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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Order.

Welcome and good morning. This is meeting six of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, on Tuesday, December 4, 2007.

Today we will begin a briefing with the Canadian Food Security Policy Group, and in our second hour, after noon, before our committee business, we will continue our study of Canada's mission in Afghanistan and hear from Omar Samad, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Canada.

First, for our briefing, as witnesses we have Stuart Clark, chair of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Canadian Food Security Policy Group. Also, we have Joshua Mukusya, founder of Utooni Development Project. As well we have Mamby Fofana, member of the board of directors, Unitarian Service Committee of Canada; Rachel Bezner Kerr, research coordinator for Soils, Food and Healthy Communities Project; and Susan Walsh, executive director of the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada.

Welcome. We look forward to your presentations.

Mr. Clark, you have some opening comments. Then we will proceed to our first round of questions.

Again, welcome to the committee.

Mr. Stuart Clark (Chair, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Canadian Food Security Policy Group): Thank you very much, Mr. Sorenson.

I want to express our thanks for the previous times that this committee has heard our testimony. You'll recall that it was just ten months ago that we spoke to you. There was an all-party resolution resulting from that presentation about an agriculture sector priority at CIDA.

We're somewhat following up on that today, which I hope will be made somewhat clear, particularly in light of the negotiations going on in Bali right now concerning climate change.

For those of you who are not aware of who the Food Security Policy Group is, it's an informal network of Canadian development NGOs who work on the issues associated with hunger and food insecurity. We've been working together since 2000, and have been working hard particularly on questions of agriculture, food aid, human right to food, and agricultural trade.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, said on November 17 that climate change is the defining challenge of our era. This was on the occasion of the release of the fourth assessment report of the IPCC, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

All of these initials and long names shouldn't hide the importance of what was being said at that time.

Among the things that were said, the IPCC stated flatly that neither a focus singularly on reducing greenhouse gas, or on climate change adaptation, would be alone sufficient to avoid the most serious impacts of climate change. In fact, there must be both.

Our work as the Food Security Policy Group has been around agricultural development. What we have been seeing and increasingly recognizing, of course, is that climate change is hitting small farmers around the world first and hardest.

But the small farmers are not sitting back and saying "Poor us." They're in fact drawing on a deep well of traditional understandings of how to cope with climate change, and in many cases making very successful adaptations, at least in these early stages of climate change.

They need help to adapt. I think we come before you today recognizing that four years ago, CIDA made a commitment to increase Canada's aid for agriculture to the level of \$500 million per year by 2008. Last year we were at about \$200 million, and the target was \$500 million, which is all to say that even at the level of simply helping farmers, never mind climate change, we are underperforming.

Therefore, we come before you today to say that in addition to the concern that brought us here last time, for an agriculture priority at CIDA, we want to put before you the need to make assistance for climate change adaptation a part of any integrated comprehensive Canadian climate change response.

To help make the case, we've brought with us three people who work on key issues related to agriculture—soil, water, and seeds.

Dealing with the issue of seeds, I would first like to introduce to you Mamby Fofana from the country of Mali. He is the proud son of a wise but unschooled farmer, and is a graduate agroforestry engineer currently working as a natural resource officer for Swedish CIDA. He also farms a five-acre farm outside the capital, which is a powerful demonstration plot for other farmers looking at how to make adaptations.

After we hear from Mamby, we'll hear from Joshua Silu Mukusya, who similarly is the proud son of a farmer and also a university-trained agronomist, and who has spent the last 30 years trying to help people become drought-proof. Drought, which of course was a frequent occurrence, is now an ever more frequent occurrence as a result of climate change. Joshua will speak about water.

• (1110)

We have also with us Rachel Bezner Kerr, who has been working in Milawi on the question of soil. She will not speak at this time, but she's ready to receive questions.

I'd now like to turn the table over to Mamby, who will speak to you about the adaptation work around seeds.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Clark.

Mr. Fofana, welcome.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mamby Fofana (Member of the Board of Directors, Unitarian Service Committee of Canada, Canadian Food Security Policy Group): Thank you.

It is with great pleasure that I come before you as the son of a farmer and a farmer myself. From the youngest age, having been born and having lived and grown in a Saharan climate which is inherently unstable and difficult, I have admired the ingenuity of peasants. They constantly adapt themselves to changes in the climate and to all outside aggressions in order to suit their agricultural practices to reality and feed themselves and their children.

I very quickly decided I wanted to study agronomy and forestry. I was inspired in this by the fact that where I was born and grew up, peasants try to grow on the same land trees, vegetables and grain in order to have production systems that are sustainable and can be controlled in order to prevent the disasters to which we are exposed today.

• (1115)

[*English*]

Having said that, I want now to highlight a bit of the concrete work we have been undertaking with regard to seeds, androgynous seeds and indigenous seeds, which are our entry points.

I have been working for USC Canada for almost 16 years. We discovered in one remote place in Mali that farmers in cases of extreme climatic phenomena are even going to eat the seeds, and they just rely on the seeds found in the market. Sometimes these seeds are coming from very different agro-ecological zones, where the rainfall is better, much better than in Douentza. By growing these seeds, it is a cycle of failure and more failure.

What we did is to try to make a participatory rural appraisal in order to know the situation of the genetic reserve in the place, in order to keep them not on an individual basis, but through what we call community gene banks, and a community gene complex with two components—one that is a gene bank and another that is a seed bank.

Then you can keep all the genetic reserve of a place. This is very important for small-scale farmers. They are 80% of our population, and they have been developing very adequate systems for keeping

alive the seeds by keeping them in the storage and bringing them into the farm the next season, linking then *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation methods.

This is a risk management system. Why? Because the seeds were kept by individual farmers, but now through the gene banks and seed banks, there is a collective or community control over of these resources, which are very important as the source or the base of any production system. They have been really adapting themselves to external aberrations like the climate, and the seeds are the result of the interactions between human resources, between soil and climate, and they are adapted.

But why is this type of agriculture now losing ground? It's because of global policies, the global market policies, and also the climate change issues, which are deep. The changes have been very complex, very quick, and very deep.

For instance, they can adapt themselves and the seeds according to interannual changes. This year in Mali, instead of starting on the first week of June, the rainy season started after July 15. Then, with traditional farmers knowing that the season will be short, they have grown what are called photoperiodic varieties, which can adjust themselves to the length of the rainy season. This is very important, and today, if the whole world can learn from this, this is very important.

I don't say that these systems are, today, very relevant, because I've said that they have been affected by external aberrations like the negative policies at the global level and the climate change issues, which have been very deep, and also the floods, because they didn't used to manage floods but they used to manage droughts. It means that the context is changing.

• (1120)

What Canada can do in such a process is help agriculture in other places. In helping agriculture, it's important to help members of civil society and also the governments to work together to know the current situation, to know the limits of traditional systems and how to improve them by putting together traditional knowledge, which is based on wisdom, and also modern knowledge.

Modern knowledge is not able to overcome the problems on its own because this type of knowledge has been developed outside reality, out of the climate, in the research stations. But by putting together the two types of knowledge, the problems can be overcome, and I think the whole world can learn these adaptation systems, which have been developed by the farmers throughout generations.

Thank you.

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

We'll go to Mr. Mukusya.

Mr. Joshua Mukusya (Founder, Utooni Development Project, Canadian Food Security Policy Group): Thank you.

As has been said, my names are Joshua Silu Mukusya, and I come from Kenya. I am going to talk about the movement of farmers in that region of Africa where we started a movement of farmers way back in 1977 to reverse the effects of drought and to enable farmers to grow enough for their feed and for themselves.

Over the years we have done a lot of work on terracing the land and trying to raise the water table by putting up sand dams or walls across the rivers. The reason we did that was simply because over the years, I looked back to when the colonial government was there; they had a program of soil conservation, which looked at slowing the speed of water. Out of those small points where they did the work, the areas remained very green, and I thought if we could develop that system and make it bigger, we would be able to be self-sufficient in food and pasture for animals.

In a period of about 30 years, we have been putting these sand dams on our dry riverbeds in the hope that we can increase the water table and create springs as well as grading our wetlands for growing vegetables and germinating trees to replace what has gone.

In that period we have had some success. We have also had failures. But mainly we have seen the biggest major problem setting us back as being the effect of climate change. After doing all that good work involving our own free labour and getting support from friends to get the materials like cement and reinforcements, the rains stood us up. They never came.

So we failed to some extent but we still think sand dams and the combination of trees and the terracing of the land is the answer to climate change and the best way the farmers can hold all their ideas to their own areas, improve their own food, with whatever support the governments of Canada and Kenya can give those farmers to improve their own food security situation.

We have seen this as a benefit to the land and a benefit to the people, but we still have a problem with other parts of the world, who have their own way of life and who have not thought about climate change, which we ourselves are trying to adapt to.

I'm thinking of governments, like the Canadian government, supporting the Kenyan government—that's being supported in the same system, doing the dams. Because of the effects of climate, that has a global cost, either in the northern hemisphere or in the southern hemisphere. If people don't take care of that, then we are back to the same problems.

We are improving and we are going back a step, because the climate is not allowing us to get to where we want to go.

It is my hope today, in this gallery, that those listening to us would have a way of finding a system that would enable future generations to enjoy the same soil we have been enjoying for the last 50 years, and to enable the poor farmers, through groups, to do the best they can to improve their quality of life.

I would like to stop there.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you to all our guests for being here.

We'll proceed to our first round of questioning.

Mr. Martin, you have seven minutes.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Walsh, Mr. Fofana, Mr. Clark, Mr. Mukusya, and Dr. Kerr for being here today. It is much appreciated.

I would submit that isn't necessarily a lack of global knowledge in terms of what is available in terms of research into seeds, soil, water, and agricultural practices. The problem is trying to get that out to the field and operationalizing it.

Could you give us some guidance as to how we can make CIDA's aid money more effective in supporting the projects that you feel are needed? That's number one. And two, specifically what areas do you think CIDA should focus on to support you?

So it's a question of, yes, we need more money, but how do we make that money work better for you on the ground? Specifically, what should CIDA champion in these areas to support food security?

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

Mr. Fofana.

Mr. Mamby Fofana: Thank you.

I think the scaling up is a permanent issue, and a very strategic issue. This depends on the approaches taken. Participatory approaches can really help in scaling up.

I take the example of a small village in Douentza. When we were doing the participatory rural appraisal, we asked the elder of the village about his notions of poverty. He said that you are poor when you are buying your food in the market, meaning that you are dependent on a market and what is available in it. But by listening to people, you can really know their aspirations and help them to fulfill these aspirations. We don't develop people; people develop themselves. You can just facilitate. This facilitative role has been done through the seed program, which has been an entry point. But the whole program has become an agro-biodiversity, conservation enhancement, and utilization process in line with sustainability.

In Mali, for instance, 80% of the people are dealing with agriculture as a source of income and employment—and this is the reality of the whole society. If CIDA really wants to help people to fight against poverty, you have to start through agriculture and use NGO and civil society members, who are very knowledgeable about the grassroots and who have developed domestic—

Hon. Keith Martin: That's the domestic civil society?

Mr. Mamby Fofana: Yes.

Hon. Keith Martin: And that means supporting project funding and program funding.

Mr. Mamby Fofana: Yes, both. The local civil society is very important for sustainability, as it's from the people, but in other places, civil society is weak most of the time. But by linking these people with western civil society members, you can then really build capacities, because our main problem in most cases is capacity. This is very important.

Hon. Keith Martin: I'll change the question just a wee bit, if I may, just to add to this.

What should we stop doing? What you're speaking about, Mr. Fofana, is project funding, and what CIDA has moved to is program funding, so what we get is a true trickle-down effect, with huge amounts of money being consumed by administrative costs and a trickle getting to the people who need it. So what should we stop doing?

This is for Mr. Clark, Mr. Fofana, or anyone.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Mamby Fofana: Thank you.

In my view, what we should stop doing, right away, are those vast bilateral programs which were designed without consulting the people and which for the most part did not take into account the deeper aspirations of the local people. They do not value the knowledge and practices of those people who made their living from agriculture for many generations. This is knowledge that was generated through a dynamic process. This is not static knowledge, it is dynamic. It tries to constantly adjust to reality, which is extremely important.

We know that governments have a responsibility to put into place policies that will assist development, but governments do not have the proper tools or structures to implement the basic development capacities jointly with the people. This can better be done through civil society organizations, with governments having a policy and standard-setting role.

I believe this is very important. It is the change Canada needs to make. It should develop projects in which the people will have a voice, that value their knowledge and aspirations, and also value their means of livelihood such as seeds. These are part of their livelihood. They were developed on the basis of very appropriate knowledge, that has even been proven scientifically correct, even if people did not always take the time to test this knowledge and to verify its validity.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fofana.

Mr. Stuart Clark: May I just add one brief comment?

I want to make reference to the World Bank's *World Development Report* this year. It was particularly important. It's the first time in 23 years the World Bank has pronounced the "A" word—for agriculture—and we were very glad to see that.

Also, it was very interesting to hear resonance at the World Bank of exactly what you've just heard from Mr. Fofana, as the bank, under the topic of governance, has made crystal clear the really key importance of building on civil society farm organizations and putting them at the centre of a lot of this agricultural development.

Canada's move towards program funding and direct budgetary support has often been done under the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, moving away from support for civil society. I think even the World Bank is saying that's probably not the thing to do.

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Anyone else?

Mr. Joshua Mukusya: I would add that civil society reaches more of the poor people than do the programs. I would be happy if the Canadian CIDA programs were given a chance to be dealt with both—common programs and civil society programs—to enable the mothers who are right in the villages, who do not have access to the powers, to benefit from these programs and to produce for their children and the nation, if you understand my way here.

Dr. Rachel Bezner Kerr (Research Coordinator, Soils, Food and Healthy Communities Project, Canadian Food Security Policy Group): Just to add to what Joshua said, I think one of the things we are really here to emphasize, which you're partly witnessing through our guests, is how important it is to have farmers' voices at the table in programming decisions and in efforts to improve agricultural productivity and people's livelihoods in Africa. They have tremendous depth of knowledge of their own environments and are experiencing on-the-ground climate change.

So farmer organizations need to be involved in the development programs that are being implemented.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Susan Walsh (Executive Director, Unitarian Service Committee of Canada, Canadian Food Security Policy Group): If I could just add something very quickly on the indigenous knowledge side of things, I will speak as an anthropologist here, having been working in this field for about 20 years.

One of the things local farmers and indigenous peoples are extremely good at is understanding the complexity of their ecosystems. They see things like a peach tree flowering early as a sign of the weather patterns they're going to experience that year, etc. There's a wealth of knowledge that even we can benefit from in a world that's facing dramatic climate changes, which I think we really need to understand as being at the root of this. If we start to ask farmers about how they want to deal with climate change, etc., that's a really important starting point.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Walsh.

We'll go to Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

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

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for appearing before us today. I believe it is Mr. Mukusya who said that you are moving forward and making progress but that for every step forward you move one step back and are not getting anywhere. It must be extremely discouraging to see the results you achieve constantly threatened despite all the effort that went into them.

It is obvious — and in my mind, this is how things should be done — that there should be coordination between foreign aid, governments and the local people, knowing of course that peasants are often the last consulted. So I fully agree with you that Canada should make an effort in this regard because these people have experienced the situation, they have traditional knowledge of these problems and they can offer solutions.

However, when we talk about climate change, as you know, these impacts are beyond the grasp of individuals and of many States. Unfortunately, Canada is not doing very well in this respect from what we can see at the present time.

I wonder to what extent your respective governments, or the governments with whom you work, realize the enormity of the danger that hangs over mankind. And to what extent do they make a linkage between what is happening locally and the fact that at a global level there is not enough of an effort to reverse the situation?

• (1135)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot.

She referenced you, Mr. Mukusya. Did you want to respond to that?

Mr. Joshua Mukusya: Yes. It's a good question.

For sure, everybody knows there is climate change. But people want to make themselves indifferent. They know it is there, but they don't want to do anything.

For sure, our governments are doing their best, as the Canadian government is doing its best. But nobody is showing us the way forward to reverse these situations.

What I would say is that, because we realize that problem is coming... We used to have two seasons in every 12 months, the long season being from March until June. It's no longer there. You get drizzles, and in some places you get nothing. Now we only depend on the short rains that come in November and December.

As I left home on the 18th, there was nothing. Probably they will start coming, but if after all the work we have done trying to prepare some communities that expect rain and get water, it does not turn up, they will have another, extra year of problems, not getting water and not getting food.

If experts could show us the way forward to reverse the situation, which we know is there, by telling us this is what we have to do to change the situation we are in, then we would be heading somewhere.

But as Mr. Clark mentioned, it is tied to many other things. And out of these many other things, as a nation and as citizens of the world, we need to find a solution as a team, because everybody has a nephew and another friend living somewhere. Even if it's in Africa, it will probably end up affecting Canada at one point in the process. Because there's a very gradual change, a lot of people don't see it.

Yes, the government is doing its best to tell people to plant trees. But just telling people to plant trees and not acting is not enough. We need to do the practical part of it: stick the plant in the ground, water it, and make sure it lives above the height of destruction by small animals.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mukusya.

Madame Barbot, you wanted to have another minute or so.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Yes.

You know, trees are planted but it takes time for them to grow and the situation is urgent. To what extent is food aid that comes directly from abroad structured to fill the need while allowing people to become self-sufficient wherever that is possible?

Mr. Mamby Fofana: First of all, in the case of Sahelian countries, especially those of Western Africa, people are fully aware of climate change. They experience daily the effects of climate change and they adapt because climate fluctuations from one year to the next have become very frequent.

This year, winter rains came six weeks late. Cotton was supposed to be grown in a number of fields but the people, knowing that cultivated cotton is a hybrid that cannot adjust to climate, preferred planting local grains. These are photosensitive and photoperiodic and can adjust to the duration of winter rains. Adaptations are happening daily and people are perfectly aware because they are directly affected. Floods used to be rare in the Sahel, but this year there have been over 34 serious floods in Mali which affected 40,000 people. So it is true that climate change is here, it is experienced and understood by the people of the Sahel.

At the same time, here is the position of our governments. There is an obvious political will. Mali, for example, ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on December 28, 2004 although it took effect only in March of the same year. This means that the country was indeed very quick to ratify the convention, but government capacity remains weak, there are few forecasting studies under way to try to anticipate the climate and the required adaptations and we know that in order to adapt we need knowledge of climatic trends.

Canada could contribute a lot in this regard also, but all this needs to be based on the traditional system of resilience and what people already know, rather than reinventing the wheel. We must build on what exists in order for the peasants who have the needs to take ownership of the measures. We are talking here about 80 percent of the population. When we help 80 percent of the population to mitigate the effects of climate change in their daily lives and to realize their potential this can be called combatting poverty.

• (1140)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move to the government side.

Mr. Obhrai.

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

Thank you very much for coming. It's always good to hear from you.

I returned from Mali only two weeks ago and I met with our CIDA officials there who are doing a pretty good job of trying to meet the challenging needs in Mali.

I was also in Nairobi last year. Coming from east Africa myself—I grew up in Arusha—I am aware of the complexities that are in Kenya and in east Africa in reference to the challenges faced by farmers.

Today you have alluded to climate change and its impact on food security, which you have eloquently illustrated. But one has to understand that climate change affects everyone, including Canada. So Canada itself has the same challenge that Africa is having but we have a stronger capacity to deal with it. There is less capacity in Africa to deal with it.

Hence, it's a cooperative effort between NGOs, the government, the farmers and everybody working together, as you rightly pointed out. So it is not an easy solution that is to be addressed tomorrow. On climate change, it's a longer-term solution that will highlight it.

I'm looking at the immediate impact here and saying that one of the factors on this, Mr. Clark of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, is helping the food security in Africa. We send food from here and we tie it down.

We are thinking of what might happen if we untied the food aid and allowed the aid to be addressed internally. Sometimes there is a bumper crop and sometimes there is a low crop, but using the internal economy of the country itself to address the security need rather than coming from here, would the Canadian Foodgrains Bank think this could be one of the positive features addressing a long-term security issue?

My second question is this. Specifically coming from east Africa, corn is a very important staple in the African diet. A report that came from the UN talked about using corn and everything for biofuel, having a negative impact on food security, specifically for countries in Africa and in Latin America. What do you think of that?

I would like to hear from you on these two questions.

• (1145)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Clark, then Madam Walsh.

Mr. Stuart Clark: I'll speak briefly to the question of untying food aid. In fact, if some of you were here when we spoke before 2005, it was an issue that we frequently brought as a desirable policy change.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank, indeed the farmers who support the Canadian Foodgrains Bank—and there are many thousands of them—were solidly behind the idea of further untying Canada's food aid budget.

So in 2005, in a deal I would have to say struck a little bit between the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in the negotiations around this, Canada untied 50% of our food aid.

I believe there have been subsequent internal moves within government, to look at further untying that food aid budget. I'm not sure where that stands.

But I do want to say that there's a sense in which procuring food aid in developing countries is seen as the gold standard. I think we

need to stop and listen to what we've just heard about climate change, because in the past when there's been a food crisis it has usually been possible to obtain food somewhere fairly close by. During the Ethiopian famine in 1984, that was definitely the case.

However, with the kind of seasonal variations we get now, it's very likely that we will have regional crop failures. We don't want to slam the door on the possibility of being able to send food from those areas whose agricultural productivity is expected to rise in the short term, including Canada.

So while there is often good sense untying this food aid because it has a good benefit in developing countries, we need to keep the possibility of sending food aid from Canada in the tool box, because there will be times when that will fit.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Clark.

Madam Walsh.

Ms. Susan Walsh: Just on the biofuels issue, that is a bit of a silver-bullet approach to climate change, we feel. I think we are very concerned that there will be a shift from feeding people to feeding cars.

The UNDP just came out with its *Human Development Report* that focuses on climate change. They state there that if all of the food crops were replaced by fuel crops, it still would only feed 20% of our crude oil energy demands.

Clearly we feel that we have to be very careful on that one. If we start to shift and further undermine the ability of farmers to grow food for their families through this new idea that this can somehow solve our problems of energy needs, we're in for some real problems there.

So we're very much wanting a very critical look at that whole new shift towards biofuels.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you, Mr. Clark, for speaking about the untying.

I want to hear from the Malians and the Kenyans about what they think about untying food and the local market conditions.

Mr. Joshua Mukusya: I would first say that the idea is wonderful. If we can have biofuel that can enable the rural communities to light their houses without going far afield, that is a wonderful idea. But if we think of a nation like Kenya, where only 20% of that land is productive, and the rest is not, if by any chance anybody goes beyond producing food and turns fields for food to biofuel, then you are telling the local poor people they are finished and they are gone. We should by all means watch, and keep on watching.

It has been in the news all over that a new crop is coming. It's promoted highly. But still in the village we don't think it is going to be the same thing as we had through growing coffee and having no food, and getting nothing out of it.

So I think it's not the best. It is a good idea, but it is not for the farmers. It's probably for the large-scale farms, for people who have other alternatives.

I'm not part of promoting that, and I don't think the community we are involved in is about that, because we have not gained from coffee, where we expected to sell something and get money to buy food and run our small projects.

It is only an idea because the world is desperate for other things. I still feel we have a long way to go before we can sink to that.

• (1150)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fofana, quickly.

Mr. Mamby Fofana: Thank you.

Concerning food aid, I think planning food in advance has to be avoided, because in cases of good production internally that can negatively affect food prices and farmers' incomes. In cases of extreme food shortage, food aid is compulsory because it can help, but the best way to help people is to help them grow their own food.

I was saying that 80% of the population is dealing with farming—not as a food source only, but as employment, as a source of life, as a source of recovering their dignity. If you are no longer able, as in the case of a Douentza elder, to provide food to a family, this is a shame. You lose your dignity. It is important to make people recover their dignity by helping them to grow their own food. This is better than food aid.

Concerning biofuel, I can go not for biofuel but for some native trees such as the gum arabic tree, which is native to the Sahelian countries and which can be planted and can help sequester carbon, even if our problem is not emissions. All the emissions are sequestered, and we are even helping other places—like Canada—to sequester carbon. It is important in that case that Canada reduce its emissions, but help us also to develop family-based farming—for justice, because if you are helping 80% of the population, this is justice.

For instance, *Jatropha curcas* is a plant that is now being permitted, but it is very exigent. It is not soil-tolerant or drought-tolerant. This means that it could compete with cereals to occupy the very fertilized lands. This can be problematic. We can go with drought-tolerant tree species that are native, but not *Jatropha*, for instance, which comes from Latin America.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fofana.

The last question will go to Madam McDonough.

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

Thank you very much to the Food Security Policy Group once again for your ongoing leadership, and to our partners from the global south for bringing living, breathing examples of why we need to take seriously the kinds of recommendations you've placed before us yet again today.

I'm not sure whether you all are familiar with the fact that there was, for a time, a Canadian climate change development fund

specifically crafted to focus on the punishing effects of climate change and remedial mitigation programs...on developing countries where agriculture, as you've pointed out, is 80% of the economic base—for example, in countries that you represent.

That program, I think, was considered to be quite visionary initially. Unfortunately, the previous government allowed it to expire, and it now no longer exists. I'm wondering whether particularly our guests from the global south had any experience with that program in their countries and whether one of the things we should be doing is looking at relaunching a similar program.

Secondly, thank you for pointing out the really quite alarming reduction in the resources allocated for the agricultural programs under CIDA that have been seen in the past, I think, to be quite important. I'm wondering whether you can comment specifically on whether it is your feeling that the recommendations from this committee to the government should be around stepping up those specific funds or whether your recommendations would be primarily around particular programs that we should be advancing and advocating.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam McDonough, and welcome back.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Stuart Clark: I think the first question was whether either of our guests had experience with the climate change development fund. I have to say I'm drawing a little bit of a blank on it, but they may know something about it.

Have you heard about it, either of you?

Mr. Joshua Mukusya: I have not heard a word.

Mr. Mamby Fofana: I know that CIDA has funded a climate change program with AGRHYMET, which is part of an interstate committee on drought and desertification in west Africa. But this is an original organization. Otherwise, I don't know of any other supports that came from this special fund.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Thank you.

Mr. Stuart Clark: To briefly answer the question you asked about what we would recommend to government at this point, I think we would continue to say that it was a wise, and I think good, policy to look at a ramping-up of Canada's aid for agriculture, which had fallen to 2% of our aid budget, around \$80 million. The plan was to step it up, over five years, to \$500 million.

As I indicated, it plateaued about three years ago. This was partly a result of the previous government's international policy statement through which the decision was made that agriculture would not be a sector priority within CIDA—that's a point we've made with you many times—with the result that it plateaued at \$200 million, and it hasn't gone up or down, as far as I'm aware.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: That's less than half of what was recommended.

Mr. Stuart Clark: That's right.

I think we would bring an additional recommendation today saying that this really needs to be acted upon. I think that was the sense of the all-party resolution coming from the standing committee back in February.

The additional point that we want to bring is that the adaptation to climate change is such a serious problem that it would be wrong to raid or take away money from health, education, and indeed other agricultural activities to support climate change adaptation. It really needs to be seen as part of our climate change response. I'm not sure, technically, whether that's appropriately channelled through CIDA, or how that would be done. Perhaps those are some of the issues being discussed at this moment in Bali. We do feel really strongly that as part of the polluters in this case, we have a certain responsibility—which, I think, Canadians understand—to redress the consequences of problems we've had a lot to do with creating.

So we'd see that as additional to the push that we've tried to give in the past towards an agriculture sector priority.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Walsh.

Ms. Susan Walsh: I'll be quick.

In addition to an increase in the resources for this kind of work for agriculture, the approach also has to be looked at carefully. I guess the message that our colleagues are bringing is that it needs to be a farmer-centred approach that supports small producers. The government needs to work very closely with civil society organizations both in the north and in the south so that the aid is really support that's owned by the local communities and they can move forward. It isn't just about the amount but about the quality of the work that's being supported.

The Chair: Thank you.

We want to thank all of you for being here and speaking on the issues of Africa. Certainly for those who have come from Africa, we welcome you here, and we very much appreciate the information received first-hand from you. We wish you all the best. I know that some of you are here for other meetings, so we wish you all the best for those.

To the committee, there is some lunch provided. I do not want to suspend for more than two to three minutes.

- _____ (Pause) _____
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- (1205)

The Chair: Members, in our second hour today we are continuing our study of Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

We have with us this afternoon His Excellency Omar Samad, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Canada.

We want to thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for taking the time and making the effort to be with us here today. This committee, as you know, the foreign affairs and international development committee, is concerned about both parts of the undertaking that Canada has in Afghanistan, not only the military perspective but also the developmental perspective.

We look forward to your comments. You're always welcome here and we're pleased to have you.

I should also mention that you've brought your wife with you today—we welcome her—and a group from the embassy.

The time is yours, and then we'll move into the first round of questioning.

Your Excellency.

H.E. Omar Samad (Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Canada, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Canada): Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Honourable members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, thank you very much for your invitation and for having organized an hour of discussion and dialogue with an Afghan.

I believe it can be useful, from time to time, to engage Afghans who have experienced the modern-day history of their country and who have also devoted a great many efforts to trying to resolve the problems of Afghanistan. I am grateful to you for this opportunity.

[*English*]

I'm going to use my time to highlight what I call strategic imperatives and also the critical human factors involved in the Afghan case.

Afghanistan, as you know, is a country in a recovering state that wants to put behind it the failed-state model and mode it encountered over almost 25 years during a period of instability, conflict, and destruction, some of which was caused by factors beyond the Afghan reach.

We are in the process of rebuilding a state within a strong and traditional nation. We are in the process of building peace, a constitutional order based on democratic principles according to Afghan wishes, a functioning economy and civil society, and a foundation for human rights and the rule of law.

To do so, the international community, including Canada, has joined hands and committed itself to helping us provide security and protection, build institutions, strengthen capacities, and fund social and economic development work under a United Nations mandate.

The Afghanistan Compact of 2006 became the binding blueprint for achieving defined benchmarks and timelines by 2011, as you know. Your country is a major contributor toward several of the compact benchmarks, a fact that, in my opinion, all Canadians can take pride in.

This process also includes internal and external countercurrents that create obstacles and challenges; seek to halt progress; disrupt the strategy that I just mentioned; instill fear; and use various tactics to create the conditions in Afghanistan and in contributing countries for failure or an alternative course that suits their strategic purpose.

What is clear to us Afghans, though, is that we do not seek regression or a return to pre-2001 conditions. Afghans do not want to be ruled by ruthless oppressors. As your multicultural society clearly demonstrates, people have differences in terms of tradition, history, and cultural traits. But in today's globalized world, Afghans are instinctively preoccupied with the same daily issues that preoccupy most of mankind and families across the globe at varying degrees of development.

As three different polls conducted across Afghanistan over the past three months demonstrate, most Afghans are relatively hopeful about their future. To encapsulate the findings, Afghans support their elected government and the presence of foreign forces, while they oppose the Taliban and do not want them to rule the country again.

Polls also suggest that Afghans are slightly less optimistic than a year ago, and are frustrated at the slow pace of reconstruction and security efforts, including mounting civilian casualties. Although approximately 14,000 small- and medium-scale projects have been on the board for implementation over the past five years and are being implemented, there's increasing dissatisfaction with the availability of jobs, roads, infrastructure in general, clean water, and electricity.

Among other key findings, almost 70% of Afghans are critical of Pakistan's role in allowing the Taliban to operate, while 60% want the government to talk to willing Taliban. The same number are opposed to growing poppies for opium. This can be explained by the fact that only 6% or so of the country's arable land is used for poppy cultivation, mostly in the insurgent-infested south and east of the country.

With few exceptions, Afghans are voicing the desire to move forward. They are seeking new opportunities and better lives for their children by tackling the difficulties and challenges we face. But they want to do so with vision, with a long-term perspective, and in partnership with countries such as yours, whose support and sacrifices we honour very much.

• (1210)

Currently we are facing increasing violence and brutality on the part of radical groups with support bases inside and outside of Afghanistan. They are using asymmetric warfare in the form of suicide attacks, IEDs, beheadings, and bombings to disrupt the democratic rebuilding process. Some do it for narrow ideological purposes, others for financial interests entangled with the drug business, while some are in need of an income or are dissatisfied with authorities for some reason or other.

We are also faced with an economic surge that has not reached all regions and all people. We also face weak institutions and government services, mixed with corruption, and at times a dysfunctional judiciary, which in our opinion will take a long time to reform. The enemy, however, is exploiting all these fault lines while we attempt to maintain our equilibrium.

As we are a fragile state, we cannot always expect quick fixes and immediate solutions that can satisfy all the stakeholders, domestic or foreign. Given the Afghan traditions, the rebuilding process is a long-term mission, with many pitfalls along the way, and it will

require statesmanship, strong political will, sacrifice, leadership skills, perseverance, and sustainable support to attain its objectives.

In addition, we realize that a military component is a critical part of the equation, but it is not necessarily the only option for the final outcome. That is why Canada and other partners have adopted a multi-pronged approach to dealing with all the aspects of the situation on the ground. However, we cannot ignore the fact that security and relative stability are prerequisites for the successful implementation of sustainable development. Better coordination and management of the daunting tasks at all levels are equally important.

We cannot separate Afghanistan and the region in which it is situated from strategic considerations in the same manner that we cannot ignore the human protection and human security responsibilities. We cannot address the global security concerns and threats that are embedded in my region of the world without looking at the issues of education, health, the plight of women and children, and human rights.

Also, we cannot take for granted the ideological and radicalization challenges we face without addressing poverty levels and, for example, reliance on poppy cultivation in poverty-stricken areas, as well as the possibility of welcoming and accepting those Afghans who give up on violence and seek a constructive role.

As you can see, honourable members, Afghanistan is not a unidimensional matter, nor is it an isolated concern. It cannot be defined in simplistic sound-bite terms, since we are dealing with a serious and complex matter of strategic importance. I have to say that Canada is, fortunately, engaged at the most critical levels and adjusting well to the dynamic environment. Canadians in civil and military affairs in Afghanistan are indeed serving a noble cause and deserve all the support you give them.

We all need to contemplate for a minute what the consequences of failure would mean to Afghans, to the region, to the forces of oppression, and to those in the family of nations who have invested in blood and in kind. What message do we send to friends and foe? What legacy do we leave behind for today's children and future generations? What does it mean to multilateralism and post-conflict engagement? What does it mean in terms of civilizational and cross-cultural relations?

I am happy to see that a prominent independent panel of Canadians is carefully studying the case, with the task of providing you and all Canadians with balanced recommendations that will help your nation decide its future role in my country. Whatever the decision, I urge you beforehand to contemplate strategically, using broad analysis and grand perspective.

•(1215)

[Translation]

Once again, thank you for the opportunity you have given me. It will be a pleasure for me to answer your questions.

[English]

The Chair: *Merci.* Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

We'll go to the first round. We'll have a split between Mr. Wilfert and Mr. Martin.

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

Ambassador, it's always good to see you.

I have three quick points. I know we can't do this justice, but certainly I'd like your quick comments.

First, in Canada we have the largest diasporas outside Afghanistan. In my view, we're not utilizing them effectively. Do you have any suggestions in that regard?

Second, on the issue of opium, you talked about 6% of the land use. As you know, the Senlis Council has proposed the Poppy for Medicine approach in its report, dealing particularly with the issue of seed to medicine tablets, again trying to respond to issues out there around drug use.

Your government has opposed it, our government has opposed it. Maybe you could elaborate very briefly as to the alternative, because it's getting worse.

Finally, what blueprint do you see needs to be in place in order to "Afghanize" decision-making and management and achieve that buy-in from both Afghans and your allies?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. Ambassador.

H.E. Omar Samad: Thank you.

You have touched upon three very interesting topics that are also close to my heart, in one way or another.

Yes, Canada has a strong presence of Afghans. Our Afghan Canadians have been here for 20 to 25 years in most cases. The numbers run somewhere between 100,000 to 120,000 people, mostly concentrated in the greater Toronto region.

As an expatriate myself, who in 2001 left exile and decided to go back and serve my country, I can tell you that one of the most effective ways to build capacity and transfer knowledge and skills to this newly redeveloping country, and to be a bridge between the new home and the old home, is to reconnect the Afghans, who had to leave their country under duress over the past 25 to 30 years, to their homeland.

I have talked to my colleagues within the Canadian government on many occasions, especially in CIDA, about looking at ways to facilitate the return of some qualified Afghans who are willing to go—and spend whatever period of time they would like—and be of help. I think that help will not only go a long way to assist

Afghanistan, but it will also go a long way to assist Canada and other countries where we have large communities of Afghans.

On the opium cultivation issue and the Senlis Council proposition, as you know, our government does not think it is the best and most effective way of tackling this humongous problem. I have to tell you that 30 years ago, prior to the Soviet invasion, and the subsequent crises it underwent, Afghanistan was not a major opium-producing country. As I mentioned, even today, 6% of our arable land is being used by less than about 15% of the farmers for this cash crop. Interestingly, they do so in the most volatile regions of the country. They do so, to a large extent, as a result of war weariness, of poverty, and because they have no other alternatives.

One of the solutions we are seriously looking toward with our partners, especially the U.K., which has the lead in this field, and now the Americans, who are playing an important role, and many other countries, including Canada, which, for instance, provides a certain amount of assistance toward alternative livelihoods in Afghanistan, is a strategy that works for Afghanistan. It could work for a region that is also affected by it, and the world at large, because the product ends up on your streets as well. It is a shared problem that we need to tackle together. There is the supply-side issue and there's the demand-side issue. We hope that everything between the supply side and the demand side can also be addressed and that not all the pressure is put on the supplier.

As a result, we think that the new approach we'll be taking, which will also be backed by very large amounts of monetary support, will provide the Afghan farmer with a clear decision—namely, if you continue, these are the consequences. We do not want to punish you right away. The purpose is not to punish you. The purpose is to help you move to other crops and an alternative means of livelihood. Of course you need certain things from us, as the government or as the international community, to be able to make that move. Whether it's rural development, roads, schools and clinics, agribusiness, and access to markets, we will do our share.

•(1220)

Now, when we say that we will do our share, we need to deliver. On a couple of occasions in the past few years, we told the Afghan farmers, "Here we are, and we are going to help you move to a licit means of livelihood", but then we failed to deliver.

That would be the disastrous scenario for all of us, to promise and not be able to deliver.

This is the way we are going to take. We are looking at all kinds of alternative crops. They are things that may not compete with opium or heroin on the markets, but they will come close to it. I am of the belief—and the latest polls show—that the Afghan people are opposed to poppy cultivation as a matter of principle, and almost 70% of Afghans are opposed to it.

In our culture it is prohibited. In our constitution it is prohibited. So the first answer I have for Senlis is that...why are you trying to impose something that is illegal—culturally, legally, constitutionally, religiously—for the Afghans? That would be a recipe for many other problems.

Let's not take that route. Again, their little amount of work in Afghanistan has shown that wherever they went and proposed this idea, we saw a sudden surge in poppy cultivation.

Is that the answer to Afghanistan's problems? From all sides, the answer to that is, no, it is not.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

We will go to the next questioner.

Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Ambassador.

You stated that Afghanistan's problems are immense in all areas. In Canada, as you are probably aware, a good portion of the population, without wanting to minimize the need to go into war zones because there is a situation that demands it, would like to see Canada involved in other areas, namely peacemaking efforts which are closer, culturally, to what we are used to doing. That is more or less what Canadians are saying.

With regard to the present mission that is to be wound down in 2009, do you have an idea of areas in which Canadian aid might be useful?

H.E. Omar Samad: Thank you very much.

You have an important mission in various respects, including a military mission in Afghanistan that will last until 2009. You also made a promise and signed an agreement with the Afghan people and the rest of the international community. Indeed, the Afghanistan Compact, signed in London last year, states that Afghanistan must benefit from help and assistance at all levels until 2011. We will then sit down again around the table, all of us together, to reflect on what will have been accomplished and decide on the future. It will of course be up to you, to Canadians and to the Parliament of Canada, to decide what you will do beyond 2009.

As an Afghan, I can simply tell you that the Afghan people and government are clearly saying that they see no way for ourselves to control military affairs and security in Afghanistan as of 2009. If we are ready to do so, we will tell you. If we are not ready, then you must not create a more complex and dangerous situation by saying that you will leave and that there will be nothing to replace you. You must still, with your NATO partners, agree together on what NATO will do in Afghanistan. But Afghans — and I believe that President Karzai was he too very clear on this — will need international military assistance until 2009 and beyond. I cannot tell you for how long, the situation is very difficult. I can tell you that we are, of course, in the process of rebuilding the Afghan army and police, and I hope that we will be able to accomplish this quickly.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have more time, Madame Barbot....

Madame St-Hilaire.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Ambassador, thank you for being here today.

I would perhaps like to hear you pursue your explanations. Indeed, you stated in very thinly veiled terms that you hope that Canada will stay on after 2009, or in any event, that you were not ready for post-2009. I understand that beyond that date, you are concerned that the government and the people might not be ready...

H.E. Omar Samad: That is what we foresee.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: That is what you foresee for after 2009.

In fact, for the benefit of the Committee perhaps, I would like you to tell us what it would take for Afghanistan to be ready, for your government to be ready for what will come after.

H.E. Omar Samad: Very well.

If you do not mind, I will answer in English.

Thank you.

[*English*]

To be ready today means reaching certain objectives and benchmarks. Some of them are clearly defined under the Afghanistan Compact, clearly, and some of them are evolving in a dynamic as the situation on the ground changes.

Look at our region. We are sandwiched in quite an interesting, fascinating, yet dangerous region of the world. It's a dynamic region. Things are changing on the ground that are having a direct impact on conditions in Afghanistan.

If you ask Afghans—and I told you about the poll that was recently taken—most Afghans think that insecurity has external roots. Yes, there is a component that's internal, domestic, and we know there is some dissatisfaction by some groups here and there for this reason or that reason. But the core of the armed groups that are facing us and your soldiers today, and the soldiers of many other countries, is fighting there for an ideological reason, a very narrow ideological reason.

Take the person who commits a suicide attack. First of all, in most cases they are non-Afghans. They are trained outside of Afghanistan, they are equipped outside of Afghanistan, and they learn their skills outside of Afghanistan. Then they are exported to Afghanistan. As a result, we suffer. All of us suffer.

This means that you have to look at the larger context. You cannot only look at what happened today in Panjwai district. You have to look at what caused an incident in Panjwai district to happen. How did it happen? How did they reach that region? Who provided the logistics? Where did they get the training, and so on and so forth, including the funding eventually. Where did that come from?

As you can see—and I tried to put this in my presentation to you—that is what makes Afghanistan strategic, or it's one of the reasons. It goes beyond simply one district, one province, or even one country. That's why, as we are building up the national army....

The latest news I have received is that the acceleration that we have put into this effort has actually yielded some very positive results in the sense that we now think that the army that is targeted to be at 70,000 trained men and women will be formed sooner than we expected, hopefully before 2009. At the same time, our government is of the opinion that 70,000 is not enough for Afghanistan security, given, again, the changing dynamics on the ground. We may be now thinking about engaging everyone on adding to this number, because Afghanistan needs to go beyond having an army of only 70,000 men.

The same with the police. As you know, for a while attempts were made to create a new police force. It did not result in satisfactory forces. There were all types of issues. But right now, as we are speaking, there are hundreds of millions of dollars from various countries and donors, including Canada, that are being allocated and spent on the reform of the police, including increased salaries, which was a huge problem, and improving the quality and the quantity of training and equipment.

•(1230)

Once we reach some of these benchmarks...and again, the sooner the better. I want to emphasize that. The sooner Afghans can be fully in charge of these issues, the better, so that, not only for Afghanistan's sake but also for the regional complexities, we can handle the situation. Then we can talk about other options that exist.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

We'll proceed to Mr. Obhrai then Mr. Goldring, for a split time.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador, for coming. It's always nice to hear your perspective.

I'm very happy that you did mention the London compact and the benchmarks that need to be reached to rebuild Afghanistan. As you rightly pointed out, it's not one single approach to building Afghanistan. It's a multi-level approach that requires all players, including the governments, NGOs, security components, all of this to rebuild Afghanistan. You can't have a one-track mind...and which is the London compact. So all this attention that says we need to concentrate on only one aspect and stop the other aspects is not going to work. You rightly pointed out about the region.

What I find amazing regarding an organization like the Senlis Council is that we still need to know what its objective really is. It comes out with reports that are so narrowly focused and so narrowly defined, giving a totally wrong picture of what is actually happening, then that gets picked up. Today's article by Nipa Banerjee in the *Ottawa Citizen* very rightly gives the whole picture of what is wrong with Senlis Council's narrow approach of coming out and saying that things are wrong here, and let's do this here, and not taking into account.

What I find quite interesting in the Senlis report is the suggestion that NATO should now move into Pakistan. I don't understand why, all of a sudden, this organization is going to urge a move into another country. To do what? Getting into this debate, to solve the problem of Afghanistan? Yet it comes in front of the committee on this thing.

Now, the dynamics in Pakistan...and I'm not trying to put you in conflict. Obviously you have to work multilaterally with Pakistan and and so on. But what I would like to hear from you is an assurance that all multi-faceted aspects of development in Afghanistan are moving forward, not as the Senlis report comes out, cherry-picking here and there, to say that this is wrong and this is not.

We never hear about the northern part of Afghanistan. We never hear of the regions, what they are doing and what is happening there. All we hear about is what is going on around here.

So perhaps you want to give us what the international community...and where, and how assuring it is to the Canadians that...thinks that Canadians put money down in development, all these things, is working for Afghanistan.

•(1235)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

H.E. Omar Samad: Thank you.

Canada has pledged and is delivering on providing Afghanistan \$1.2-billion Canadian worth of development aid in a ten-year period. Afghanistan is the largest recipient of Canadian aid ever. We are very grateful for this, and we appreciate every dollar. I, as an Afghan, have said many times that I want every dollar of Canadian aid to go as far as it can in changing and improving the lives of Afghans, whether it's for children and women, whether it's for infrastructure, whether it's for governance or rule of law or human rights.

For example, yesterday, we were very happy to hear about the \$80 million additional dollars pledged over four years for demining. A couple of months ago, education again became a priority for Canada. Canada is going to be a leader amongst nations in helping us create the new Afghan education system and build schools and train teachers.

These are real changes, real facts, which one may not see because of the way the changes are implemented over time. But they have made, and continue to make, a difference in the lives of the Afghan people.

This doesn't mean that everybody's happy and satisfied. This doesn't mean that the job is complete and finished. This doesn't mean that the needs of Afghanistan are met. This means that this job, as I mentioned in my remarks, is a long-term mission of rebuilding a country that was destroyed over 25 years. Just imagine any society, whether developed or semi-developed or under-developed, being hammered politically, militarily, economically for 25 years constantly. What would happen? Do you expect that to rebound over five years? It doesn't happen. It has never happened in history. Why do we have such expectations for Afghanistan?

The question is whether we have the political will to understand this and then to commit long term, not only to the military aspect of this mission but also on all the other fronts that exist.

As you said, the Afghanistan Compact is a blueprint, and one that we have signed on to, which means that we have to meet.... For example, yesterday, we announced to the world that we destroyed, under the Ottawa treaty, all the mines and explosives that have been stockpiled in Afghanistan over the last four years. We signed on to the Ottawa treaty in 2003. We had an obligation to destroy tens of thousands of mines that were collected and stockpiled, and we did. That was an Afghanistan Compact benchmark that was met.

So where do we stand? Does this mean it's the end of the mine problem in Afghanistan? No. We know for a fact that we have millions of mines still buried under Afghan land, and every day—every day—at least two Afghans, mostly children, lose a limb or lose life as a result of it. Every day.

So you see, this is one issue that Afghans have to face, and one issue that you, as our friends, are helping us resolve, amongst hundreds of issues that we have to face. That means you have to be patient with this issue. You have to have a long-term perspective. You have to send the right message, not only to the Afghans, not only to the foe, which is sitting there trying to undo everything we're trying to do, but also to your own people, who expect you to deliver with their tax money.

When I say we are grateful for Canada's help, I mean we are grateful for every dollar, every soldier who serves in Afghanistan. They will be remembered for eternity in our history. They are now part of our history, as we are part of yours.

• (1240)

So are we going to give up on this mission halfway? As we see, there is real potential for success, because you have the backing of the Afghan people. Why throw away a mission, or change mid-course the dynamics of the mission, while what we could be doing is strengthening it? We could look at ways to strengthen it to better accomplish the goals we all have together.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

We'll go to Mr. Dewar.

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

The Chair: I'll just remind the committee that we still have committee business, but Mr. Wilfert has allowed us to shave five minutes off his time.

Go ahead, Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Your Excellency, for making yourself available to the committee today.

As was mentioned, it is helpful to hear your perspective, because we can read papers and we can watch television, but having a firsthand account from your perspective is most helpful.

I just want to be clear about my party and where we stand. We have said that we want to withdraw from the counter-insurgency mission in the south. Let me just confirm to you that this is not a position that requires us to withdraw from helping Afghanistan. I want to underline that, because there have been some concerns that we were simply suggesting that we extricate ourselves entirely from Afghanistan.

I should point out that in 1998-99, many of us—my party and other people involved in the social democratic movement—were actually trying to get the attention of the world when the Taliban were doing what we now know they did, and they didn't respond. I think it's a horrific situation that the world community only responded after it affected them directly. I certainly understand your concerns about not losing sight of that. In other words, if we see quelling and we say, "Oh, great, fine, everything's done", and put a ribbon on it and go home....

So I get it. I understand it. That said, we heard from members of the Canadian development community last week, as well as from those who are looking towards other solutions in Afghanistan, and working with Afghans. The suggestion was that we're not quite getting the balance right.

I've noted that you've commented in the public domain on a similar concern, that right now the emphasis on the military vis-à-vis the development isn't quite in balance, and that we need to find a better balance. I have to say that I was a little surprised, to be polite about it, that when I asked officials from foreign affairs and CIDA if three D was dead, they said they didn't use that term any more, they have one D, and it's all working well.

So I leave you to read the record on that.

In your opinion, what is out of balance? Do we need more diplomacy? Do we need more development? Or maybe we need more defence?

• (1245)

H.E. Omar Samad: Thank you.

First of all, thank you for expressing your support for Afghanistan. Having spent almost three years here, I know that, overwhelmingly, Canadians care about Afghanistan, and they are over time becoming much more informed about Afghanistan and the realities of Afghanistan. They want to do something, and they are doing it. I hear every day of Canadians across this vast country, on their own initiative, doing something to help an Afghan in Afghanistan, whether it's organizing dinners and collecting money for education in Afghanistan or collecting teddy bears. So many things are being done. I appreciate that very much.

I hope I have a chance sometime, maybe not in this context, but with members of your caucus and party, to have a more in-depth discussion as to why the counter-insurgency issue is—unfortunately is—a real issue that we have to deal with. When an insurgent, or whatever you want to call him, comes into our country or is given money and told that this will take him to heaven, for example, and he kills a school teacher or beheads a woman activist or attacks schoolchildren going to school, we have a problem. We have a problem that needs to be dealt with. They're not wearing uniforms like my soldiers or your soldiers. They're not abiding, or trying to abide to the extent we can, by all the international norms and regulations and laws that organize warfare. They're doing it, of course, outside our norms, and they're doing it in a ghastly manner and in an opportunistic manner.

Mr. Paul Dewar: But it is getting worse, as you mentioned.

H.E. Omar Samad: Well, do you know why it is getting worse? Because in 2003-04 we failed to fill the vacuum and failed to build on the achievements and accomplishments we had, and they came back. That doesn't mean that now we have to accept it, but they used that opportunity to come back to Kandahar.

If it were not for your soldiers and ours, and the soldiers of other countries, Kandahar in 2005-06 would have fallen. The fall of Kandahar means the fall of the south, the south means the fall of the west, and the west means the fall of the rest of Afghanistan. That's how history is played in Afghanistan, and they know it. That is why they targeted Kandahar.

Anyway, let me go back to the balance issue, and I hope, again, I have an opportunity someday to sit down and go into much more detail about this, if you're interested.

The balance, I think, is an issue that has to be evaluated by Canadians first. You are an advanced democracy. You have institutions that can go in and evaluate how you are doing and whether it is meeting your criteria.

As I said, you are one of the top donors. You're in the top six donors, and you are moving into the top four donors toward Afghanistan. That is a proud place for Canada to be, and I'm not talking about the military aspect. You have to be extremely proud, as tragic as it is, of the fact that your men and women are serving courageously and with professionalism. They are respected by the Afghans, and we all share in the grief that your people have whenever tragedy strikes.

As far as development is concerned, there are times when the problem is not how much money is being given; it's mostly how it's managed and implemented. We are now looking at new concepts, including, for example, how to empower Afghans even more so that they can make decisions about their priorities and needs without having some consultant from a third country who is contracted for three months to come and tell all of us how to spend millions of dollars.

We have learned many lessons over the past six years in terms of how to disburse funds towards development and reconstruction. One of the lessons is to go to the communities, go to the Afghans, engage the Afghans, engage the communities. Afghanicize the process, listen to them, get them involved. They will protect your money and they will protect the school you build.

Every project that has been implemented in such a manner has not been destroyed, because the locals in the communities have protected it. The Taliban and the terrorists have not been able or not dared to go into those communities to try to create problems for themselves.

•(1250)

Mr. Paul Dewar: I have one last quick question.

I just want to know, who is protecting those projects, the successful ones that you said have been—

The Chair: A very quick answer, then. We're way over.

H.E. Omar Samad: The people themselves. Yes, of course there is some government presence. There is the international community presence. There is an NGO presence. Everybody is playing their role. But now it's coming from the grassroots.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're certainly hoping, Mr. Ambassador, that you'd be willing to come back sometime. With one hour and being kind of rushed with some of the other presenters we've had just prior to you, our time is pretty well up.

I do want to give you a little bit of an indication as to one of the questions we may be interested in when you do come back. I know you made some remarks just recently in Montreal at the Millennium Summit. You stated this:

Let's also not forget that we started this process from the ground up, at point zero, with twenty-five years of lost opportunities behind us. And to expect that this gigantic job of putting a failed state back on its feet can be accomplished within a few short years flies in the face of reality.

That is very similar to what you said today.

I think probably one of the questions that the committee would be wondering about, and that maybe you spoke on a little bit today, is at what point can Canadians expect that Afghanistan will be able to sustain itself, perhaps without military intervention but continued developmental assistance? What timeline would you expect within which we could see a withdrawal of some of the massive international assistance we have?

But that's for another day.

H.E. Omar Samad: I look forward to that.

The Chair: There are other committees that have given witnesses an indication of what the questions may be, so we will do that today with you.

H.E. Omar Samad: Thank you for the tip.

The Chair: We thank you for being here today.

H.E. Omar Samad: You're welcome. Thank you very much.

The Chair: We are going to take a very quick little break and then we're going to do some committee business. Mr. Wilfert has a motion that he wants dealt with today.

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_____ (Pause) _____

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•(1255)

The Chair: Committee, we'll come back to order. We have a number of motions.

The first motion that is on the paper is as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade invite the Hon. Maxime Bernier, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, and the Hon. Helena Guergis, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and International Trade, to appear before the Committee at the earliest opportunity to answer questions pertaining to the government's efforts to obtain justice in the murders of Domenic and Nancy Laneiro in Cancun, Mexico.

Mr. Wilfert, would you please speak to the motion.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, could I move the order just slightly. The second one is not, I am sure, contentious at all, so I would move the second one.

The second one is simply to get officials here—no minister, just officials—to provide a comprehensive detailed briefing on the current strategy and involvement in the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia.

I don't see that as very contentious. I would move that.

The Chair: We would have to have unanimous support in order to bump or to move up the order of precedence—unless it's yours.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: It is mine.

The Chair: Then we will just stand your other one down and we'll go to the second motion.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Can I move that?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: We are being nice today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

The motion is as follows:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development call on senior officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Canadian International Development Agency to provide the Committee with a comprehensive and detailed briefing on the Government's current strategy and involvement in the Horn of Africa, specifically Somalia.

If you remember back to the previous Parliament, I think Mr. Roy Cullen had a motion very similar, and perhaps this is what this one came out of.

Mr. Wilfert, do you want to speak to it a bit?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: No, I just move it.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: You don't want to speak?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I'm in favour.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, did you have a comment?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, we are in favour and we don't see any difficulty with this motion. It deals with the current situation in Somalia. The government will be more than happy to say what is happening in Somalia, and that's fine with the government.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Madame St-Hilaire.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Chairman, I would like to move a friendly amendment, if my colleague does not mind, namely that the minister for International Cooperation also appear at the same time, as well as people from CIDA and the Africa Fund.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Wilfert, do you accept that as a friendly amendment?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I think the only thing that will be problematic for the government will be that the word "minister" was included. I don't know why; I just assume that will be a problem.

I accept it as a friendly amendment.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: We would then have a difficulty because, number one, the minister is coming here. We can't have, as you said, the minister's time schedule is such that...

We're going to get all the briefings that we need here, and the questions can be directed at this thing. But to ask every time that there needs to be the minister here becomes practically impossible, and then it becomes impossible for the government to start supporting this thing. The minister is coming.

The Chair: Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I simply wish to say that the ministers who will be appearing will be dealing with the matter of Afghanistan and that it will already be quite limited. I believe that it is extremely important that they be here specifically to talk about Africa, in order that we have the time to ask appropriate questions.

● (1300)

[*English*]

The Chair: All right.

So, how would this read, then:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development call on senior officials and the minister from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and International Development to provide the Committee with a comprehensive and detailed briefing on the Government's current strategy and involvement in the Horn of Africa, specifically Somalia.

A voice: She wants both ministers.

The Chair: Both ministers?

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chair, if we eliminated the term "ministers" and said that if we are not satisfied with the briefing we receive and we then hold it in abeyance, we could then call the minister subsequent to that.

I want to get this on the floor and get this adopted. If we're not satisfied with what we receive, then we can...because I'm not happy, on the record, to have two ministers for an hour each.

We want the Minister of Foreign Affairs for two and the CIDA minister for two, and maybe at that time we can deal with this issue and other issues with the minister, but two hours—

The Chair: I know, Mr. Wilfert, but we've had perhaps nine or ten motions by now calling for the minister on each one. So what are we asking for, two hours...?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: The motion, though, that I put forward—

The Chair: We've also limited ourselves, because of the very aggressive timelines, to have an interim report done—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, on this one I'm being very helpful.

The Chair: —or rather a preliminary report.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I'm just saying afterwards, if we're not satisfied, we can put that in. In the meantime, every time we've asked for the minister, we say and/or. We realize the minister can't come every time, but one way to deal with a lot of these issues is to have the minister for two solid hours to cover a number of topics, which I'm sure would relieve the government of having to talk to us every time about how the minister can't show up, and then we can deal with some of these issues.

So as a courtesy we invite the minister, but what I want and the government wants, obviously, is a briefing on this issue. I'll certainly include CIDA.

Whether Madame St-Hilaire is agreeable to withdraw “minister” but reintroduce it, or have the minister, when she comes...we can address that issue.

The Chair: I think one way to do it is not to accept it as a friendly amendment. We can vote on the amendment and then we can vote on yours.

Mr. Obhrai and then Mr. Kramp.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

The problem we are having here is this minister is coming for everything, which is practically impossible.

Somalia is an important issue to be discussed here. I find it very strange; when the Liberal Party was in government, their ministers would never come the way that motions are being set out here. Now, all of a sudden, everything has to be....

We have said, and I have said it very clearly, that we are willing to support listening about the Horn of Africa, because it's important. The minister is coming, and any questions they have they can ask, but every minute to do that...it's becoming a political hot potato. They're trying to play politics here.

Then the government will try, instead of here you having unanimous consent....

Can I speak, Mr. Wilfert? Can I speak?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Here we are giving full support to this motion to study Somalia, which is important, right. I would probably say that Mr. Wilfert is right. If they don't get proper answers, they can then resubmit a motion to ask for whatever they want to do, but let's move forward on this.

The government is willing to support this motion, but they should start putting this motion and stop playing political games. The government is not going to do this and all of a sudden, instead of having a unanimous motion, you're going to start having divisions.

The Chair: I have Mr. Kramp too, but I don't know if Mr. Wilfert....

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I was just going to say that I would be prepared, if Madame St-Hilaire is agreeable, to include officials from CIDA, period, not the minister, but that we come back and revisit the issue of having two hours with the minister of CIDA.

The Chair: I think that way you have a better chance of doing this even before Christmas, if that's what you're after.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Okay, that's the motion; amend it to include CIDA, no minister.

The Chair: Okay. So, you're withdrawing that friendly amendment to the other...?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Yes. My friend seems to be agreeable.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have a question here for Madame St-Hilaire.

What happens if CIDA comes along and says it has no project in Somalia?

The Chair: Mr. Kramp, did you want to come back on that issue?

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): No, with Mr. Wilfert's decision, we're fine.

The Chair: Order here.

As I understand, Madame St-Hilaire has withdrawn the ministerial aspect of the motion. So it would read, as is, inclusive of CIDA officials...?

A voice: Yes.

• (1305)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: A point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, a point of order.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have to speak.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, my name was on the list.

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm just asking St-Hilaire, by putting the words “CIDA officials”, what happens if CIDA comes along and says they are not engaged in Somalia?

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, we are putting forward a motion. We are not discussing if the motion should be accepted or not. I believe that it is perfectly legitimate to ask the minister to come. The motion is of such great importance that we are asking the minister to come and meet with us.

Now, I am in complete agreement — Ms. St-Hilaire having given her agreement — with having the amendment she had moved withdrawn. However, I would like the discussion to be confined to the motion, in other words are we inviting these people to come, yes or no?

[English]

The Chair: Well, it is confined, because he was speaking specifically to CIDA. He was speaking to the portion that Madame St-Hilaire brought into her motion, which was CIDA.

So we'll leave it at that. It is amended. The friendly amendment has now become a friendly amendment with just CIDA.

We'll call the question.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I want you to know—

The Chair: It is carried unanimously.

Madame Barbot, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I would like a few words to be said about the visit by the ministers next week.

Indeed, it seems to me that it makes no sense whatsoever to set aside just one hour for two ministers. We should at least provide that each minister have a minimum of one hour for there to be a discussion. You will recognize, as I do, that following their presentation and once we have begun talking, there will be no time left.

So I would first like to know why we only have that much time. For us, this would even lead us to question our invitation to the ministers.

[*English*]

The Chair: In the past we've had ministers come for one hour; some have come for more than an hour, and then we've had two hours with five or six ministers up there.

The motion basically invited the ministers to come. I know they were trying to accommodate this committee fairly quickly before Christmas. Because of a lot of travel arrangements to different conferences all around the world, the ministers had certain times; at other times they weren't available because our committee wasn't meeting.

I haven't heard anything else, although Mr. Obhrai may be able to update us.

I know it's frustrating. When I was in opposition, and even in government, I always thought it was good to have the ministers there. You get the answers, because all the officials are usually there with them.

In some respects, I know that the ministers have tried to be here before Christmas.

Go ahead, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just for the record, I would like to say that since this committee has been there, there have been 12 appearances by the ministers to the committee, in all aspects of it.

Now it is up to the opposition to say what they want to talk about. We just can't keep going on this thing. What I would suggest is that the motion was passed and the minister has agreed to come for an hour. If they're not satisfied with it, they can subsequently start putting further motions as to what they want to do. But let's move forward here. Otherwise, we'll all get bogged down here.

The Chair: We have Mr. Wilfert and then Madame Barbot.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chair, I think—

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry; it's Mr. Wilfert, Madame St-Hilaire, and then Madame Barbot.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chair, in fairness to the ministers, and for them to do an appropriate job, we need to have two hours with each minister, not simply one. This isn't a tea-and-cookies event; we want to talk about real issues.

In order to have the opportunity, if the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the CIDA minister is available for two hours on December 11, that's fine. Then we'll have to put the other one off. But in fairness to the minister, in order to answer the kinds of questions that we need and the kind of...

Mr. Chair, through you to Mr. Obhrai, since August we not seen either minister, so I think it's appropriate that we give them the opportunity to come and speak. Two hours, I think, is reasonable, and then we can also deal with the other minister.

I'll leave it up to you, Mr. Obhrai, because you're very good at this and very skilled at this. I'm sure you will be able to get one of the two to come for two hours.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Are you praising me? That's amazing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Yes—but please do not put that in the record.

• (1310)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Madame Barbot, he's praising me.

I'm in shock.

The Chair: We're going to Madame St-Hilaire.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Indeed, Mr. Chairman, I wished to correct my colleague, because there are new ministers, there was a Cabinet shuffle, and I believe that it is important that committee members be able to put questions to them. And if we only have one hour, there will be no time for us to put questions to them after their presentations.

This is why I am of the opinion that we would need two hours with each minister. Furthermore, we might cover all the motions, instead of inviting them 14 times, as the Parliamentary Secretary was regretting. We could invite them for two hours each and cover off all of the questions, rather than inviting them again.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are you saying you want both of them to appear for two hours? Or is it two hours for one day, and then two hours—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Two hours each.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are you asking whether both ministers can come at the same time for two hours?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: No.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Separately.

[English]

The Chair: So you want two hours with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and two hours with the minister of CIDA.

Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, I would simply add that I consider it to be a lack of respect towards the ministers to invite them to come here with their whole entourage for just half an hour each. Given our numbers here, that would be of little effect.

[English]

The Chair: We've sent the invitation. They've accommodated us by being here. If we can check and say that there's been a desire to have them longer, then we'll see, but in the meantime....

I mean, I'm not a minister, but if I looked at a paper that had eight motions, and they were asking me to be there for every motion, I would say, "You know what? An hour here, an hour there...." And perhaps that's what's going on.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Now they want two hours; we might as well go to six hours. With all these motions here....

Look, let's be realistic here. Madame St-Hilaire is absolutely right, there's a new minister, who has indicated his desire to come here.

I want to ask a procedural question. An invitation has gone to the ministers. The ministers have responded. You stated quite clearly that they will be here for an hour. It's up to you, as the chair, whether you want to write them and ask if their schedules permit more time. It's their time schedule, not what we want here.

The Chair: That's what I'm going to do.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: But did we not pass a motion to have them here?

The Chair: Yes.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: We've been passing it for an hour.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: So why are we changing everything? They can say yes and they can say no.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): We didn't specify how long they were coming for.

The Chair: They have specified that. They're going to be here for an hour. We're going to ask—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: It's the old problem. Now you're doing it after the fact.

The Chair: All right. I think we're ready for this question on this motion.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Which motion?

The Chair: Which motion...?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, which motion?

An hon. member: We did it.

The Chair: So there's no motion on the floor.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, that's what I'm telling you.

The Chair: Okay, I stand corrected.

Mr. Wilfert, you're suggesting that I send a letter, or that our table clerk send a letter?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I would like to—

The Chair: It's not a motion, but I will send a letter.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I'd like to direct the will of the committee to asking the chair to send a letter indicating that we appreciate both ministers' willingness to attend—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: And we would invite them—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: We'd like to invite them for two hours each. It could be on two different days, that's fine, but we would like two hours with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and two hours with the minister of CIDA in order to properly address issues of concern to the standing committee.

The Chair: That's not really a motion, then. You're right, and I was wrong.

We'll do that. We'll ask if it's possible for an extension of time and—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: It's not a motion, it's just an invitation.

The Chair: It's not a motion. You're asking the chair to do that.

We will not get to your other motion today, Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I understand from the clerk that we'll do it Thursday. Thank you.

The Chair: Are we done?

The meeting is adjourned

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