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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Our guest has just arrived, but we have very quick committee business that we want to discuss first.

You have before you a report from our steering committee. This is what we talked about in that other meeting, when we said we would deal very briefly with the committee business. Your steering committee met yesterday. It is important that we at least pass this so that we can set up for the meeting with the three or four ministers next Wednesday. You have your committee report. If you take a look at it, you will note that the committee will meet jointly with the Standing Committee on National Defence pursuant to the motion adopted May 29 at 3:30 to hear from the various ministers.

Do we have consensus on that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That gives us a Wednesday meeting with national defence. Okay.

The second issue is that the analysts from the Library of Parliament, with the clerk of the committee, will prepare a draft work plan for the study of Bill C-53. It's our first piece of legislation that we'll be dealing with. It deals with investments in Canada. We're going to get the report on that. It's a very brief bill.

Madame Lalonde, did you want to speak?

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): No. I agree.

[English]

The Chair: There is a consensus there?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The next one is that the committee consider the fifth report of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights concerning Iran at a later date. This is saying that the subcommittee has given us the report, that there's consensus, and that the committee will continue its study of the fourth report of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights concerning human rights in China once it has finished consideration of the committee report on democratic development.

Do we have a consensus on that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That is carried.

We have two motions that were on the order paper for today. Neither of the presenters of those motions are here, so we will need unanimous consent in order to deal with those motions. My understanding is that we may not get unanimous consent. If that's the case, then we would wait until Madam McDonough is here to present her motion and Mr. Goldring. Mr. Goldring's motion appears first and then Madam McDonough's.

Do we have unanimous consent to proceed without Madam McDonough here?

An hon. member: No.

The Chair: Not seeing unanimous consent, we will wait until Madam McDonough is present. I know there were also amendments to the motion that were going to be brought forward, and I know Mr. Dewar was willing to speak to those. I note for the record that he was willing to speak to those amendments, but we will wait.

That concludes the committee business.

This is meeting 60 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Thursday, May 31. It's a special meeting today. This committee has concluded a study on Haiti, and today we go back and revisit the subject of Haiti. We have a significant update on the situation in that country.

We have as our witness, from the United Nations, Mr. Boucher, the Canadian Ambassador to Haiti; Andrew Grene, special assistant; and Edmond Mulet, the UN's special representative of the Secretary General for the UN stabilization mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to hear from the three of you today. I can say that Haiti is a country about which I think all of us learned much more when we did our study, and we have much more concern and compassion for what's going on in Haiti.

We would like to hear your remarks and, if you would be willing, have you take questions from our committee.

Again, welcome, and we look forward to what you have to say.

Mr. Edmond Mulet (UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), United Nations): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Mr. President, I am honoured to appear before this distinguished committee.

[English]

It is a privilege to meet with the representatives of a nation that has so illustrious an engagement in the work of peacekeeping. As a former parliamentarian myself in my home country in Guatemala, I particularly welcomed the opportunity to meet with legislators. It is a personal pleasure for me as head of MINUSTAH to acknowledge the remarkable contribution that Canada has made and is making in Haiti.

Your country played a key role in helping to stabilize the situation in Haiti in 2004 through its participation in the Multinational Interim Force. Your compatriots are playing an equally vital role in current stabilization efforts. Canadian peacekeepers and our civilian police and military components have shown exemplary dedication, courage, and professionalism. They include our current Deputy Police Commissioner, Colin Farquhar, and our military Chief of Staff, Colonel Tom Tarrant, both of whom have provided outstanding service to the mission, as have a number of former senior officials from Canada.

Alongside this as a lead donor to Haiti, Canada has provided extraordinarily generous support for the long-term work of institution building, which is indispensable for the sustainability of stabilization efforts. Canadians have also shared invaluable expertise and know-how, including the members of this Parliament, who I understand will host Haitian counterparts early next month.

Canada's multifaceted engagement testifies to your country's attachment to Haiti and its determination to help. It also speaks to your continued commitment to multilateralism and to United Nations peacekeeping. On behalf of the United Nations, I would like to convey our deep gratitude.

Mr. Chair, it may be useful to begin our discussion today with a brief update on the latest developments in Haiti and some general thoughts on what we see for the future. Today, working closely with the Haitian leadership, MINUSTAH is making significant strides toward helping Haiti move beyond crisis to reach a sustainable level of stability, but we have a long way to go. It is crucial that we stay the course.

In line with the multifaceted approach that was endorsed in this committee's most interesting and thoughtful report on Haiti, we are supporting the civilization of Haiti through four areas of activity: strengthening of political consensus and governance, maintenance of security and stability, reinforcement of institutions related to law and order, and enhancement of the social and economic fabric. Progress in each of these areas is crucial, and all are linked and interdependent.

I would like to outline some of the main challenges we see in each area and our views on how they can be addressed. The creation of a political consensus is at the core of achieving stability in Haiti. Important advances have been made in this area over the past 12 months. Headed by President René Prével, a leadership has emerged at national and local levels that enjoys an historically exceptional breadth of support and has made a concerted effort to reach out to all elements of the political spectrum. President Prével's recent announcement of anti-corruption measures shows his determination to maintain the confidence of his electorate.

But this new consensus is fragile, and in order to survive it must overcome depolarization, socio-economic division, changing alliances, and power plays that are endemic to Haitian politics. The strength of these dynamics could be seen at the end of last year and the beginning of this year when attempts were made to oust Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis or members of his cabinet. These attempts were forestalled by an effective dialogue launched by President Prével with parliamentarians, but the ongoing potential for a reversal is clear from political pressure now being placed on the Minister of Justice.

The choice of national leadership is, of course, a domestic issue. However, a sudden change in leadership could set back progress and reform programs and could undermine the potential for growth of a new culture of political cooperation and compromise. In this context, MINUSTAH and the wider international community have an important role to play in promoting dialogue and understanding. This could include encouragement from fellow parliamentarians to Haitian counterparts to play a constructive role at a critical moment in their country's history.

• (1110)

International support for Haiti's democratic process is also expected to include assistance for a further set of senatorial elections this coming fall, in keeping with constitutional provisions. This will require further financial assistance in an area where Canada has already been extremely generous. In addition, it will be important to advance with the creation of permanent electoral bodies, an area where the Organization of American States will also have a key role to play.

At the same time, we must seek to support the development of governance capacity at the national and local levels. MINUSTAH is providing advice to different ministries on decentralization and local government, public service delivery, civil service regulations, and local financing. The mission is also seeking to assist the customs service to improve efficiency, accountability, integrity, and security in its work. However, real progress will depend on sustained bilateral support, including in the areas of training and infrastructure. Again, we would welcome Canadian support.

On maintenance of security and stability, significant progress has been made in security in recent months. Problems in this area dominated much of the coverage given to Haiti over the previous three years. However, it should be noted that Haitian political support and ownership was indispensable to progress in this area. Little could be done until a legitimate and credible national authority was in place and publicly endorsed such an approach. These circumstances emerged last December when, after sustained efforts to engage in peaceful negotiations brought few results, President Prével gave a green light to go ahead. It then became possible to make significant inroads in dismantling the organized gangs that effectively held sections of Port-au-Prince hostage and projected a long shadow of fear across the capital and the country.

Some 700 gang members have been captured over the past three months. A number of key gang leaders have been placed in jail. Areas that were off limits before now, such as Cité Soleil and Martissant, are now accessible to the state. This progress is important, not only because it limits the ability of the gangs to attack security forces, but also because of its positive impact on public confidence in the ongoing transition process.

However, this progress should be seen as an opening battle for security for Haiti. The war for definitive stability has barely begun. Even if the few square kilometres of Cité Soleil have been returned to government control, national security structures are still not present or effective in most of the country, leaving a vacuum that risks being filled by disruptive or non-official forces. The area along the land and sea border is unguarded and subject to penetration by arms and drugs traffickers who in turn generate additional instability. The state's inability to manage its borders also undercuts the government's ability to earn its own revenue, representing a major long-term threat to stability.

Furthermore, the potential for renewed violence within the country remains very high. Haiti's poor and unemployed population includes many individuals, some of them former rank-and-file gang members, who have ready access to weapons and who see few other prospects for advancement. Influential actors may seek to engage such potentially disruptive elements for a mixture of criminal and political motives.

We have already seen an emergence of violent criminality in areas of Port-au-Prince and other parts of the country, which have not previously been threatened. We were reminded last month of the potential for political violence when the Prime Minister and other ministers were assaulted by a stone-throwing crowd in Gonaïves, a city that has historically served as the flashpoint for destabilizing movements in the country.

The long-term solution for this threat must include political and socio-economic measures, as well as the creation of Haitian security capacity.

• (1115)

In the short term, it is essential to consolidate progress made thus far through continued efforts to respond to and pre-empt violent activity and to deepen and expand the security presence in the country. It is clear that despite current reform efforts, which I will describe further in a moment, the Haitian security apparatus will not be in a position to shoulder additional tasks at this time. In the short term, there will be no alternative to maintaining a substantial and well-equipped international security presence for the coming year.

MINUSTAH will revert to the UN Security Council with specific recommendations for force requirements in the fall, after we have further clarified the precise tasks that need to be undertaken, bearing in mind the evolving security situation on the ground and the availability of complementary efforts by bilateral actors. In broad terms it will be essential that we stay the course and that member states resist any premature pressure to reduce the mission's capacity in a way that could imperil the gains that have been made to date.

International assistance to contain and respond to immediate threats to security will allow us to pursue our efforts to strengthen

national rule of law institutions, which represent a key element in any peacekeeping operation's exit strategy.

Significant progress is being made in efforts to strengthen the Haitian National Police. A vetting and certification process has begun. The HNP, the Haitian National Police, with MINUSTAH support, is now recruiting and training some 1,300 new police officers every 14 months. A traffic directorate has been reformed and is currently operational in Port-au-Prince, and the development of the HNP's capacity in finance and personnel is in progress.

At the same time, much more remains to be done. MINUSTAH and the international community must work together with the Haitian authorities to support the development of a more effective criminal investigation function to strengthen the HNP leadership at all levels, to build discipline and morale within the service, to enhance its policing and human rights values, and to establish better relationships with the communities and build the confidence of citizens.

Priorities for the coming year will include development of the capacity of the inspector general and chief, steps towards the establishment of a new police academy, and the refurbishment and re-equipping of commissariats within provinces' departments. In these areas, too, Canada is playing a key role, and we look forward to your continued support.

In the area of justice reform, progress has been somewhat more difficult. Drawing on support from MINUSTAH, the Minister of Justice has drafted three bills currently before the legislature that are intended to strengthen the independence of the judiciary and that would represent a key element in the reform of the Haitian justice system. Again, encouragement to Haitian parliamentarians to move decisively in this area would be welcome.

In addition, on March 27, President Préval launched a dialogue with all interested sectors on the reform of the justice system. A 12-member follow-up commission has met regularly since to establish a synthesis of previous reports on justice reform, to identify the bottlenecks within the justice system, and to set a list of concrete, urgent actions. These efforts should assist the articulation of a new, comprehensive, and overall strategic plan to reform justice, which can be endorsed by all key stakeholders.

In the area of corrections, progress has also been limited to date. MINUSTAH's corrections unit, which is headed by a Canadian, Lisa Quirion, and includes a number of Canadian experts, has been providing advice and support to corrections officers. Significant donor initiatives have been undertaken to increase penitentiary space. However, the current situation remains unacceptable in terms of security and human rights.

Urgent priorities include a political decision by the Haitian authorities to convene a commission on detention that can expedite the release of detainees as appropriate. At the same time, the mission is assisting the Haitian authorities in preparing reconstruction and rehabilitation projects to increase cell space for inmates and to improve inadequate structures.

Donor support will be essential to meeting infrastructural and training needs in justice and corrections if a solution is to be found to this pressing problem. Again, Canada has been a particularly active and generous actor in this area, and we hope this can continue.

• (1120)

The fourth element we are working on right now is the enhancement of the social fabric and recreation of a working economy. This area must underpin all the others. Political collaboration, security, and institutional viability will all ultimately stand or flounder on the rock of social and economic recovery. Any real progress towards economic revitalization will demand extensive engagement, far beyond the capacity of a peacekeeping operation, drawing on the synchronized efforts of UN agencies, bilateral contributions, and private enterprise.

Budgetary support from donors will remain crucial to maintaining momentum and bridging the gap in order to increase national revenues and promote public expenditure management. As Haiti's economic programs are defined, the country should be enabled to qualify for irrevocable debt relief. And it is essential to encourage and facilitate the renewed engagement of private enterprise in Haiti.

Mr. Chair, all of us in MINUSTAH are encouraged by the progress that has taken place in our efforts to promote Haiti's stability. We are grateful for the excellent cooperation with the national authorities and for the generous support of the international community, including Canada, making this possible. But these advances should be seen as a reason to redouble our efforts and not as a basis to prematurely lower our guard or reduce our engagement.

Substantial challenges lie ahead in fostering political dialogue, maintaining security, building institutions, and fostering economic development. I am confident that working together, in collaboration with regional organizations and the wider international community, we can overcome them and help the Haitian leadership and people reach the level of stability they require and deserve.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Mulet.

I'm not certain if any of the others had any presentations.

No? We're glad you're here. We weren't sure you were coming, but we're glad you're here.

Mr. Mulet, I can tell you that we're pleased in this committee to have a good vice-chair. He has told me he's had the opportunity to meet with you in the past and has been favourably impressed. And, again, we've really been looking forward to your presence here.

Mr. Patry.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Mulet, Your Excellency.

Since my last visit, things have improved. From your presentation this morning, we gather that the improvement is above all in security. You have succeeded in cleaning up Cité Soleil and the surrounding area. In one sense, Haiti, especially Port-au-Prince, is a little more livable. But kidnappings and other crimes are still very common.

[Translation]

You told us about good governance, about security, law and order, and social and economic problems.

My first question is about 90% of the parliamentarians being new and maybe only five or six of the 30 senators having any parliamentary experience; all were rookies, in a sense.

The *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*, that I head, has organized seminars for women and for parliamentarians. Relations are difficult, because I am not yet sure that Haitian parliamentarians understand a parliamentarian's role. They have passed some laws that deal with it, but that's all. I am not sure they understand what accountability means either. They want to pass a law in order to be sure that they can say anything they want. Here, while we can say anything inside the House of Commons, outside, we can be sued. They want to be able to do it everywhere in the country without being sued, using the excuse that they are parliamentarians. So we clearly see the difficulties.

Let me turn to elections. You said that there will be more elections for the Senate. As this is the French system, where one third of the Senate at a time is re-elected after a certain number of years, it costs an enormous amount of money. Is there a way to amend the constitution? It also takes two rounds, like in France.

We know that their constitution goes back to when Haiti was created. That too is the French system, going back to the Napoleonic code; it is antiquated and archaic. For example, if a woman is raped, she cannot go to court because DNA evidence is not accepted because it did not exist in Napoleon's time. It is as simple as that.

If we want to amend the constitution, where do we start? Is it possible to do? I understand that an amendment to the constitution must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the two chambers, and then by the next parliament, and that it will go into effect with the parliament after that. So a constitutional amendment can take 10 years. It is much more difficult than in Canada, indirectly.

Are the parliamentarians ready? I would like to know a little more about that.

All donor countries are being asked for a lot of money, but the money is going to be spent on elections again. In my opinion, money should be put where it is needed, with the people. Is there an agreement among donor countries? For example, Canada has said that it may possibly look after building a new parliament building. I have visited their parliament building, and I do not know if it is twice as big as this room. Proceedings are held there with a hundred people. Is it possible for the donors to come to an understanding? One could be responsible for the law-making, another for the justice system, another for security. I would like to know which of the donor countries is doing what to help Haiti get on its feet.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patry.

Mr. Mulet.

Mr. Edmond Mulet: Thank you, Chair.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much.

Yes indeed, since your last visit, the security situation has greatly improved, certainly in Port-au-Prince. As I said in my presentation, we have arrested more than 700 gang members since January. The key gang leaders are in prison. Only one is not, Amaral, but it is only a matter of days before we find him. All the others are behind bars. I am not just talking about Cité Soleil, but also about Martissant, another district of Port-au-Prince that was run and controlled by gangs. We now have a permanent presence, and a lot of success.

We are now also moving into other parts of the country. In Gonaives, for example, I deployed troops and SWAT teams last week because the situation was worsening. Last Saturday, we arrested Gonaives' biggest gangster, Ti Will. There was even a demonstration for his release in front of the police station. So we had to send a helicopter and more troops to get him and bring him to Port-au-Prince, because the situation was quite tricky.

The security situation is improving, but it is still very fragile. It is going to take some more time to develop the capabilities of the Haitian national police. Graduations from the police academy occur only every seven months. At the end of July, we will have 647 new police officers on the streets. It is a process that is still going to take time.

When it arrived, the United Nations mission was responsible for stabilizing the country because it was on the brink of civil war. Next, the mission had to put in place a legitimate government, the result of democratic elections. We were able to organize elections with Canadian money and the support of other countries. There were five elections last year: presidential, senatorial, first and second rounds for the legislature, and re-runs, plus repeats. There were municipal elections on December 3, and, a month ago, there were more elections. One cycle has just finished and elections must be held again in November.

As you rightly say, one third of the Senate, which is made up of 30 people, must be re-elected. A national election, with first and second rounds, must be held to elect ten people to the Senate, and that is going to cost...

• (1130)

Mr. Bernard Patry: A million dollars per person.

Mr. Edmond Mulet: Fifteen million dollars for each round. That is \$30 million for ten senators, but it is required by the constitution. The President understands that the constitution itself is a source of instability, as does everyone in Haiti. They have neither the means, the resources nor the infrastructure to hold all those elections, but the constitution does not allow a referendum to be held to amend the constitution. It can only be amended by the majorities that we are familiar with: the national assembly, the majority specified by this parliament, confirmation by the next parliament, and implementation by the third. It will take ten years to happen.

The country cannot wait 10 years. In a situation like this, the constitution is going to be contravened because there is neither the

money nor the means to conduct the process. At the moment, the President is thinking—a commission is working on it—not of amending the constitution, but of drawing up a new one. This is not provided for in the current constitution and so it is not prohibited. The present constitution talks a lot about amendments and amending procedures, but it does not mention a new constitution.

It may be that the President will ask for the assembly or the present parliament to convert itself into a constituent assembly in order to draw up a new constitution. They are talking about that possibility, but they will not have the time to come up with a new constitution before the end of the year. I think that there will be legislative or senatorial elections in November this year.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mulet.

We have to keep going according to a time limit here.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you very much for being here, Mr. Mulet.

You know that we have always been, and that we continue to be, extremely concerned by what is happening in Haiti. We have a huge Haitian community in Quebec. We now have a member of Parliament who comes from Saint-Marc. They are part of our family.

It is good to hear such a positive report. On the other hand, I read as regularly and as much as I can about Haiti. Many segments of the population, the ones who write and are written about, see that life is better, but there is a sort of despair, because things are not going fast enough, especially in some areas like the Constitution, of course. To start, I would like to hear what you have to say about that.

Yet MINUSTAH has done a job that people despaired of ever seeing done in some places, by ridding the country of gangs. Unfortunately, kidnappings, although they have decreased, are still numerous. Just recently, Mr. Latour, a very admired and respected figure, was kidnapped. A ransom of \$100,000 was demanded and he was found the next day with his throat cut. Things like that are concerns. I would like you to tell us what you think about it. After all, you have just come from there.

I would like to finish with a little point that Ambassador Boucher is very familiar with. This is a special concern because a young Quebecker is in prison without having been charged. We can do nothing, except wait for justice, if you can call it that, to take its course. We are worried.

• (1135)

Mr. Edmond Mulet: After stabilizing the country, holding elections, and installing a legitimate, democratically elected government, security is an area where progress is being made. What are we going to do now?

I think that it is very important now to help Haiti establish a basic rule of law. We are working on reforming the Haitian national police, on reforming the prison system, but I also think that reform of the justice system is necessary and indispensable. This is the other great pillar on which the rule of law is based.

However, this does not depend on the executive branch, that is the President or the government. It depends on Parliament. The government has tabled three laws in Parliament, laws dealing with the status of the judiciary, with codes for the judiciary, and with the judiciary's governing council. This is going to bring about the independence and the professional status of the judges. It is now in the hands of Parliament, but it is not moving forward. If something could be done to motivate them into passing those three laws, it would be really fantastic. With that as a starting point, I think that they could move forward on all other fronts. For example, more than 80% all the prisoners in Haiti have never seen a judge. There are no files, there is nothing, no formal charges, nothing. It is a most serious violation of human rights. I think our efforts now should be on the establishment of the rule of law. That is what is going to allow the country to develop economically.

[English]

The international community cannot afford to subsidize Haiti forever and ever and ever. So we have to establish this minimum level of the rule of law to motivate investors and the diaspora to come back to Haiti and make this workable, and to have their own resources and their own income. But I don't see the diaspora or any other investors or tourists coming back to Haiti if we don't have this minimum level of rule of law. So this is where we have to concentrate right now. We're working together in a very coordinated manner with the international community, bilateral donors, and everyone in this direction.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Could Mr. Boucher say something about Maxim Charbonneau?

Mr. Claude Boucher (Canada's Ambassador to Haiti, As an Individual): In the Charbonneau case, we have made representations at all levels, including specifically to the President and the Prime Minister. In the Haitian system, the examining magistrate's power is absolute. It must be at least a month since he assured us that his decision is going to be rendered. Someone has even seen a copy of it. But it has never been done. When Mr. Greenhill came, he spoke to the President and the Prime Minister once more. They recognize that their power is limited, but they said that they were going to take the matter up again with the examining magistrate.

You are right, it is quite frustrating, considering all these pressures and the desire to reform the justice system. I am told that the laws have been tabled in Parliament which is perhaps going to vote on one of the three this week. That might help to move the roadblock. But the situation is difficult.

• (1140)

Ms. Francine Lalonde: The prisons are extremely unhealthy places. They are crawling with diseases.

Claude Boucher: Representatives from the embassy visited Mr. Charbonneau less than three weeks ago to assess his state of health and his morale. The visit was reassuring. There were no causes for concern, even though, you are right, conditions are difficult. We are monitoring this matter very closely, at all levels.

Mr. Edmond Mulet: I spoke to the President a week ago asking if he could do something, but he is very reluctant to intervene.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I suppose that is because there are so many people in the prisons who have not been before a judge.

Mr. Edmond Mulet: Yes.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: His innocence...

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Khan, please, for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, and Your Excellency.

First of all, Mr. Mulet, I'd like to congratulate you on your appointment. There are challenges, but with challenges come opportunities for doing a lot of good.

Sir, I agree with you that security is a prerequisite to any development in any country, not just Haiti. Canada has obviously remained determined and committed to supporting the Haitian government in reconstruction, development, security, and democracy. Canada is committed to investing nearly half a billion dollars, \$520 million, over the next two years.

Could you comment, sir, on how this money is being spent and what concrete benefits or results there are that you can share with this committee?

You mentioned debt forgiveness for Haiti, if I understood you correctly. The committee would like to hear what amount the Haitian debt is.

Mr. Edmond Mulet: Thank you.

Ambassador Boucher is probably better placed than I to know how Canadian money is spent in Haiti, but from what I've seen and witnessed, it's making a big difference. Canadian money is spent in their PNH reform program, in parliament, and now you're going to be building a new inspector general's office for the PNH and also a police academy for officers. Canada is now rebuilding all the police stations and sub-police stations in the southern part of the country. You are also involved in—

Mr. Claude Boucher: Corrections.

Mr. Edmond Mulet: In corrections, yes, of course. You're involved in prisons, not with a repressive approach but with a humanitarian, human rights approach, to provide better conditions for inmates and everything.

There is also budget support for governance and decentralization.

So from what I've seen, I think it's money well spent. Absolutely.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Is there any expenditure in the health and education sectors?

Mr. Claude Boucher: Yes, we do a lot in support of the department of health at the national level, as well as in a few departments, mainly in Artibonite where we do concentrate our efforts.

Education will be a sector of concentration for CIDA in the coming years, so we will again want to support elementary education. I think close to half a million children don't go to school now, so we would want to make sure that by 2015, in line with the UN millennium development goals, all children in Haiti go to school. There is also some thinking being done about the possibility of building a professional school to enhance Haitian capabilities and ensure that young people will get training and be in a position to work.

• (1145)

Mr. Edmond Mulet: The latest I've seen is in regard to the penal chain. Canada is now supporting that also, because we have this unit that is investigating corruption situations and cases, but it doesn't have enough resources, financial, human or technical, to follow up on the penal chain. In a joint venture of the European Union and Canada, since last week, they have been providing assistance in an effort to have impunity in Haiti.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Other than security, and assuming the security situation does improve and provides some comfort, are there any other recommendations you might have on how to encourage FDI, foreign direct investment, in Haiti, and in what sectors? You were talking about foreign investment coming into the country. What steps can we take to encourage that?

Mr. Edmond Mulet: I think a lot of money is needed in Haiti right now.

As you rightly mentioned, education is a priority. Only 15% of the educational system in Haiti is controlled by the ministry of education; 85% is controlled by private institutions, and the quality is very, very bad. Only 5% of Haitians have enough resources, enough money, to send their children to the private educational system. And 51% to 52% of children who should be going to school are not going to school right now, so the gap is growing every year between children who go to school and those who don't. Again, this is another time bomb in the country.

So I think any investment in education at this point would be more than welcome.

Of course, infrastructure is very much needed: electricity, energy, everything. Everything—including hospitals. It's a country that used to have roads and hospitals and institutions, all of which have imploded and there's nothing left. So everything needs to be reconstructed.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Dewar, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our guests. It's a pleasure to have all of you here today.

Mr. Mulet, I've actually had the pleasure of being in your country in interesting times in 1986. Maybe sometime over a cup of coffee we can chat.

I also had an opportunity to make a very short visit to Haiti. It's really sad to see what has happened to Haiti. The world seemed for a time to have turned its back on Haiti, with a lot of distraction in other places. We'd hate to see this new-found attention of the world community on Haiti—well, there are two things: one, if it isn't sustained, as you mentioned, and secondly, if it isn't going to provide for stability.

There's so much to ask questions on, but let's talk about the prison system. Mr. Boucher, what is our financial commitment right now to refurbishing the prison system? Maybe I'll just start with that: what is our financial commitment to that right now?

Mr. Claude Boucher: At the moment, I would say it's less than half a million dollars. This is concentrated in building a new prison in Fort-Liberté in the northern part of the country. We are also thinking of building a new prison in St. Marc.

A technical mission was in Haiti just a few weeks ago to look at the whole correctional system and to see what kind of effort Canada can make. I think this mission will make recommendations in the coming weeks. I'm quite optimistic that they will recommend we increase our effort. We are, at the moment, thinking about an investment of between \$3 million to \$5 million in the coming three years.

Mr. Paul Dewar: And that's for the bricks and mortar, or is it for

Mr. Claude Boucher: Yes, but in a month I think we will have eight correctional services officers from Canada there. At the moment, we have four on the ground, but we'll get four more in the coming weeks.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So if I were to ask you right now, you would say Canada's strategy and investment is a work in progress.

• (1150)

Mr. Claude Boucher: Yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay.

On the issue of investment, Mr. Khan referred to how many dollars we had been spending or had dedicated to spend in Haiti. Can you give me a breakdown, generally speaking—and this is just to get a macro view of things—of how much we're spending on things like the justice system, on prisons, which I'll call institution building, versus what I'll call humanitarian aid or spending on education and health care, etc? Can you give me an idea of what the breakdown is there?

Mr. Claude Boucher: I didn't expect such a detailed question, but I will say at the moment that close to half the money spent this year will go to education and health and to reinforce governance. The other part will go to infrastructure, police reform, justice system reform, as well as correctional services reform. Also, we have approximately \$20 million in what we call local development, encouraging the small communities to design projects.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Micro-financing and—

Mr. Claude Boucher: Yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: In terms of policing, there's lots being done to train new police officers and police services. Can you tell me a bit about the role of women in that? Has that been a focus? If so, what is the focus? In other words, are women being trained as police service officers?

Mr. Claude Boucher: Yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: About how many?

Mr. Claude Boucher: The president's personal objective is to have 50%.

Mr. Edmond Mulet: Yes, 50%.

Mr. Paul Dewar: How's it going?

Mr. Edmond Mulet: It's now 14%.

Mr. Claude Boucher: Canada is really involved in trying to increase services for women in all sectors. For example, we just had a mission to Haiti's parliament a few months ago to encourage women to involve themselves in political life. We do the same thing at the local level to try to organize women. Also, in the police, as you know, we now have 70 Canadian police officers, and they are involved in recruitment. And we try to encourage women.

The increase is quite impressive. At the first promotion you had only two women. Now it's up to 14%, and we are quite confident that it will increase in the coming months.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Elections Canada has played a role in the past in the elections there. Are we doing that in the upcoming elections?

Mr. Claude Boucher: I think the CEP has gained a lot of its own capacities. In these last municipal elections, they were the ones who really conducted the whole thing on their own, so they've learned from all of the advisory services, especially from Canada in the past. So they have those capacities now.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So is Canada providing resources for the upcoming senate elections?

Mr. Edmond Mulet: We are, but we are waiting for the electoral committee to design the critical path. At the moment, we don't have any timeframe or anything like that, but, yes, we will.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I actually have one other quick question I just have to ask. It's a touchy one, and it's about the role of Aristide. We're honest brokers, which is what we hope to be seen as. I'm still not clear about what exactly happened with the overthrow of Aristide after he was elected.

What is his presence in the culture of Haiti today, and how is Canada seen or connected to the former president, in terms of how people perceive that?

Mr. Claude Boucher: I can answer the first part of the question and you can answer the second part of the question.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Fair enough. That's teamwork.

Mr. Edmond Mulet: This is Préval's second term as president. He was president for five years with Aristide's support.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I understand that; I know the history.

Mr. Edmond Mulet: He was also Aristide's prime minister for five years, and he ran under a new banner, this new movement called Lavalas, and Lespwa, but most of his base was in Lavalas. He has

this national unity government, and one of the ministers represents the Lavalas Party, the minister of planning.

In the very beginning, when Préval came to power, you would see these marches and manifestations calling for Aristide to come back. There would be 5,000 people marching on the street. A few months later it was 3,000 people, and then in December it was 500. It went out with probably only 20 people marching, asking for or demanding Aristide's return. His own movement, Lavalas, is very fractious, with a lot of different groups with no leader conducting it in Haiti. So I think Aristide's political presence in Haiti is very, very much diminished at this point.

• (1155)

Mr. Claude Boucher: I have just a few comments.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Sure.

Mr. Claude Boucher: We consider Aristide a man of the past today. We think Haiti needs reconciliation. When you see all of the messages sent by Aristide from South Africa, which he does at least on a yearly basis—and he just sent one in December or January—they are not the kinds of messages that will encourage reconciliation. He tried to oppose portions of the Haitian society, so in this context, I don't think his return would help to stabilize the country. Maybe at some point he should return to his country, but one thing is sure: it would be premature today. It would put in jeopardy all of the international community's efforts to stabilize the country and to encourage reconciliation. We will need more stability, and more political stability, and maybe sometime in the future—

But as Mr. Mulet said, what we witness in the country now—contrary to some of the reports we sometimes see in the press or on TV—is that he doesn't have a lot of support. In fact, the last demonstration of his supporters was announced to be made up of thousands and thousands of people, and there were less than 500 people.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, and also Mr. Dewar.

We will move to a second round, and we have Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you for being with us, gentlemen. It is a pleasure to see you again. I really appreciate what you are doing for Haiti, the more so because I come from the country myself, specifically from Artibonite, the region where all the revolutions are born. But in spite of the fact that I come from Haiti, I have not been closely involved for some time, having been forced to leave the country when I was quite young.

Francine, you are probably more familiar with the current concerns in Haiti.

But, of course, one never stops being Haitian. When I take part in discussions on Haiti as part of my work as a member of Parliament, it is always with emotion and a great deal of interest.

With all that has been said, two aspects that you briefly touched on seem almost absent from the current situation. At least, that is how it seems to me, looking in from the outside. To an extent, this is about national reconciliation. Mr. Boucher alluded to it briefly. As far as I can see, no efforts are being made in this direction. I am well aware that everything has to be done, but the fact remains that the everything includes the Haitian people. As you know, there is enormous economic disparity, there is dissension and even hatred among different factions. Considering everything that we are doing in Haiti, I am a little surprised to see that this aspect is not being considered.

I could parody Mr. Bush—I think it would be for the first time—who spoke about winning hearts and minds. I would rather say reconciling hearts and minds. In my opinion, this idea does not figure largely enough in what is being done for Haiti and with Haitians. Of course, none of these efforts will be successful unless the people themselves decide to get involved. At the moment, the people are a little alienated—and here I am not talking about those who are forming the government—by the fact that white people are acting on their behalf, and that the government is their puppet. It is as if Haitians do not see, individually and collectively, why they need to become involved. In that context, I think that a kind of national reconciliation could result, in terms of concrete action, in people taking ownership rather taking handouts.

Unfortunately, Haitians have become beggars through the years. That is what happens when you cannot take care of yourself. It is particularly so from a macroeconomic point of view. On a personal level, it results in individuals who are suffering and who keep waiting for foreign aid, at all levels.

Then there is the elimination of the debt. In the Haitian mind, that debt is enormously important. People talk a lot about the current debt, and I remember that, at the World March of Women, women said that they had never signed anything and were not responsible for any debt at all. That is the extent to which they do not feel part of it.

People forget Haitian history, the fact that the country paid for its independence in gold. This has a direct effect on the present situation. We paid the debt when things were going relatively well, but it had enormous consequences, including in the minds of the people. Haitians are very proud of having paid the debt, but I find it stupid. Here in 2007, I feel that we never should have paid. But we did.

As for the debt that has accumulated since, I think that foreign countries are partly responsible. They should be capable of very quickly establishing something that would allow Haiti to come to terms with those two elements. We paid the debt, and it caused us an immense problem. If you know the kind of aid to provide to foreign countries, especially to a country that is still in sharp decline, would you not think that eliminating the debt could act on hearts and minds, and facilitate that reconciliation?

• (1200)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot.

Unfortunately, we're pretty well out of time. I don't know what your schedule is like, but if you would like to take a few moments to

quickly answer that question, we'll then conclude with a few remarks.

Mr. Edmond Mulet: Okay, I'll do it quickly.

[Translation]

I am going to touch on the question of reconciliation. When René Prével was a candidate for election, he announced that he was going to establish a government of national unity. The first thing he did after having been elected was to call together the six largest parties and ask them to nominate ministers. All the members of the cabinet represent different political parties, even the Lavalas party. Everyone is represented.

When he has important decisions to make for the country, the President brings everyone together, whether they are from the civil society, from political parties, from Parliament, or from the private sector. He is constantly working for national reconciliation. He even meets with the people from Groupe 184 who strongly opposed him, Mr. André Apaid, Reginald Boulos, etc. The latter is the owner of the daily *Le Matin*. On the paper's 100th anniversary, Mr. Prével went to the reception and there was a reconciliation. Mr. Boulos now makes public statements in which he supports the government.

I see things moving forward. This reconciliation, this national dialogue starts with the very head of the government. In addition, the private sector and civil society are expressing a desire to work together and to leave behind those 20 years of confrontation and polarization. I find that very encouraging.

As regards Haiti's debt, it is about \$1.3 billion, but the negotiations that the Prével government is holding with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are going very well. This is all about macroeconomics. It is possible that in one or two years, the debt may be totally wiped out, but that is not a given. Some conditions, dealing with governance and integrity among other things, must be fulfilled. A debt like that is not easily eliminated: we want the government also to make some efforts in the area of tax collection. And it is doing so.

The inflation rate in Haiti is one of the lowest on the continent. In fact, the government has assumed enormous financial and fiscal responsibilities. So I think that in these two areas, the country is going in the right direction.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mulet.

I'm disappointed that Mr. Dewar left a little early.

Haiti, I think, always used to be our major recipient country. Now, Afghanistan, of course, has taken that role. But Canada remains very much committed to Haiti.

The foreign affairs department announced a while back \$10 million through the Global Peace and Security Fund to help with security and the judicial system in the country. And specifically with regard to Mr. Dewar's question, a colleague passed me some information on health care: Canada has made a commitment to invest nearly \$520 million over the next five years. When CIDA made some announcements in February of 2007, there were a number of specific projects mentioned: \$18.75 million for the Haitian health system development support project; \$17.5 million for the expanded immunization support project; \$9.2 million to support the United Nations transitional appeal; \$19.8 million for the program to rehabilitate basic economic infrastructure in Haiti; and \$5 million to implement Haiti's national school feeding program. Those are some of the specifics on what Mr. Dewar asked about in regard to health care.

Whatever the amounts are, we hope to see some fruit and very positive stories down the road in terms of success in Haiti. We know that MINUSTAH and others involved there are very optimistic and hopeful. I guess it depends on where we start, but some would say we can only go up from here. We do look forward to more and better democratization, so that we can see the parliament and justice system working, and all those things you mentioned today. We just wish you all the best in that.

Thank you for being here.

• (1205)

Mr. Edmond Mulet: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We are adjourned.

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