.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I will continue with the line of questioning of Mr. Martin. Foreign Affairs will experience a \$70 million budget cut over two years.

Mr. Martin has raised the question of a \$1.3 million cut and the cancellation of consultative, research and public information programs on foreign policy. You are eliminating all the research and information from academics, amongst others. If these programs are cancelled, how will you be able to inform the Canadian public?

You are cutting \$4.2 million in the funds for consolidation of Canadian missions abroad. All these missions need more people and not less. You were talking about emerging countries like China, India, Brazil, and Russia. What are you going to do in these countries? How many consular offices do you plan on opening in these countries and elsewhere in the world?

Third, Mr. Martin also mentioned public diplomacy. Mr. Minister, public diplomacy includes cultural and educational events to make our culture better known and enhance our image abroad. The example that comes to mind is the cultural centre in Paris. Next year's budget for public diplomacy in Paris is nil. There will be no funds at all for culture in Paris. This is a disgrace.

Finally, you are wiping out the international internships for young Canadians program, a program with a \$10.2 million budget. In this era of globalization and in a multi-ethnic country such as Canada, international internships are crucial if we are to meet the need of young Canadians who are our future leaders. What will happen now? What are we going to do with young Canadians, now that the Canadian government does not want to send them abroad for their education?

Thank you.

• (1700)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Patry.

I'll let the minister and the department decide which questions to answer. I would also ask Mr. Martin and Mr. Patry if we could perhaps get the written text of the questions, so that we can perhaps even pass them on to the department.

Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** I'll try to respond to the questions in order.

As I indicated, Mr. Chair and colleagues, one of the big challenges that we faced at the Department of Foreign Affairs was the inherited cuts from the previous government. That was prior to the program review that we went through in our current budget. We inherited cuts that had not yet been administered by the department, so this very much had a bearing on the decisions that we had to make.

As far as the public diplomacy program goes, there are a number of ways in which we continue to engage publicly. We continue to obviously have many public forums. We continue to receive papers and submissions from noted academics, from the business community, and from the cultural community. It's not as if we have cut ourselves off in any way from the sources of information that we currently enjoy in Canada and abroad. As well, as we all know, there is a tremendous use of Internet access now. That provides us with, again, much global reach that didn't exist in the past. So those were all factors in the decisions around the efficacy of public diplomacy programs that existed.

In the regions that I mentioned and highlighted in my presentation, like China and India and Brazil, we have consular and embassy presence there currently. We are doing a review within the department to decide, in the very near future, where we need to increase our consular presence, where we need to increase potential budgets as far as staffing across the board is concerned, and where

we need to set our priorities. One of the big challenges, of course, is to avoid spreading our presence so thin that it doesn't have the desired effect, so that it doesn't have the impact that we would like to have, whether it be in business, whether it be in consular service, or whether it be in our ability to diplomatically intervene in areas of importance to Canadians.

On the issues with respect to research and global partners, the budgets there again went through the same rigorous review with which we approached our entire department, as we did across the board. This was not unique to Foreign Affairs, nor was it unique to any department. This was an approach that we took, upon being elected to power, upon being given a mandate from the Canadian people to look for ways in which we could increase efficiency and ensure that we are actually delivering services and getting good value for money throughout the department. That has been an abiding theme that we have pursued since taking office almost ten months ago.

The stabilization and reconstruction task force in Afghanistan that Mr. Martin inquired about is a perfect example of where we are investing, where we are assessing, on almost a daily basis the efficacy of our efforts there. And make no mistake about it. This is a very difficult and challenging mission in Afghanistan. As we know, with the insurgents in the south, the region for which we bear the greatest responsibility along with a few of our allies, is a constantly changing and constantly volatile region of Afghanistan. But the whole-of-government approach, which of course includes development, good governance, and the stabilization and revitalization programs that are administered in large part through the PRTs and many Canadian Forces personnel themselves, is having an effect.

It is our intention to continue to give our people the necessary resources and equipment to complete their tasks. We can do that without neglect and without withdrawing services in places like West Africa. We have not lost sight of our responsibilities and our commitment to Africa and to the regions there. There is a conference happening in the Great Lakes region, as I'm sure Mr. Martin is aware. We're very cognizant of the challenges particular to the Darfur region in Sudan, and Canada is clearly looking for ways to influence, in a positive way, the end of the slaughter, the end of the threat to all things humanitarian inside Darfur.

Having said that, again without getting into a long discussion on the politics of this, the challenge right now to provide more in Sudan is, in particular, the cooperation of the Sudanese government and the transition that has to take place for the United Nations to have a greater presence on the ground.

• (1705)

**The Chair:** Mr. Minister, I hate to cut you off. We appreciate your comments, but I want to be certain that all members get an opportunity to ask you questions.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Sure, Mr. Chair. Just let me say that I know there are numerous questions that have been posed here. I could use my entire time to try to respond to each and every one of them, but we've made note of those questions and we will give specific answers, with details and figures, accordingly.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Seven minutes, Mrs. Barbot.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I am relatively new in this committee, and I ask for your indulgence. I am a bit surprised. I thought in a meeting on the estimates, we would deal with the estimates, but the discussion is much more general. I always thought figures are specific and tell a clear story of what we are going to do.

You talked about our government's strategic priorities as they are set out in plans and priorities. What is the context of these priorities? Is the present policy of the government different from the 2005 international policy statement of the previous government? How do they differ? That would help us understand the context of budget cuts and strategic priorities.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Chair, this government puts the emphasis on getting results, and that is different from what the previous government was doing. Promoting democracy and human rights is a priority for our government and its departments. We managed to get excellent results over a short period of time.

Contrary to the previous government, we got tangible results with the softwood lumber agreement with the US and a number of initiatives in cooperation for security in North America.

[*English*]

I would suggest to you that we have brought a great deal of focus. We have as well brought a great deal of effectiveness, in terms of results and administration, through this department and through other government departments.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** You are mentioning specific actions, but I would like to know the general context of your policy. Is it similar to the previous government's policy? If there are differences, what are they?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Not at all.

[*English*]

I've said that we have put a greater emphasis on promoting democracy. It has been front and centre in our approach with respect to dealing with countries and dealing with many of the programs we currently offer.

I would suggest that we have put more emphasis on dealing directly with our allies, including the United States and including our cooperative effort with NATO, the UN, and the mission in Afghanistan.

We have put a great deal of emphasis on respect for human rights. Of course, that includes raising issues at every available opportunity at international forums and at multilateral meetings with countries where we feel human rights abuses are continuing.

We have put a great deal of emphasis, I would suggest, on programs that promote Canadian values, promote equality, and promote the principles that Canadians put a great deal of value on.

We have been, in my view, achieving results at an accelerated pace compared to the previous government.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Three minutes, Ms. Bourgeois.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, I am really glad you put the Foreign Affairs and International Trade departments back together. What has been the impact of this reunification?

In your statement, you said your strategic priorities included enhanced dialogue with our G8 partners and emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China. You also want to raise the awareness of Canadians concerning the opportunities in international trade.

Every time I hear about international trade, I feel a bit of fear, because I am concerned that our traders and industries are not protected. Canada does not have any protection for them.

Do you plan on putting forward some action to protect our industries against all those emerging economies?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Minister, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dear colleague, I will deal first with your first question on the impact of the reunification of both departments. The response of people in both departments is excellent. For them, it is a dream come true.

Results are positive. Both departments now work hand in hand since many of their offices are in the same building. They share a common approach and the same priorities.

[*English*]

All of the efforts, I would suggest, are fully coordinated. The interaction is incredibly productive. In fact, the deputy minister of Mr. Emerson was previously an associate deputy minister within the Department of Foreign Affairs. So the personnel, the direction, and the coordinated effort are much more comfortable, and I would suggest much more efficient, when these ministerial responsibilities are combined. Having said that, I think there is greater coherence and greater direction when we're able to do that at the front end, rather than having the two departments try to respond separately. It's better for planning purposes as well.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Since they have the same approach, both departments are more efficient.

[English]

Regarding your second question, on further protectionism—

**The Chair:** Please answer very quickly.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** —I'm not entirely clear about what types of industries or what type of industry approach you're suggesting we should move towards greater protectionism for. On the contrary, Canada continues to look for ways to expand trade into new markets, and in some cases to look at furthering free trade agreements, with India for example, as my colleague Mr. Obhrai knows. We have continued our efforts in places like Colombia and Guatemala, the Americas, and the Caribbean to pursue trade agreements, and to pursue memoranda of understanding. Those are areas in which we're looking to increase trade, not to the detriment of Canadian industry or Canadian business interests, but in fact to open up new markets.

I haven't heard any plea of late for increased protectionism that would lead me to believe that this is something we need to pursue vigorously.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Could we have Mr. Obhrai and then Mr. Van Loan?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Thank you, Minister, for coming. It's always good to have you here with your deputy, Peter Harder—there are too many Peters in the department—and my colleague Peter Van Loan too. But I won't change my name.

Minister, in your statement, you just said that your message today to Canadians is that they are getting a lot from this department and the budget it receives. They're getting engagement and standing in the world. Today we have the African parliamentarians over here who are joining us. I know that in December you're going to Nairobi to talk about the Great Lakes initiative, which is one initiative that Canada is undertaking. We are spending a tremendous amount of money, on the NGO side and on all the other sides, on the issue of child soldiers, and to get all these things working. It's a huge, comprehensive plan. I think it's the best time, here now, for you to say that it's one of the best programs we have in engagement. Would you like to say something on that, Minister?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

I'll take the occasion to thank you for the work that you do on behalf of the department as the parliamentary secretary.

You mentioned Africa in particular as an area where Canada, Foreign Affairs, CIDA, and the whole of government have responsibilities and obligations to try to continue to elevate the human condition there.

Child soldiers, as was mentioned by Mr. Martin, is a particularly soul-destroying issue when you meet those who have been affected, the young people who had horrors perpetrated on them during some of the conflicts in Africa. There is a lack of basic amenities, starvation, and the AIDS pandemic.

There is no one in this country who feels we can't do more. It's a matter of ensuring we're doing it in a way that maximizes the impact and in a way that we know our aid is making it directly to the recipients.

How do we maximize that approach and ensure, as Canadians, as a government, and as a department, that we are making that difference? Well, we put in place mechanisms and we put in place people who are committed to the cause.

Having visited Africa and having personal knowledge of the situation there, surely you know full well that every bit helps. We are in fact doing a great deal to help the people. We have committed a great deal of money, resources, and personnel. We continue to do so.

We see the difference between our efforts in Afghanistan and our efforts in other parts of the world, including Africa. One of the great challenges is having the support of the host government and the desire to have Canadians there.

It seems fundamental to me that this is a truth that exists. We need to have an invitation, in some cases, to be able to do more inside many of the countries in which we would like to offer assistance.

Haiti is another example of where we are there at the invitation and with the goodwill of the people and the government of Haiti.

We have other commitments in which we're able to achieve a great deal because of the level of cooperation on the ground. In many cases, it also involves cooperation with other countries, international agencies, and NGOs that are the actual providers of the aid and assistance.

It takes the whole of government and a very coordinated approach, as you know full well, Mr. Obhrai, to achieve maximum results in many of these troubled spots where Canadians are giving so much of themselves.

Aside from the compassionate nature that we know is here in this country, Canadians generally are making remarkable contributions through international forums and agencies outside what the Government of Canada may sponsor. They're participants in many international organizations and many bodies, and they give of themselves daily throughout the world.

• (1720)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Goldring.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** Mr. Minister, congratulations once again for the tremendous effort and success of the evacuation from Lebanon. It certainly brought to the attention of many parliamentarians the consular division of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Perhaps you could advise us on what types of challenges are facing the department in delivering the consular program. Are there lessons learned?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Goldring. That's a very relevant question.



I mentioned that somewhere in the range of 2.7 million Canadian passport holders live outside the country. The other figure that may startle you is that over 40 million trips emanate from Canada every year. So we're a very mobile population, as well. When Canadians leave this country, they don't take their charter rights with them, they don't take their health care system with them, they don't take many of the same legal protections we enjoy in this country. So when Canadians find themselves in stress, in peril, and in a difficult situation, their first point of contact in many cases is our embassies abroad.

There is tremendous pressure on officials to deal in a very personal and efficient way with Canadians who come to seek their help. I have increasing admiration every day for our officials at work abroad in this department and other departments.

As you know, having travelled a great deal yourself, the range of questions you can get on any given day, or the requests that you can get because of the situation people may find themselves in, whether they have been arrested, injured, lost documents—passports most notably—had their plane tickets taken, have been robbed, or they need to return to Canada because of an emergency.... These are just a few of the more prominent examples of situations we address regularly through the department. Global tensions, electoral and political discord and instability in some of these countries—we do more and more in terms of advertising and try to be pre-emptive and preventative as far as travel advisories on websites. All that interaction to arrange trips abroad by government officials is in large part carried by consular officials.

It's an extremely onerous and challenging position to hold, and yet one that is quickly embraced by Canadians who fill those positions in our embassies and consulates. A great deal of national pride emanates from this department in the work they do.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** They're really on the front line in some hazardous locations. I'm sure there must be some analysis on how to better secure and protect them when they are there in intense, active duty.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** You are absolutely right. We're constantly looking for ways to improve efficiencies using new technology, lessons learned, as you mentioned, from the Lebanon crisis. There's a Senate committee tasked entirely with the role of examining that evacuation as to how we might go forward in the uncertain times we live in. I hope we'll not face something of that nature again. There are 40,000 Canadians inside Lebanon, 15,000 of whom we evacuated in just one month with no significant resources there. I think we had nine people on full-time staff at the Beirut embassy when the crisis began.

Let's never forget this is risky work, as I alluded to in my earlier remarks. We lost Glyn Berry in Afghanistan. The work our consular officials do is life-threatening at times, and it's invaluable work.

I was in Poland a week ago, and just as we were about to enter the embassy, a few Canadians arrived. They had been robbed. I was taken with the professionalism and the personal attention afforded these Canadians, who found themselves in a foreign land and were in real trouble, concerned about missing their flight and getting back to Canada. Within a few hours, our officials there had sorted through this problem and given them the assurance and the assistance they

needed. That has been one of the real joys to see the incredible effort that's expended every day by officials working abroad.

• (1725)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. MacKay.

Madam McDonough.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm a bit puzzled about the amount of emphasis on the importance of the field services being performed out there—consular services and so on—and yet the decision by this government not to have a parliamentary secretary dealing with consular services.

Second is the decision not to proceed with what I think was universally endorsed in last year's budget and set out by the previous minister that it was extremely important for us to get a better balance between the number of Ottawa-based and field-based foreign service personnel. Maybe you could address that briefly.

Third, I know there isn't time for detailed answers in these questions, and I appreciate your indication that you'd be prepared to follow through.

Fourth, we had a press conference earlier today with representatives of a number of NGOs and former alumni of the young professionals international program. We expressed our concern about one of the finest, most cost-effective, and valuable programs we have, and a decision by this government to eliminate it.

I wonder if I could ask you again—maybe in writing—to clear up confusion caused in question period today when the suggestion was made that this program was actually eliminated by the Liberals and you just came along and inherited that. My understanding is that the Liberals cut about \$1.5 million to \$1.6 million from the program, and your government has eliminated it all together.

Fifth, we had a very interesting couple of days—and just the previous hour to this session—with parliamentarians from a number of African countries. There is an interest in understanding exactly what Canada's current level of commitment and engagement is in the NEPAD program. I wonder if we might ask for a report to be tabled with the committee on that, since we don't have enough time to go into it.

Finally, on the issue of budgetary and human resource priorities, in the presentation that was made to us as well as the dollar figures to match, it is of concern to a lot of people that we have been seen to be second to none in the world in the confidence and calibre of our international personnel, yet most of the emphasis in the presentation we heard today, and many of the alarming cuts, would indicate that there is a dramatic shift in emphasis toward trade investment and commercial self-interest. Virtually absent from any commentary, and waning in terms of adequate budgetary support, are measures to support peace-building, aggressive diplomacy, disarmament, nuclear nonproliferation efforts, UN reform, and sustainable development. It is a great concern to the Canadian people and members of this committee to understand where we're headed with this shift of emphasis in diplomacy.

We know there is a tremendous need in the world for the kind of diplomatic expertise Canada has demonstrated, yet we see this sort of steady erosion following a period when the previous government began to hollow out much of our capacity. Now that we're into our eighth year of having a surplus budget, it's very alarming to understand the thinking behind a very significant increase of emphasis on our own commercial self-interest and a great deal of militarism, with so little commitment of dollars and support for the kind of diplomacy and peace-building that this world starved for.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam McDonough.

We have four minutes. We'll try to indulge the committee and those here in those four minutes. Then we'll get to the votes.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the comments from all my colleagues.

To answer some of your questions, Madam McDonough, I will endeavour to get information to you on all of those subject matters.

The first question you put with respect to the young professionals international program I do want to clarify. As you mentioned, this program was cut previously, but was set to sunset in 2008. So a decision was made previously, upon coming to the department, that this program didn't merit further funding by the previous government. Having said that, we accelerated the sunset, but we have focused instead on the international youth internship program, which is a comparable program. It targets the same age group. It benefits a far larger number of Canadians, more than 20,000 in number, and we will continue to honour the recipients of those programs who were awarded those positions prior to this decision.

With respect to a shift away from some of the core responsibilities and some of, to use your words, "the competent calibre of diplomacy and personnel" that we have, that will continue. We continue to put emphasis on making meaningful contributions, whether it be through international fora, whether it be the United Nations, the Human Rights Commission, whether it be programs that are dedicated to

further Canada's interests in areas of nuclear non-proliferation. We are signatories, as you know, to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. We continue, as you know—you participated at the department—efforts to bring people together at the department to forward Canada's position.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Why did you cut the budgetary provisions for those kinds of efforts?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Well, we continue to fund programs that we feel are efficient and are achieving the results that we continue to embrace, that are Canadian values, values that express equality, that express respect for human rights, respect for the rule of law.

Another area that we haven't had time to deal with is Canada's participation in election observation, which is a huge contribution that Canada makes through Elections Canada.

You mentioned peacemaking. This is the principal obligation that we have, to bring about the type of development and the types of results that you and I and every member of this committee want to see in Afghanistan. We want to be able to do much more on the ground to protect people, to further women's rights, to further democracy building, to further the important infrastructure that has to be built inside Afghanistan. It cannot happen without the security perimeter around each and every one of those projects. So sustainable development remains front and centre in the Department of Foreign Affairs, and CIDA more directly.

That whole-of-government approach, I would suggest, is one that should make Canadians very proud and will continue. That is a legacy this country has laid out, and one that this government will continue.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. We thank you for coming.

We thank each committee member.

We will have the votes on the budget at the next opportunity.

The meeting is adjourned.

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