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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (0900)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, colleagues.

[English]

This is meeting number 36 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, on Thursday, October 29, 2009.

Our first order of business this morning is in consideration of the report on the five-year review of Rights and Democracy for 2003 to 2008.

Appearing before us from Rights and Democracy we have Mr. Beauregard, president and chief executive officer; Payam Akhavan, member of the board of directors; Jean Guilbeault, member of the board of directors; Marie-France Cloutier, director, administration and resources; and Razmik Panossian, director, policy, programs and planning.

I understand you will give two opening statements and then we'll go into a round of questioning.

Madame Lalonde has a point to begin.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Chair, I introduced a motion about Rights and Democracy's five-year funding plan.

Would it be possible to discuss it before the end of this meeting?

[English]

The Chair: I think we would probably go to committee business at 10:45, so we wouldn't be cutting Rights and Democracy short.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I do not wish to take any time away from Rights and Democracy.

[English]

The Chair: Madame Lalonde, if we go to committee business, we would have to go in order of the motions as they appear on the order paper for our committee. That isn't the first one up. In fact, Mr. Ohrai has already asked about a motion and so has Mr. Dewar.

If you want to go to committee business, we can discuss that, but it will be at 10:45 or 10:50, not in the first hour.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: No, I did not want it in the first round.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, so we can take time in the last hour.

I believe Mr. Guilbeault, who is a member of the board of directors, will have the opening statement and then we'll go to our second presenter.

Mr. Guilbeault, welcome.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Guilbeault (Member of the Board of Directors, Rights & Democracy): Good morning. I would like to begin by thanking the Chair, Mr. Sorenson, as well as the other members of this committee for inviting Rights and Democracy to appear today.

For nearly 20 years, Rights and Democracy has been dedicated to bringing to reality the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its binding covenants and other international human rights instruments.

We promote and defend human rights and democratic freedoms around the world. We support human rights defenders and democracy activists striving to achieve better lives for themselves and their communities. We assist societies in the building of democratic institutions and processes that give effect to universal human rights.

I am pleased to represent the board of directors of Rights and Democracy at this important meeting. I would like to offer the regrets of the Chair of the Board, Aurel Braun, who could not be with us today due to a family emergency.

The act that created Rights and Democracy gave it a board of directors that includes 10 Canadian members from across the country as well as three international members to ensure that developing countries are represented.

My colleague Payam Akhavan, who is here today, as well as our members from La Paz, Regina, Kabul, Calgary, Bamako, Toronto and Ottawa will no doubt agree with me when I state that the entire board of directors thanks Parliament for its support to Rights and Democracy over the last 20 years and looks forward to building on our important relationship over the next 20 years.

The five-year review of our organization, which was completed by the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and tabled in Parliament by Minister Cannon, is an important element of the act that established Rights and Democracy.

In 1988, when Canada's Parliament gave Rights and Democracy the mandate to strengthen democratic institutions and programs that give effect to the International Bill of Human Rights, it ensured that our work would be carried out on behalf of Canadians.

By appearing before you today, we are reporting back to Canadians, through their representatives in Parliament, on our important accomplishments over the last five years. We are proud of these accomplishments. As you will see from the evaluation report and from the presentation by our President, Rémy Beaugard, Rights and Democracy is implementing its mandate in some of the most difficult and dangerous countries in the world, where human rights remain unfulfilled and where democracy seems a long way from taking root.

Notwithstanding the challenges inherent in our line of work, the programs and activities of Rights and Democracy are, in the words of the evaluators, making "a positive contribution to Canada's role in the area of human rights and democratic development on the international stage." Nowhere is this more true than in Canada's two largest recipients of official development assistance.

In Afghanistan, Rights and Democracy supports the participation of women in the transformation of Afghan society. We are working with women's rights groups and traditional leaders to halt the discriminatory practices toward women, especially in marriage. We contributed to building a democratic culture based on human rights through a number of local partnerships throughout the country. Rights and Democracy's efforts lead to the approval by the Supreme Court of Afghanistan of a new marriage contract that respects women's rights.

We are currently working with an Afghan law-drafting committee that is facing enormous challenges to re-write the country's family law. Our office in Kabul, which employs 18 people, is staffed entirely by Afghan nationals. Our programs touch thousands of people throughout Afghanistan.

In Haiti, Rights and Democracy contributed to the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman, and organized human rights tribunals after the fall of the dictatorship in 1994. Through our office in Port-au-Prince, we trained over 350 civil society activists throughout the country in advocacy techniques, leading to greater citizen participation in the democratic process.

• (0905)

With funding from CIDA, we are currently working with political parties and politically-active youth to promote multi-party dialogue, encourage the political participation of women and foster greater State-society relations on important human rights issues such as access to food and civil registration.

These examples point to the high quality of our programs in Canada's priority countries. Our work in Haiti and Afghanistan also points to another important factor in the success of our endeavours: sustainable long-term financing. These two country programs benefit

from long-term funding arrangements with CIDA, which allow us to operate through offices in the field. Rights and Democracy, as an executing agency, has consistently delivered on results.

However, most of the work we do, whether it is supporting the pro-democracy movement in Burma or documenting human rights violations in Zimbabwe, is funded through an annual parliamentary allocation. This committee's support was instrumental in securing a significant increase in Rights and Democracy's parliamentary allocation five years ago to approximately \$9.2 million. The five-year review demonstrates that we have generated positive results with this allocation, and it recommends a series of steps to improve our programs and operations.

Mr. Beaugard will outline what has been done, with the support of the board of directors, to implement these recommendations. He will also explain why the future success of Rights and Democracy depends on a multi-year, single-source funding agreement with the Government of Canada for its parliamentary allocation. As we prepare to finalize our strategic plan for 2010 to 2015, your knowledge and expertise, and indeed your support, will be crucial.

Before I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not recognize the important contribution of Rights and Democracy's staff, represented today by its union's president, Maxime Longangué, and our partners across the globe. As you have seen on several occasions in the past when Rights and Democracy experts have come before this committee, our staff is dedicated to the cause of human rights and democracy, and pursue the mission of the institution with unparalleled professionalism and determination; our employees are the guardians of our mandate in the field.

Parliamentarians, you can rest assured that Rights and Democracy will, with your support, continue executing its mandate of promoting and defending human rights and democratic development throughout the world—that is to say, promoting and defending values dear to all Canadians.

Thank you.

• (0910)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Guilbeault.

Mr. Beaugard, you have 10 minutes.

Mr. Rémy M. Beaugard (President and Chief Executive Officer, Rights & Democracy): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to join Mr. Guilbeault in thanking you for inviting our organization to today's meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the presence in this room of two other members of our board of directors: Brad Farquhar, from Regina, and Professor Elliot Tepper, from Ottawa.

[English]

Rights and Democracy is often called upon to present to this committee. We were here last week to discuss the human rights impact of foreign investments. This important special relationship with Parliament is unique. Few countries in the world have sought to create by law an institution such as ours. To my knowledge, no other country has one whose mandate links both human rights and democratic development. In this respect Rights and Democracy was created not only to promote universal human rights and democratic freedoms, and those who support their realization, but also to foster democratic institutions, structures, and processes that individuals require to give effect to human rights.

In staying true to this mandate and pursuing these intrinsically linked objectives, Rights and Democracy has worked closely with civil society organizations and governments, including the Government of Canada, and has engaged in places and situations where the need is most acute.

Our extensive experience in the field has led us to conclude, as we did in the original report preceding its creation, that democratic development is about reforming the way decisions are made in a society by ensuring that citizens participate in the decision-making process that affects their lives.

Rights and Democracy has applied this unique approach to democratic development in over 30 countries since its creation. Currently we work on four thematic lines, which include democratic development, women's rights, economic and social rights, and indigenous peoples' rights. We operate in 13 core countries.

Rights and Democracy's extensive underground contacts and long-term country expertise, its ability to bring together various actors from state and civil society, and its solid reputation allow it to react and deploy innovative programs rapidly.

The purpose of my presentation today is to present the main conclusions and recommendations of the five-year review. I will describe how Rights and Democracy has implemented these recommendations.

The statutory five-year review that you have before you was conducted by the Office of the Inspector General of DFAIT and covers the period between March 2003 to March 2008. The review included data review and analysis of our programs and activities to determine the relevance of our work and the strategy and governance system deployed by the institution. Six case studies were chosen by the evaluators to provide a cross-section of programs.

I am pleased to state that the Office of the Inspector General concluded that the overall results of this review were positive. The data gathered and interviews held with various stakeholders in Canada and in partner countries have confirmed the effectiveness and relevance of Rights and Democracy's activities in the field as well as their compliance with Rights and Democracy's mission.

As with all evaluations, there were a number of areas for improvement. This is healthy for an organization, especially one that is operating in different contexts with an overall objective fixed in the long term.

Of the five recommendations, four are directed at Rights and Democracy. The first recommendation directed to us is to increase our effort to engage Canadians in the work that we do, as mandated by paragraph 4(3)(c) of Rights and Democracy's act. The act calls on us to foster research and debate in Canada on human rights and democracy issues. We completely agree with this recommendation and we have already made significant progress in reaching out to Canadians to raise awareness. In 2008 we created a communication directorate to better manage the various components of our strategy. We developed a new Canadian engagement strategy, which we have already begun to implement. The central part of this strategy is the new cross-Canada dialogue series. We have already been to Winnipeg and Ottawa, and we will hold a series of dialogues in each province and every territory over the next five years. While our headquarters are in Montreal, we are opening an office in Ottawa to better engage the foreign-policy community concentrated in the national capital.

Over 20 Rights and Democracy student delegations are active on university campuses across the country, from Nanaimo to Moncton. Every year these delegations act directly in their communities to "put the world to rights" in their own way.

● (0915)

Recommendation number 3, which is number 2 addressed to us, but number 3 in the report, is for Rights and Democracy to maintain its program focus in the coming year while improving its management approach and strategy. We welcome this recommendation, as we believe the teams and countries in which we work and the partners with whom we work require long-term engagement. Since January of this year, we have been mobilized in the preparation of our strategic plan as recommended in the report. The 2015 strategic plan recognizes that the institution has a potential that must be maintained. The strategic planning process, approved by the board, was led by Rights and Democracy staff and included efforts to learn from past experience as well as to look forward into the future environmental factors that will influence our work. Consultations were held with board members as well as with 150 stakeholders in Canada and abroad, including the Government of Canada and partner organizations. The draft of the strategic plan has been presented to the board for approval very soon.

Many of our programs will evolve into new and innovative areas of work. Rights and Democracy has been supporting the democratic movement in Burma, and will continue to do so through the democratic voice of Burma and by supporting the Burmese Parliament in exile. Rights and Democracy is working to end impunity for human rights violation in Zimbabwe and to train journalists on how to report in a repressive environment on democracy issues. Thanks to Rights and Democracy, Chinese non-governmental organizations are advocating for democratic change within China by using laws to improve their respective human rights. In Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country in the world, Rights and Democracy is working with civil society in order to foster dialogue around the issue of security sector reform. In Colombia, where I will undertake a mission next week, we are strengthening the political participation and peace-building effort of women and indigenous people through citizen participation initiatives at the municipal level. In Bolivia, Rights and Democracy is supporting the political participation of women at the local level. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are supporting efforts by local women to stop sexual violence in eastern Congo and to bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes. In Morocco and Jordan, Rights and Democracy works to enhance civic participation of youth at the municipal level.

• (0920)

[Translation]

Recommendation number four calls on Rights and Democracy to improve the exchange of information and synergies between its programs. To respond to this recommendation and ensure that the institution operate with a more efficient structure, capable of generating collaboration and knowledge sharing, Rights and Democracy underwent a reorganization in the spring of 2008.

Working groups around priority initiatives and countries were created, as well as a policy team designed to provide research and policy expertise to all programs and initiatives.

[English]

Finally, the last recommendation calls on us to improve our financial monitoring and analysis tool. Detailed budgets accompany projects submitted for approval, and vigorous accounting procedures and reporting guidelines are followed by all staff members. Our financial management experts have even travelled to priority countries to provide training sessions to our partners on budget management, an important yet often overlooked result in our capacity-building effort.

As stated by the Inspector General, despite increased funding, CIDA's grand disbursement procedures, based on annual allocation, considerably limit Rights and Democracy's ability to perform its strategic planning.

[Translation]

However, I would like to indicate that CIDA has informed us a few days ago that our budget allocation for the next year had been approved, which will allow us to continue our operations despite the issues that we listed earlier.

Democratic development and the promotion of human rights are necessarily long-term endeavours, with sustainable results possible

only with sustained long-term engagement. Rights and Democracy has remained an efficient organization following the increase in funding, and maintains a low percentage of administrative costs compared to the total budget.

As we embark on a new strategic plan for the coming five years, our operations, planning and accountability would benefit tremendously from a consolidated, single-source funding system administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as recommended by the Office of the Inspector General in recommendation number one.

We will continue to diversify and increase our sources of funding in the coming years to expand our capacity to support democratic development and human rights internationally. The Government of Canada—on the recommendation of this committee—would benefit from implementing recommendation number one, and in so doing strengthen Rights and Democracy.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beauregard.

We will proceed to the first round of questioning with Mr. Patry and Mr. Pearson, please.

[Translation]

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

Thank you to Mr. Beauregard, Mr. Guilbeault, Mr. Akhavan, Mr. Panossian and Ms. Cloutier for being here this morning. It is a pleasure to have you here with us. First of all, I would like to thank you for the excellent work that you do internationally as well as the fine documents that you always provide to our committee in both official languages. That is greatly appreciated.

I took a quick look at the records that you gave us. Among the country records, there is one on Afghanistan. You are well aware that Canada's presence in Afghanistan is quite considerable and that it is one of the priorities of this government and the Parliament of Canada. A lot is currently being said about our military mission, but we hear very little about the social mission we are conducting in Afghanistan.

Following the military withdrawal next year from Afghanistan, how do you see Rights and Democracy's presence in that country? Mr. Guilbeault said that you receive \$9.2 million in government funding. What portion of that amount is committed in Afghanistan? If you were to receive additional funds for Afghanistan, could you do a whole lot more than what you are currently doing there?

• (0925)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patry.

Mr. Beauregard.

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: We have a separate budget for Afghanistan, over and above our \$9.2 million operating budget. CIDA has given us approximately \$1 million a year to undertake a specific project, namely to strengthen the rights of women in Afghanistan. Ours is the only agency to deal with that issue.

You have no doubt been following the family law reform for both the Shi'ite and Sunni communities. As indicated by Mr. Guilbeault, we worked with a committee of experts to support the government and civil society organizations throughout the process, in order to help them shape the public policies that will be based on the legislation. That is our program. We are working in six provinces with a number of women's and civil-society organizations. We have conducted training and produced radio programs to talk with women about their rights. We have often had to deal with the Department of Justice and the department responsible for the Status of Women.

Those are our current activities, but we will have to ensure follow-up. I have discussed these matters with the Afghan minister responsible for the Status of Women during my visit there. Once the legislation is implemented, there will be a family code. We have to establish a mechanism to inform Afghans of the existence of those laws and their meaning. Following that, it will be important to set up family courts or institutions to which people can turn to resolve their problems.

There is currently only one family court in Afghanistan, located in Kabul. In the rest of the country, the normal process is through traditional courts. Women must also have access to legal services. In the six provinces where we have a presence, we are currently supporting legal clinics that specialize in the rights of women and children. There is a lot of ground to cover, and those efforts are not enough. If we are to continue beyond 2011, we will have to build on the experience we have acquired and the contacts we have established on the ground, and continue to work along the same lines. Simply put, this is unfinished business.

You are no doubt aware that it is a great privilege for us to have as a member of our board of directors Ms. Sima Samar, the president of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission. She has long been an active human rights defender. Recently, the Governor General informed Ms. Samar that she had been awarded the Order of Canada, and she will travel to Canada to receive it in the next few weeks. She is a real asset, and we have developed very close ties with her country.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beauregard.

Mr. Pearson.

Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Beauregard, the first recommendation talks about the consolidation of funds between CIDA and DFAIT. If you were to implement that recommendation, what difference would that make to what you do? What would be the challenges to that?

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: I would like to ask Madame Cloutier, our director of finance and administration, to respond. She is familiar with the funding difficulties and money entry.

Ms. Marie-France Cloutier (Director, Administration and Resources, Rights & Democracy): As it was mentioned before, we just learned this week that Minister Oda assigned the part of our allocation that comes from CIDA. This year we heard that we would get full funding in October. Last year we heard in January. This is very hard, because our budget is for the full \$9.8 million, and from

the beginning of the year we spend on the assumption that we have this money, but we only get confirmation later on in the year. In the meantime, we have to borrow this money from somewhere in order to function. That's one of the problems.

The other problem is that the reporting mechanisms are very different between DFAIT and CIDA. CIDA now grants us on the basis of a project, the project being managing Rights and Democracy, so there is a reporting mechanism that is very different. This annual report normally should be our report to the minister and to Parliament, but for CIDA we have another reporting mechanism that we have to fulfill.

• (0930)

Mr. Glen Pearson: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Madame Cloutier, has that always been the case, the way you report back? Is this something new in the last few years?

Ms. Marie-France Cloutier: It's new since this committee has gotten us an increase in our funding. This increase was never consolidated. It came directly from CIDA. Before, we only got it from one source and that was from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Chair: So since the increase in funding there have been these extra accountability measures put in place?

Ms. Marie-France Cloutier: Yes.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Yes, Mr. Beauregard. We've got ten seconds.

[Translation]

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: The problem is that Department of Foreign Affairs funding is usually allocated over a three-year period. However, CIDA's funding is allocated on a yearly basis. This makes project planning on the ground extremely difficult.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Lalonde.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with my colleague.

I would like to thank you for your presence here today as well as for your excellent reports. Rights and Democracy is a source of pride for Canadians. I am sure that everyone knows that and, if not, they should. When you consider the work that is done to develop democracy, through the development of a country's own institutions and experience, Rights and Democracy—and you have indicated this on a number of occasions—is a unique institution.

At a time when Canada wants to develop democracy, and when substantive debates are taking place as to how democracy should be developed and the way in which countries that have recently obtained their independence can transition toward a government for and by the people, your experience appears outstanding to me. I have been convinced of that by following the work done by a number of your officials. That is why I believe that the committee should agree to your request for more long-term funding, which would help you to better use the skills and knowledge of your organization and workers.

Mr. Beauregard, how can longer-term funding, together with tighter controls, better help you serve the cause of development and democracy?

• (0935)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Beauregard.

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is important to recognize that the work we do is long-term. We cannot go into a developing country that is experiencing difficulties and think that we can solve all its problems within a year by making a few investments.

The long-term funding that you refer to has an impact on our strategic planning and decision-making. People often ask us why we are not involved in certain countries. Working in a country where we have no prior experience requires between one and a half and three years of preparation. We have to establish contacts, understand the environment and make sure that our future partners are reliable. An entire network has to be established before we can become involved.

Having done work of that kind over a number of years on the continent of Africa, I am increasingly wary of sporadic interventions. You cannot simply sprinkle a series of measures over a problem and think that the work has been done. That is why it is important that we receive long-term funding of this kind.

My colleague is asking me to give an example. The best example that I can give is that of Haiti. Over the last 40 years, each time there was a crisis there, we would allocate a few resources and, as soon as the situation seemed to return to normal, we would move elsewhere and wait for the next crisis.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: And there have been many.

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: Yes, and we moved from one crisis to the next. Each subsequent intervention cost more than the previous one. In my conversations with the Prime Minister during my last two missions, she said that she hoped that Canada would be there for the long term because their problems could only be resolved over an extended period of time. This is not only a question of money, but also of time and effort. That has to be taken into account when we design our involvement.

The Chair: Ms. Deschamps.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you.

I would like to follow up on Ms. Lalonde's comments. Let us talk about Haiti. Uncertainty is also caused by delays, in receiving funding from CIDA, amongst other things. This can undermine Rights and Democracy's credibility and, as a result, Canada's credibility.

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: As the Inspector General pointed out, there was a lag in operations when we submitted our programming for Haiti. Fortunately, the issue was resolved rather quickly. What the Inspector General was indicating was that, once we have begun rolling out a program, there has to be funding to back up the commitment. Otherwise, our involvement is absolutely in vain. For us, this has also been a useful exercise. Before a project ends, whether in Afghanistan or Haiti, we already begin to look forward to our next submission so that we can ensure continuity.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: You receive annual funding from CIDA, but always with an element of uncertainty; and funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs every three years. How can you ensure effective management and planning? It must be quite difficult to deal with—

Ms. Marie-France Cloutier: It is very difficult. We operate on assumption. We assume that lawmakers want us to have that level of funding. So we operate as if the funding has been confirmed, even though approval is still pending. It is always quite unsettling, but that is how we operate.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Deschamps.

[*English*]

We'll move into the government side. Just before that, I have a question for you. You said in your presentation that "While our headquarters are in Montreal, we are opening an office in Ottawa". I'm wondering when you anticipate this being opened.

• (0940)

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: The office will open on November 1, to the immense chagrin of VIA Rail, because we're probably one of their best clients on the line between Ottawa and Montreal.

The fact is that our host ministry, the Department of Foreign Affairs, is in Ottawa. There are so many meetings we have to attend in Ottawa, so we're coming and going all the time between the two cities. We felt that having a one-person office here at some point would be useful. We're going to try it out and see how it works. Just in terms of cost and efficiency, even though we like Montreal, the business is very much in Ottawa.

The Chair: These are the only two offices in Canada. Do you have other offices? I assume in Kabul there's a Rights and Democracy office with a sign on the wall, and in Haiti...

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: We have an office in Kabul made up of Afghan staff. Unfortunately, there's no sign on the door, and you can understand why. It's a simple bungalow where people go to work. The cars are not identified, or anything like that.

The identification in Haiti is different. We have an office made up of Haitians. We also have an extension of our Montreal office—similar to the one we'll have in Ottawa—in Geneva, because there's so much going on in Europe with human rights activities, the UN system, and many of our international partners. Two years ago we decided to try it out for two years to see if it was efficient to have an office in Europe in Geneva. We're doing an evaluation of this project now, and we'll see whether this is something we will want to continue.

The Chair: Do you have one in South America?

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: No. We have projects, and our agents travel. For example, we're doing a mission in Colombia next week with some of our colleagues. Most of our field agents who participate in managing different projects go to these countries about twice a year. I'm also expecting to go to Zimbabwe in January to launch the media training activity. I will be going to China because, as you know, we have an important program in China with the school of the Communist Party.

The Chair: Is Canada getting the credit for all those other ones besides Kabul? Is there a flag and a Rights and Democracy sign on the wall so they know we have a presence in all those other countries?

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here today. We appreciate your involvement and reporting to us today, and the good work that Rights and Democracy is doing in many parts of the world.

You were here recently to report to us on Burma and corporate involvement around the world. We know that Rights and Democracy is representing Canada in a lot of very important files around the world.

I see that your involvement is domestic as well as international. I notice from your report that 20 Rights and Democracy student delegations are active on student campuses across the country, from Nanaimo—which caught my attention because it's my home riding—to Moncton. You say that every year these delegations act directly in their communities “to put the world to rights in their own way”.

I wonder if you could start by briefly explaining the involvement of Rights and Democracy domestically. Is there a plan or strategy involved in engaging Canadians?

Mr. Razmik Panossian (Director, Policy, Programmes and Planning, Rights & Democracy): That's a slogan we use to mobilize students to work on human rights issues on their campuses. The domestic involvement is at the level of university students in order to encourage them in their education on human rights issues.

Mr. James Lunney: I see.

Is there a plan or strategy to engage more Canadians in the process?

Mr. Razmik Panossian: Yes, that's only one small element. As Mr. Beauregard mentioned, our flagship event is the John Humphrey Freedom Award, which is given in December. There is a cross-country speaking tour for the recipients. There is also a cross-country dialogue series, where in the next five years we'll be going to every province and territory to talk about the programming and the human rights issues we work on. So there is a lot of work pertaining to that. There is the work we do with the media in communications—putting out press releases, op-eds, and the usual things.

● (0945)

Mr. James Lunney: Let's go back to the international scene now.

I understand that you have an office in Geneva, as you mentioned. I saw something in your report about having a partnership with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. It seems that the Human Rights Council has inherited some of the dysfunctionality of its predecessor. I'm wondering if you can explain Rights and Democracy's partnership with the UN High Commissioner and the HRC.

Mr. Razmik Panossian: Certainly. I'll take this question because when the partnership was established I was at Rights and Democracy.

We established that partnership in 2006. As you remember, this was the period when the commission, which was utterly discredited, was being transformed into the council. In that context, we thought we should have a presence in Geneva at one point, but also to work with the Office of the High Commissioner in order to try to turn this transformation in a way that was positive.

The Human Rights Council has been quite problematic in many respects, in terms of the politicization of certain issues. Our partnership was not on the controversial issues. Our partnership was to strengthen the civil society component that is within the UN. It was relating the special mechanisms to special *rapporteurs*, for example, on issues like the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food or the special expert on Haiti, to work with them and strengthen that component. It was a three-year partnership that expired this year, on March 31, 2009, and at this point we are looking at the different possibilities for what our engagement should be, if any.

Mr. James Lunney: In establishing an office in Geneva, did you run into some challenges there? Are you registered as an NGO in Geneva? Can you explain how that works under Swiss law?

Mr. Razmik Panossian: Yes, we are actually registered as an NGO. Obviously, we have to abide by Swiss law, so we followed the Swiss law in establishing a Rights and Democracy organization in Switzerland. It is registered as an independent organization, but the board of directors of Rights and Democracy Switzerland is entirely made up of either the board of directors of Rights and Democracy here, and the senior staff. For example, Marie-France is on the board of directors of that. There is no separate entity, so to speak, in reality, but in terms of the legal requirements of Swiss law it is a registered organization there with a bank account.

Mr. James Lunney: Since we're talking about NGOs, Rights and Democracy seems to exist in a sort of different framework. It's not really a crown corporation. How do we define what Rights and Democracy actually is in terms of Canadian function?

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: We are an agency of the Government of Canada. It's a shared governance agency under the terminology that is used by Treasury Board. That's what we are, similar to the Asia Pacific Forum. There are five such agencies under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Shared governance means that the board is appointed by the government, and so is the president. There is a sort of co-management. It's an arm's-length relationship, but it's not a long-arm's-length relationship.

We abide by all of the rules of Treasury Board. When I travel, I travel according to management board regulations. The Auditor General comes once a year to do her thing. We abide by the French language services legislation or the Official Languages Act.

There are slight differences. Our staff is not part of the federal staff. It is not part of the public service, but they do have the benefits of the public service.

I agree with you that we are a bit of a hybrid organization, those who share this notion of being a shared governance organization, but that's the way it is.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you.

In terms of accountability mechanisms, decisions made by Rights and Democracy are approved by your board of directors, or are overseen, is that right?

• (0950)

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: Yes. The board of directors meets three times a year and is responsible for the orientation, the adoption of the budget, the adoption of regulations. Projects over \$60,000 have to be approved by the board. There is an executive committee that meets in between the board meetings. The board has an audit committee. The board has a committee to select the John Humphrey Freedom Award and to review the performance of the president.

Mr. James Lunney: Just a last quick question. You know that of course the Government of Canada withdrew from participation in the Durban conference but was very focused on activities in Geneva. Did Rights and Democracy play any role, directly or indirectly, in planning for or participating in the conference in Durban?

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: No, we did not.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beauregard and Mr. Lunney.

We'll move to Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our guests today.

I simply want to start with an observation on your work. It seems you do from A to Z. When I looked at your report, you go from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

I'm going to ask you about some of your projects and where they're at and then I want to ask you about governance. I have shared concerns with people about Congo. Mr. Obhrai, the parliamentary secretary, and I attended an event here on the Hill about what's going on in Congo, sexual violence to women. There have been some programs with the government on sexual violence to women.

Your program, the Congolese women's campaign against sexual violence in the DRC, is that ongoing, and is there a further commitment to that?

Mr. Razmik Panossian: The Congo involvement, yes, there is. We have a project we're hoping the board or the executive will approve regarding sexual violence in Congo. Our activities there are concentrated in the east of the country, where the conflict was, and they are very much focused on capacity-building of women's rights: organizations of women who have been victims but are also activists in trying to seek justice.

I should mention that one of our partners, a woman we trained, Julienne Lusenge, appeared as a witness in front of the UN Security Council at their invitation. So the type of work we do is both at the national and international level, highlighting the issue of sexual violence in Congo.

Mr. Paul Dewar: One of the concerns many people have when they've learned of the situation in Congo.... You have in your document here 2,200 cases of recorded rape from January to June of 2008 in North Kivu, and I think the numbers are much higher. This is what has been reported.

It's not stopping. I guess one thing is to report—you identify a problem—but the other is to stop. One of the things we heard, as a follow-up to the engagement here on the Hill, was about policewomen who have gone to Sudan to train women to be intervenors.

To deal with victims is one thing. The other is to deal with the phenomenon that is rape as a weapon of war. It's very difficult to deal with if people are simply saying they'll deal with the aftermath. I think there's some movement to train women to deal with stopping rape, as opposed to documenting rape.

Mr. Razmik Panossian: The entire objective is to end impunity on this, and the work we're doing is not so much with the police side of things. It's really with the legal side of things, to bring the violators to justice at the national or the international level. That's the target we have chosen: the legal avenue to end impunity.

Mr. Paul Dewar: And I hope we see further commitment, because government money has been spent on this issue. I think it was \$15 million ending this year, and I hope the government will continue that project.

I'll go to Z, Zimbabwe. Many of us have been deeply concerned about that. You're launching an initiative to train reporters, and I just want to know what that means. As we know, it has been tenuous—and I'm putting it mildly—for reporters to be able to do their jobs, so how is this going to work?

• (0955)

The Chair: Just before you do that, there would be some who would suggest that if you have success there, you should come back and train our reporters.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: There are some. Not me, of course.

Go ahead, Mr. Beauregard.

Mr. Rémy M. Beauregard: We received a two-year special allocation to work with independent reporters on top of our core funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs, because as you know, right now the press in Zimbabwe is at the beck and call of the government. So we're going to work with an organization called the Media Institute of Southern Africa, which groups several countries, including South Africa. We're going to train independent reporters, slightly similar to what we're doing with the Voice of Burma but in the sense that these are people who are going to review issues, report on them, and find ways to rebroadcast or print or share that information within Zimbabwe, because that's the issue.

Right now the government of Zimbabwe is controlling the press so much that people in Zimbabwe don't know what's happening in their country.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Going to the governance issue and looking at the recommendations, you highlighted in your report how you responded to the assessment that was done. One of the things that you can't do.... I guess I'll bring it up. It was mentioned by Madame Deschamps, I think, or Lalonde, and Mr. Pearson. The first recommendation is for the consolidation of core funding. We already heard from Madame Cloutier on this. The need is to ensure that we're looking at funding mechanisms so that you don't have too many inputs, that you actually have a comprehensive flow of funding. Is that the idea here?

And I guess back to the assessment that was done in your organization, how would that help you function better from a fiscal point of view, from being able to be accountable financially? That's the first question. So on the accounting piece, how is that going to help you?

Secondly, from an organizational structure, how is that going to help you in terms of your programs? Perhaps Mr. Beauregard could answer the second.

The first one, from an accounting and from a physical framework, would that help you? And secondly, from a program point of view, how would that help?

Ms. Marie-France Cloutier: As I said before, the problem we have is planning. At the beginning of the year, although we have our board adopt a budget, we adopt a budget with the presumption that we will get this money. We're not sure we're going to get it. So we're always kind of on a tightrope here. And as I said, we need to borrow the money in order to pay our staff for the first ten months of the year.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Is there an extra cost involved in that?

Ms. Marie-France Cloutier: Not really. I'll explain it more clearly.

The way we operate is we use the Government of Canada's pay services to do the salaries for our staff, and we're invoiced every second week. So for the first ten months of the year we don't pay them back. We're expecting money from the Government of Canada on the one hand and we're owing money to the Government of Canada on the other hand. But these two entities, although both are the Government of Canada, are not the same. So at one point we need to pay back the left hand. This is the way we do it.

It brings a lot of insecurity, not only on the planning side of the accounting but also to all our staff, because people are aware of this. We're a small team. We're not a 300-person department. We're under 50 people. So people know that, that we don't have this cashflow. We have a big cashflow problem.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Cloutier.

And thank you to all who have given their testimony today. I also want to thank you for having your documents presented. We appreciate the report.

We will now suspend and move into the next hour. We'll invite our guests to take their places at the table.

We're suspended.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-
- (1000)

The Chair: In our second hour this morning we will consider the 2010 Group of Eight summit that Canada will host next summer in Ontario.

We will hear from the Halifax Initiative Coalition. We welcome back Fraser Reilly-King, the coordinator. This is not the first time he has appeared before our committee. Sharing the panel with him, from Plan Canada, is Amanda Sussman, policy advisor.

I understand you have an opening statement and then we'll proceed to the rounds of questioning. Welcome to the foreign affairs and international development committee.

Go ahead.

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King (Coordinator, Halifax Initiative Coalition): Thank you very much for inviting us to appear before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to discuss issues related to next year's what is now both a G-8 and a G-20 meeting, which will be coming to Canada in June.

As Mr. Sorenson said, my name is Fraser Reilly-King and I am the coordinator of the Halifax Initiative, which is a coalition of development, environment, faith-based, human rights, and labour organizations. We have 19 members. We were founded 15 years ago, actually, when the G-7 summit came to Halifax in 1995.

Our activities since that point have focused on the policies and practice of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and export credit agencies. We endeavour to fill the shortfalls in their policies and their practice and make suggestions for filling those gaps.

Our organization is also a member of the 2010 Canadian G-8 Civil Society Coordinating Committee, which is responsible for developing the policy platform that all of you should have seen prior. And my colleague Amanda will be talking about that in a little more detail following me.

Before we get into discussing the chapeau document or the policy platform, I did want to provide a little bit of context for next year's summits, both the G-8 and the G-20 meetings, particularly with respect to the structures for governing the global economy.

As many of you are aware, over the past two years countries the world over have been battered by a series of interconnected and unrelenting crises of food, fuel, finance, and climate. No nation has gone unaffected, and the scale of each crisis is certainly one that no one could have anticipated, let alone imagined.

In response, global leaders, through the Group of 20 or G-20, have now met in Washington, in London, and just last month in Pittsburgh, to address many of these crises. Parallel to this, the United Nations has also initiated a process, pulling together a commission of experts made up of finance ministers, former finance ministers, central bank governors, and academics to put together a series of recommendations to inform a conference that took place last June in New York on the global economic and financial crisis.

Last month, as you would have seen in the news, leaders in Pittsburgh announced that the G-20 would become the premier forum for discussing global economic and financial issues. And importantly for Canada, at the time Prime Minister Harper also announced that next year when the G-8 comes to Canada, Canada would also be co-chairing with South Korea a G-20 summit that will take place at the same time as the G-8 meetings. For many, this development is seen as a positive and more inclusive step forward.

As you would have also heard, the countries of the G-20 boast 65% of the world's population and represent over 85% of global gross national product. A positive step forward from the G-8 is that the G-20 now brings to the table such emerging economies as South Africa, China, Brazil, India, Mexico, Argentina, Indonesia, and a number of countries in the developing world.

But also importantly, the G-20 excludes 173 countries. There is not a single low-income or least-developed country in the pack, and not a single fragile state. The African Union is essentially shut out. And from that perspective we believe it's not entirely inclusive, nor legitimate or credible. Furthermore, the G-20, just like its predecessor the G-8, remains largely untransparent and unaccountable.

Therefore, at this tremendous moment of transition and change, we need to be extremely careful not to freeze this new institution and its membership into an historical moment in time. What I mean by this is that what works right now in 2009 we need to make sure works also in 2029 or 2059.

If you want an example of how things have fallen short on this front, just think of the UN Security Council. It spoke to a moment in time in 1945, but 60 or 65 years later the global economy has changed, and the world has changed.

What then? We come to next year's G-20. Canada, I feel, could play an incredibly important role, one of tremendous leadership, by initiating a process with other countries to transform the current structure of the G-20 into a forum that models democratic and transparent policy and decision-making and kickstarts a new era of multilateral cooperation.

• (1005)

We can get into more detail, if you want, on what this might look like. But what we really wanted to frame here were some of the principles that could guide the composition of that structure. To be

pragmatic, we propose that it still be limited in size, but it should be representative in composition.

As I've hinted, a G-20 in principle isn't a bad idea. In past years, various entities have underscored the need for a council to help govern the global economy. The 1995 Commission on Global Governance, Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, French President Jacques Chirac, and then more recently the UN Commission of Experts, which I referenced earlier, have all flagged such an idea. A forum of leaders, we would suggest, hand-picked by the powerful, who have no global or public credibility, is not sustainable. Such a forum should include possibly 20 to 29 countries and have representatives nominated by the members of regional multilateral bodies. The spokesperson would rotate on a periodic basis.

A second principle is that it would be inclusive of the poorest countries in the world. As I mentioned, it is positive that Brazil, India, China, South Africa, Turkey, and Indonesia are now at the table. But South Africa can't be expected, nor entrusted, to speak on behalf of 50 other countries in Africa, particularly since these countries it's representing have very different realities and needs from those of South Africa. They have very high debt loss, a narrower range of exports, weaker industrial bases, a larger rural population, greater dependence on external resources, such as aid, and weak governance and regulatory systems. Including these countries at the table necessarily informs the agenda and the broader solutions that need to be addressed.

By implementing the more representative forum outlined above, Canada would set the stage for addressing a more comprehensive agenda on global, economic, and social issues.

It's also important to provide voices for civil society at this new platform. Non-state actors in the past several decades have proven to be increasingly important players in multilateral organizations. Civil society analysis, proposals, and protests have positively impacted governments' understanding of the issues, methods of work, and policy agendas. Engaging civil society is key to the democratic process and has become a central element of a range of discussions within different fora. Formalizing a process for engaging civil society within the G-20 would be an important step forward. This can take the form of expert working groups, involving a range of stakeholders, that could make formal submissions to the G-20 for consideration. Or it could involve opening up Canadian consultation and parliamentary debate ahead of next year's meeting.

Transparency of process and accountability for decisions is the fourth principle we think should guide this new body. Ironically, the financial crisis, a crisis whose origins can be linked, in part, to a lack of transparency in financial institutions, has given birth to a new set of institutions that lack any transparency or accountability.

A leaders G-20 should publish agenda and background documents on public websites ahead of their meetings. It should also be a first step towards an effective and representative leaders summit process within the framework of the UN. It would strengthen the broader multilateral system and contribute its reports from G-20 discussions to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Without such changes, the G-20 rapidly risks losing credibility and legitimacy, just as it has found a renewed need for its existence. Strong Canadian leadership during this important period of transition could go a long way toward addressing that.

Thank you.

• (1010)

The Chair: We will now move to Madam Sussman.

Mrs. Amanda Sussman (Policy Advisor, Plan Canada): Thank you.

Good morning. I thank you for the opportunity to appear here today, and I'll try to use it wisely to make the best use of your time.

My name is Amanda Sussman and I'm here on behalf of the 2010 Canadian G-8 and G-20 Civil Society Co-ordinating Committee, which is an initiative involving more than 100 Canadian organizations and associations of organizations who themselves are supported by thousands of Canadians across the country. I'm also an advisor to Plan Canada, one of the world's oldest and largest international development agencies, operating in more than 66 countries.

Today I'd like to brief you on a major initiative of the committee that began last February in preparation for the Canadian presidency of the G-8. Essentially we began with what worked and what didn't work in Kananaskis when Canada last hosted the G-8 in 2002. One of the things that became clear was that, while there were dozens of organizations engaged in public campaigning using a variety of methods—from constructive engagement with the government all the way to street action outside the alternative summit in Calgary—there was no clearly articulated set of recommendations that could be communicated both to the government and to the public as to what it was that civil society organizations were actually looking for.

It was also unclear where there was broad consensus upon which political leaders could base their actions. So this time around, organizations are taking quite a different approach. The document you have before you entitled "An Agenda for Global Development" is a result of an in-depth process whereby a broad and diverse grouping of organizations agreed upon three critical and interlocking themes that should be at the centre of the 2010 agenda: combatting poverty, transforming the global economic and financial system, and making real progress on climate change. Within those themes, dozens of organizations have produced a clear set of policy recommendations to government that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and actionable from the government's point of view.

For instance, the recommendations on child and maternal health reflect the collective expertise of Canada's five largest international development organizations: UNICEF, World Vision, Plan Canada, CARE, and Save the Children, who themselves have decades of experience working on these issues first-hand around the world.

Similarly, the recommendations on food security reflect the work of the Food Security Policy Group, an association of 35 agricultural and development organizations from across the country who work together to share their collective expertise as front line organizations working on food security. These are just two of the many associations who participated in the process to produce each of the recommendations you have before you.

I want to emphasize that the recommendations are not just supported by Canadian organizations alone. Over the past three days in Ottawa, the committee has hosted a global gathering of citizens organizations working on the G-8 and G-20 around the world. From our discussions, it became clear that the recommendations outlined in this document reflect a broader and wider international consensus, which will also be communicated to other G-8 and G-20 leaders in their respective countries.

On poverty, the committee began with a very straightforward question. What could the G-8 realistically accomplish to advance each particular issue in 2010, given that it is a short-term political body without institutional capacity to implement initiatives in the long term? The recommendations are mainly directed at what Canada can do as host of the G-8 to put the millennium development goals back on track. For those not familiar with them, the millennium development goals are an agreed-upon set of international goals set by world leaders at a series of summits throughout the 1990s. There are eight goals covering the world's most pressing issues, from poverty and hunger to HIV/AIDS and education, with specific targets to be reached by the year 2015.

Clearly, 2010 will be a decisive year for Canada and for the world, and our decisions on economic reform and climate change will determine the success of the world's efforts to reduce poverty and address global warming for the next generation and beyond. As host of the next G-8 summit, Canada can make the difference between two choices: relegating these aspirations to no more than a distant hope, or confirming a serious possibility that many of these goals can be a reality in our lifetime.

I also want to emphasize that we have made important progress in many cases and money has been well spent. Past investments in these issues are producing some remarkable results on HIV and AIDS, on education, and on immunization, just to mention a few. In Africa alone, citizens have used ODA flows to provide AIDS treatment to nearly three million people, dramatically reduce the deaths due to malaria, and help put more than 34 million children back in school.

•(1015)

What is unique about 2010 is that with many of the challenges discussed in this paper the causes are now well understood and the solutions are well known. Rather than large elusive goals that remain too difficult to tackle, this paper focuses on realistic steps that Canada can take to catalyze progress on many of the world's most pressing issues and promote a new model of globalization that is socially responsible, economically sustainable, and environmentally just.

What we are looking for here today is to initiate a constructive and effective dialogue between the Government of Canada and citizens groups based on best practices of G-8 summits in the past. We feel it would be essential to have this committee play an important role as a vehicle for Canadian stakeholders from many different sectors—*for profit, not-for-profit*—by holding a distinct set of hearings on the G-8 and G-20 agendas.

The process does not have to be too onerous to be effective. For example, it could be four to six hearings, with two in Ottawa and four distributed across key regions in the country, culminating in a concise report with clear recommendations to government. These hearings could be one of several things that parliamentarians do to engage their citizens on these key issues as world leaders come to Canada next year.

Beyond this committee, best practices from previous G-8 meetings include a wider dialogue between government and civil society globally, known as the Civil G-8.

We hope this committee will play an active role in facilitating this wider conversation, and we look forward to working with you on this initiative.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Sussman.

We'll move into our first round.

Mr. Pearson, please, seven minutes.

Mr. Glen Pearson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do want to be brief, because I know we have committee business to get to. I just have a couple of quick questions.

I really like your idea, Ms. Sussman, about the committee being utilized to provide that citizen engagement. I presume plans are already under way at the government level about this conference in Muskoka. Can you tell me the status of the government consulting with civil society? Has that been taking place or not?

•(1020)

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: At this level, it's very, very minimal. We are not familiar with a broad plan on the process for consultations, but we're looking forward to more information. We've had some initial consultations on specific issues with small groups at the officials level only.

Mr. Glen Pearson: So this committee could be part of what the government uses to do that. I think that is a very wise recommendation.

Also, I was at Kananaskis and Gleneagles, and at alternative formats, and it's very frustrating that these things are put out there

and we never quite stick to them. On this one coming up in Muskoka, there's going to be the pressure of the world economy and other things we're facing.

What can we do to better ensure that the commitments made at this broad level are actually completed? In many ways we seem to be moving away from them. I realize it's easy for government to set targets and move away, but what could civil society or other groups do to help tie us down to commitments so we actually deliver on them?

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: We have made some important progress in recent years on the accountability mechanisms for the G-8s. There's now a formal institutionalized structure to track what the G-8 commitments are and make further progress. That's also why you'll not see a laundry list of new initiatives in this paper. It's really focused on our organizations analyzing where the money has been well spent and what works, and doing more of that.

We're also looking at transferring some of those best practices on the accountability mechanisms to the G-20 process now. There is a process in place for making sure issues come back to the G-8 agenda, and if they haven't been appropriately defined, looking at concrete timetables and action plans to achieve stated previous commitments.

Mr. Glen Pearson: Mr. Reilly-King, have you anything to say to that?

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King: I think it also gets to this issue of making the G-20, as it is beginning, more transparent and accountable for its decisions. I think as long as you have 20 countries, or eight countries, that are the same every year, they're going to pursue more of their own political interests, the interests of the day.

If you have a more representative body, where the person speaking on behalf of Africa has been nominated, for example, by the African Union, he then has to report to the African Union on the commitments he has made. I think you build a better sense of accountability by transforming the body into a more representative body. Also, if there's greater transparency for the discussions, then the governments at the table are forced to be more accountable to their own constituencies and the public back home.

Mr. Glen Pearson: That's great. Thank you both.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pearson.

Madame Deschamps.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: You might say that you have quite a program in the lead-up to the 2010 summit. In an ideal world, the excluded countries would be allowed to take part in the summit. Their contribution could be decisive, particularly in the fight against poverty and the transformation of our financial and economic systems in the middle of this global economic crisis. As well, climate change and environmental issues are of great concern to me. However, those issues are not adequately addressed or given the necessary attention in light of their increasingly serious impact on the poorest countries. Once again, it is the poor that are the most affected.

In my opinion, we have to eliminate the divide between rich and poor so that the most disadvantaged and most affected countries can contribute to these events. At the moment, they are not given the opportunity to do so. There is a political divide between the interests of emerging economies and those of the global leaders.

I do not know if you want to add anything to what I have just said, but I wanted to indicate my support for your undertaking. It seems to me that it is essential for us to support and advance the objectives set out by those countries.

• (1025)

[English]

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King: Perhaps as a reaction to that, one of the things we have learned from this global crisis is just how interconnected we are. Back in September and October there was some thinking that perhaps economies like China, Brazil, or Russia—there are a number of countries that have built up substantial reserves—which were a little bit better protected against the crisis, would be decoupled from the impacts of the crisis. What we've seen is that globalization has meant that no one is immune from any crisis and that in fact crises are intrinsic to a globalized economy and that we can't come up with ad hoc solutions to tackle those.

I think what the G-20 has done so far that is positive is it has addressed the immediacy of the crisis. Every country has put in bailout packages. I think the UN has come up with a figure of commitments of around \$20 trillion, I think \$1.69 trillion just on fiscal stimulus.

If we don't now move from that immediate bailout to address more systemic problems with the globalized economy—and we've touched upon some of them in here, such as democratizing international financial institutions, implementing new rules for trade and finance, and a real transition to a sustainable economy—then you can expect the same thing to happen five years down the road. It's going to be a longer and a harder recovery.

It's a good first step, but what we'd be looking for Canada to do next year is to really move from those first initial immediate responses to something much more substantive that's going to change the rules and policies of the game for everyone.

The Chair: Madam Sussman.

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: I'll just add to that. Obama's Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently said, "Never waste a good crisis". This is an opportunity, really, to start looking at some of those fundamental systemic issues so that we prevent such things from happening in the future.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Deschamps.

Madame Lalonde.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: You must have thought of a strategy. Making a significant effort to try and achieve three priority objectives is not everything; you must also think about how to get those countries and their civil society organizations on side in order to move forward. A meeting of the G20 is an extraordinary

opportunity. Action has to be taken, and it is important to know how to advance ideas and get answers.

[English]

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King: In response to your question, what we're facing now or what we're realizing now is that before, we were really dealing with the G-8; they were the governors of the global economy. Now it's clear that more people need to be at the table. So for my organization and others, a strong element of our focus over the next 20, 30, 40, 50 years is going to be reaching out to civil society organizations in different countries, in particular for now the G-20 countries, because they're facing the same problems.

I think a number of countries, Brazil, India, China, Turkey, are now at the table, and they don't necessarily have the same views that the G-8 have. I think an important element to this changing governance is it's not just different as to who's at the table, but now there are different opinions being brought to the table. Another danger is if those voices, like what China wants or what India wants, aren't listened to as well, the G-20 won't work. We are looking to broaden our outreach to different groups.

• (1030)

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: The G8, which will become the G20, is in fact an opportunity to reflect on how we can increase our efforts in an interconnected world.

[English]

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King: It really is a key opportunity. France has said that in 2011 that there won't be a G-8 any more, it will just be a G-20. We're in a huge period of transition, and that's why Canada is such a focal point. You know, it's always seen as a middle power. It can bridge the gap between northern and southern economies. I think it would be hugely important for Canada to make a positive step forward to try to make that transition and bridge that gap. Otherwise, just as we're starting, it's going to be a big step back.

The Chair: Madam Sussman, did you have something on the other question, as well? I know you were trying to get in there.

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: No, no, that's okay. I just wanted to respond on building the bridges between the civil society networks. This past conference I referred to in the past three days brought in over 80 representatives from organizations from civil society around the world, and that's growing in momentum. We're finding that the collaboration between groups internationally is building with each G-8 summit, and a major focus of that is to keep broadening that and reaching out to groups that have not participated in the past.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move now to Mr. Goldring, please.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for appearing here today.

Ms. Sussman, your organization listed some of the member organizations that you represent, and it looks like there are about 30 here, but I understand that there are more than that. How many organizations does your group represent?

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: Many of those listed there are themselves associations. For instance, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation has over 100 members in itself, and the Canadian Food Security Policy Group, which is listed there, has 35 in addition. It's difficult to have the exact tally, but there are at least eight or nine major associations such as those, which themselves have many, many members. Then on top of those coalitions, more than 100 individual organizations have endorsed this document, which is now being shared widely through the Make Poverty History campaign.

Mr. Peter Goldring: And with your organization, the Halifax group, it would be a like association of multiple organizations? How many organizations? Do you identify a number of them?

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King: There will be some overlap of organizations. We have 19 members, so that includes the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Oxfam Canada, Oxfam-Quebec.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Sometimes when we have organizations such as yours attending, it would be helpful to have more details of some of the organizations that are represented. We had Rights and Democracy here earlier. Would that be one of the associate organizations of either of your organizations?

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: Rights and Democracy has not participated so far.

Mr. Peter Goldring: But I notice here there are some that do work for CIDA now. How would you characterize that? Is there a number of them that would now do work for CIDA on projects internationally?

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: Many do, yes. The international development organizations do a lot of work with CIDA.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Could you characterize what approximate numbers, or some guesstimation of numbers of actual personnel and people your various groups would be representative of?

In other words, you have a proposal here to go forward as suggestions for the upcoming summits. I'm wondering if you collectively represent 100,000 people who are involved in your various organizations. If all of them have had some input or sign-off on these suggestions, I would suggest that's a good indication of a pretty good cross-section of civil society on a suggestion to move forward. Would that be a fair assumption?

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: Yes. Each recommendation was signed off by the individual organizations. There have been representatives from each, and then more broadly, other individual organizations are endorsing the whole document, which means it goes through their internal—

• (1035)

Mr. Peter Goldring: From their members—not only from their executive, but from their members.

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: Yes, from their members.

Mr. Peter Goldring: So that would be a pretty good cross-section, I would imagine.

Given that, and you're asking here to have travelling on this, I would think that you've already done pretty good canvassing of a good cross-section of civil society. Would that not be a duplication of

efforts? What more could be determined by travelling and having meetings across Canada?

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King: I think, in part, it's a question of travel. There's a precedent for this happening, I believe, for Kananaskis and Halifax. There was some trouble involved when the committee held similar hearings in the lead-up to the G-8. It's in part a question of travel, but also a suggestion that the committee spend more time on these issues.

I have a focus on financial issues, and Amanda focuses on a lot of child and maternal health issues, but there's a huge spectrum of issues within this, and we can't represent the full expertise of those issues in half an hour or 45 minutes.

Mr. Peter Goldring: So your proposal here would be a kind of draft for consideration, but by no means all-inclusive. That should be viewed in that way too.

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King: We've come together, over 20 groups, as a coordinating committee, and feel the three priorities for next year are climate change, the financial crisis, and a number of issues related to the millennium development goals, which will be up for review next year. I think that might be a good framework, perhaps, for organizing the focus of the hearings around those three issues, and perhaps also the broader issue of governance in the transition from a G-8 to a G-20.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Looking at the proposal, I could see that there should be a lot of room for discussion, too. For example, in one item it calls for 100% debt cancellation of all indebted poor countries, and it's really not identifying what is a poor country. That's a pretty broad sweeping comment to make. Another one here is supporting the existing levy on airline tickets in 13 European and developing countries, but not really defining what the developing countries would be. Then there's a strong recommendation for the carbon tax on wealthy countries, not really defining which ones they would be, then carbon dioxide omissions, or equivalent mechanisms, and a global currency transition tax and a global financial transitions tax.

I would say that there is commentary in here that leaves a lot of room for discussion.

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King: One thing we struggled with, obviously, was to try to capture all of the issues, but not do it in 100 pages. So there are a lot of elements in there that still need further defining. I mean, there are 43 low-income countries and around 60 least-developed countries, so there could be some debate on which ones get debt cancellation.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Yes, and your comment too on increasing the G-20 to a G-29 or a G-30. I mean, it still leaves the question of who you are going to leave out. There are a lot more countries than that, too. There are lots of questions to be answered on it.

Are you aware of whether the Canadian government has received or is at least part of a drafting of proposals to be discussed at this? Surely somebody must be putting pen to paper on some initial ideas about what they propose to bring forward.

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: Are you referring to the Canadian government's draft proposals?

Mr. Peter Goldring: Yes.

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: We have not seen anything concrete. The dialogue process between the G-8 Sherpas starts quite early, which is why we have submitted this proposal now. But we've had nothing more than informal conversations.

Mr. Peter Goldring: There was a comment on reducing levels of emissions to below the 1990 levels, and another that our basic proposal would put us far short of that. We have to understand that absolutely nothing had been done at all until 2006. I believe that our government's plan to reduce emission levels is a pretty aggressive plan. We have to make up for a lot of lost time. What has been proposed by the government is far superior to anything that has ever been conducted before. This needs to be taken into account.

•(1040)

The Chair: Just to remind you, the agenda isn't specific to what Canada's doing. It covers what other countries are doing as well.

Mr. Peter Goldring: The comment was on Canada.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Reilly-King, this notion of governance that you talked about I find very interesting. I think it is time to contemplate what should be done as we go along. The G-7 became the G-8 and then the G-20. I would agree that this is not a bad thing. It's fine. But it seems to be a club of sorts. We're including more, but there are a lot of people on the outside. I think it's important to look at the majority of the world that isn't in. So I like that idea.

The idea that you have here, is it being developed with other groups? You mentioned that many civil society groups were meeting here in Ottawa. Is this a shared idea? If so, who is it being shared with? Just talk a little bit about that.

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King: The idea of democratizing the G-20 goes back several years. At the more official level, three studies have been done, two of them by former UNDP administrators, on how to go about structuring such a body. More recently, another was done by the UN Commission of Experts. It was chaired by Joseph Stiglitz, a former World Bank economist, and made up of central bank governors and finance ministers. They came up with the idea of a global economic coordinating council, which would be situated within the framework of the UN. It would operate on a constituency basis.

So there has been some work done on what this would look like. The three studies I referred to talk about including on the council representatives from the World Bank, the IMF, the World Trade Organization, the ILO, representatives from the UN system, and regional bodies that would nominate individuals on an annual basis.

On the civil society level, we have started a process. There have been meetings all of this week with 80 organizations from around the world. Over the next few months, Canadian civil society is going to start elaborating on these principles and forming a conception of the framework that should guide a G-20. We're hoping to do a number of regional consultations with groups that would inform the process. So we're hoping to have more.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's promising. I encourage you in that. Most people would like us to avoid repeating the problems with the UN. I think most people support the UN. There are challenges, and it's

appropriate to look at what worked and what didn't in advancing the cause of economic stability in dealing with poverty.

Ms. Sussman, there are many issues to talk about when it comes to the G-20. That's why the idea that we should go and talk to Canadians about it is an attractive one. Your proposition for our committee is that we should hold meetings here and across the country. Did you have some ideas about where the meetings outside of Ottawa would be? Is this something you're putting forward as an individual, or is it something you've consulted about with your member groups?

Mrs. Amanda Sussman: We've certainly consulted. What's more important is the principle of making sure that people in different regions have access to that communication. I believe in the Kananaskis process there may have been hearings in British Columbia in Vancouver, Toronto, Halifax, and one in Montreal. It's that sort of principle, just to make sure it's accessible.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I think it's not a bad idea. We would obviously have to plan ahead. I think this committee's job is to talk to Canadians about issues of foreign affairs, obviously, but in this instance it's about the fact that we're not talking about our going out in the world, it's the world coming to us. I quite like that idea. There's a precedent for it, and I think the timing is such that we probably could plan it, but that's up to the committee to deal with at a later date.

I'll just end it there, because we do have committee business. Thank you very much for your intervention.

•(1045)

The Chair: Thank you. We do appreciate your coming to our committee today.

There is just one very quick question. Mr. Reilly-King, you mentioned you are doing an extensive consultation in the lead-up to this. Are you going to be formulating a report that would be public, that we'd be able to gain access to in order to see who you're talking to and some of the outcomes? When would that report be ready?

Mr. Fraser Reilly-King: Civil society is always ambitious, but I think we're hoping to have something ready by January, at least an initial report that would flesh out the principles a little bit more. If the committee were to have a hearing in February, then it could feed into that.

The Chair: We would certainly appreciate getting a copy of that report. You usually are pretty good at circulating those things, so just maybe send it to the committee.

Thank you again.

We're going to suspend and then we're going to move into committee business.

• _____ (Pause) _____
•

The Chair: All right, we'll reconvene here.

First of all, we're moving into committee business. I'm going to ask the clerk to pass out the steering committee report. I think all those who are part of the steering committee that met last Tuesday would say it's fairly straightforward.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Chairman, do we not normally do committee business in camera?

The Chair: No. Committee business is public unless we request to move in camera for some item.

Has everyone received a copy of the steering committee report?

I am just double-checking on this. The steering committee meets in camera. They deliver a report. If you choose to go in camera you can, but it is public unless you choose.

We have four items on the steering committee report for which we would ask your support in passing. The first one is that the committee has scheduled two additional meetings to Bill C-300. This would take away from your schedule the two meetings that we had on Africa. That would be on November 24 and 26. This would also allow us the opportunity in December to then go clause by clause on Bill C-300.

Mr. Abbott.

•(1050)

Hon. Jim Abbott: If I may, Chair, I think we need at least an additional two meetings. I'm just wondering, by passing this report, if it's going to then constrain us to two meetings. The reason I say this is because we have been hearing, on Bill C-300, all the way through, from dominantly people who have been in favour of Bill C-300. I think the first time, to my recollection, that I recall any really cogent argument against Bill C-300 was in one half meeting, namely EDC.

The Chair: No, we've had the departments here, and we've had a number of mining associations, and we've had Mr. McGuinty—who was on his own exploration group—and we've had the EDC. We're trying to bring balance to this, but there are a number of other witnesses. I'm told by the clerk this is not just to extend the study of Bill C-300, but to extend this for witnesses.

If we need extra time for clause-by-clause consideration in January, we'll do that, but this is really four extra hours. So it's two days, albeit four hours. I'm told by the clerk this would be sufficient to hear from the witnesses on the paper right now.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Okay, I wonder if I could get some comment from other committee members as to whether, in their view, the judgment of the steering committee is correct that, indeed, four additional hours will be more than adequate.

The Chair: This wasn't an issue on which there was a lot of debate at the steering committee. If you want to add to text here that the committee should schedule at least two extra additional meetings, you might be able to do that as a friendly amendment.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Then, if I may, I would request that the committee schedule at least two additional meetings. It simply gives us the flexibility. If it's not required, it's not required.

Rather than adopting this committee report as tabled—which does absolutely constrain us—by using the words “at least”, it gives us the flexibility needed, should we decide we do need more meetings.

The Chair: All right. Because this is a friendly amendment, I'll consider this before going to Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Goldring, are you wanting to comment on the point made?

Mr. Peter Goldring: It's along the lines of that point, yes. It's on that point, because there have been some questions raised that haven't been answered, and it may take some exploring to get the answers.

The Chair: All right.

Do we have an agreement here to add “at least” to that motion and then move it right along? That would imply that if we need three meetings, we'll have three meetings.

Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: The way it's drafted right now, you can have more than two. It just says “That the committee schedule two additional meetings”, but it doesn't stop us from having three or four. But at least it means to me that we can have more than two. It's a minimum of two, so we can have three, four, five, or six meetings, the way it's drafted right now. It doesn't matter.

An hon. member: Exactly.

The Chair: So we don't need a motion on this. If we have the understanding that we need three or four meetings, we have that consensus here today.

Is there a consensus here?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right, then that's good. We'll leave it as is. And because we have consensus here, that means we can have more than two meetings if we want.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Goldring was before me.

•(1055)

The Chair: He spoke on it already.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I was going to substantiate it, because we really haven't been getting a lot of answers. It seems to me that the department was going to be getting back to us with some more clarity on the rights issues.

The Chair: Yes, that's right. Thank you.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I want the committee to understand something you just mentioned, that the time we take on this one will cut into the African study. Am I right?

The Chair: That's correct. That was part of our discussion at the steering committee.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I understand that, but this was discussed in the steering committee, so I'm just letting others know this will cut into the African study time.

The Chair: It cuts into all of our committee time, including the African study time. You're correct, that was what was on the agenda for those two meetings.

Mr. Lunney, did you want to speak to this?

Mr. James Lunney: I wanted to pick up on the Africa thing. I just wondered if this had come up for discussion, and when we were planning to get back to the African Great Lakes study we were engaged in. It's important work that we shouldn't forget about. Did that come up at the committee?

The Chair: It didn't necessarily come up, but my understanding is that we'll get back to it when Bill C-300 is done.

All right. So we're all in favour of number one.

Number two is that in accordance with the motion adopted, we invite Peter Kent to appear before the committee as soon as possible.

Mr. Paul Dewar: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, are we adopting this report, or are we going through it clause by clause? We usually adopt the report.

Going by past practice, we adopt the report. If we adopt it, then the whole thing is together.

The Chair: We are adopting the report, but we do have the opportunity at committee to discuss any of these points.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm just going on process. We usually have a motion to adopt the steering committee report, if we can do that.

The Chair: Do you want to move that motion?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Sure.

The Chair: Mr. Dewar is moving that we adopt the steering committee report as is.

Mr. Abbott.

Hon. Jim Abbott: No disrespect, but I want to go through this. The good discussion that we had on the first clause I think was of value. I have no comment on number 2.

The Chair: Again, we just need to remember this is the first time the committee has seen the steering committee report, so I tend to try to give members the opportunity to look at it.

Are we okay with number 2?

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have a question for Madame Lalonde, who is the one who brought this forward.

When exactly do you think we should get the minister here?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I have addressed that in my motion.

[*English*]

In my motion, it was right on his return, at the beginning of October.

An hon. member: That's already passed.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: May I...?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: He represented Canada and saw the situation on the ground. According to the reports we have received, things are not going smoothly. So it is important that he appear as soon as possible.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right, as soon as this passes, I'm directing the clerk to send the invitation.

So we're all right with number 2?

Are we all right with number 3? Okay, so number 3 is good. We'll be dealing with that next week. We'll get the requests out right away.

Number 4.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Could I—

The Chair: This is happening, okay? We've already basically passed it as committee as well, but it was brought back to the steering committee. We have made the invitation.

The plan in number 4 is that he will be here following our November 3 meeting, and there will be a lunch brought in as well. It's an informal meeting.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Could somebody, just in 30 seconds, give me some background on the professor?

The Chair: He was recommended by the Embassy of Israel, and we did talk about it as a committee.

Maybe I'll just defer to Mr. Cotler, who perhaps knows Professor Asher Susser.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Yes, I know Professor Susser. He is an expert, in particular, in matters of the peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbours. He's done specific studies with respect to the Israel-Jordan peace treaty. He's focused on the Israeli-Palestinian question. So he's one of the more recognized experts, who's also taught in a number of universities abroad, as well as Israel.

• (1100)

The Chair: All right, so we're all in favour of passing that.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have a question, just for my information—

Mr. Bernard Patry: This witness is to be brought here by the government. Do we agree?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: When I asked you the question in the steering committee, you had no answers.

Mr. Cotler is here—

The Chair: All right, do we have the motion now?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have a question.

I'm really worried about my friend Paul Dewar. He gets a little uptight. He needs to get cooled down here.

Will this gentleman be visiting us from the Middle East?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: He's in Ottawa already.

The Chair: I believe he's here in Ottawa.

Mr. Bernard Patry: So we don't pay for the trip?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you.

The Chair: We are not paying for the flight here, the trip, or anything like that.

We are not going to get to the motion, as we have another committee waiting to use this room. They're here right now.

On November 3 we're going to have the second meeting afterwards, as well, so I'll leave some time on November 3 to deal with the motions. I want to remind you the way this works. We bring forward motions as they appear on the order paper—that is, in the order they appear on the order paper. Just to be quite frank, there is no guarantee that a motion will be dealt with, but we will try to do that if it's your will.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chair, we have heard from Rights and Democracy. That was the item on our agenda. I was entitled to

move a motion in that regard. We have to make sure to debate that at our next meeting.

[*English*]

The Chair: Your motion will go into the bank of motions that we have. That is the only format we have agreed to as committee. That's the process I'm trying to uphold.

Thank you for your attendance.

We are adjourned.

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