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# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, April 29, 2010**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Dean Allison**



## Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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•(1110)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)):** Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we will begin our meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation for Burkina Faso, Minister Yoda.

Welcome, and thank you very much for taking the time out of your schedule. I'll ask you to give us your opening statement, and then we'll go around the room and have some questions and answers. We'll finish up around 12 o'clock, if that is okay.

Minister Yoda, the floor is yours. Welcome. Thank you for being here. We look forward to hearing your remarks.

[Translation]

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation, National Assembly of Burkina Faso):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

To begin with, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you for the warm welcome I and my entire delegation have received since arriving in Canada. I particularly appreciate this opportunity to appear before your distinguished Committee. I will make a very brief opening statement to allow you time to ask questions and make comments. Then, of course, the delegation accompanying me and myself will be available to answer your questions to the best of our ability.

Mr. Chairman, I am here at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, to hold discussions with Canadian authorities, with a view to strengthening the meaningful bilateral relations that already exist between our two countries.

I arrived here on the 25th and between the 26th and today, I have had many meetings with Mr. Cannon as well as with parliamentarians and Burkinans here in Canada. I must say that, so far, things have gone very well.

Mr. Chairman, relations between Canada and Burkina Faso go back to the early days following our independence, and have grown stronger with every year. Until 2005, we were on the special list of African countries with which Canada maintained bilateral relations. We entered into a cooperation agreement—2001-2011—which enables Canada to carry out projects in Burkina Faso through official development aid monies amounting to \$90 million for the period just mentioned—an amount which has been increased since by some \$50 million.

Mr. Chairman, one of Burkina Faso's assets today is good governance, as determined by international public opinion and, naturally, civil society actors in Burkina Faso. We have stable institutions: we have a government, a unicameral Parliament where 10 parties are represented, an independent judiciary, a free press and a civil society which is highly critical of the government. I am sure that you receive reports from both the civil society and the press.

There is also a strong Canadian private sector presence there, it being the top private investor in Burkina, particularly in the mining industry. That private presence is very much appreciated by Burkinans; the companies that operate there abide by the country's laws and regulations.

We have also made significant progress in social areas, such as education and health, but because we are a young country with few resources, we are clearly aware that there is still much to be done, and we are doing our utmost every year to improve things for all of our social partners, so that they can also take action in those areas.

As you know, we are very much engaged in managing peace and security in the sub-region. And our head of State, President Compaoré, is also very involved in peace and security in the sub-region, and even across the region, whether it be Togo, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Niger in 1995 and 1996 in the Sahelo-Saharan strip or in Sudan.

Indeed, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Canadian government for its assistance with the deployment of our battalion in Sudan.

It seems to me—and I will conclude on this point, Mr. Chairman—that it is in Canada's and Burkina Faso's mutual interest to develop their bilateral relations. Why?

Because Burkina Faso is an open country which is resolutely pursuing the path of democracy and working on a daily basis to improve its system.

It is also a country where Canada's private sector, as I mentioned earlier, has major interests. We have almost \$800 million worth of private Canadian investments in the mining industry. For many years now, we have enjoyed what we consider to be strong bilateral relations with the Canadian government, although they can certainly be improved, particularly as regards consultation involving international organizations in the area of peace and security, as well as in terms of helping us to enhance development in our social sectors.

Mr. Chairman, my expectations in coming here are that our country, Burkina Faso, and your country, Canada, can forge closer ties in an atmosphere of serenity, commitment and real friendship—in other words, that you present the issues that you feel must be resolved and that we, in turn, ask you the questions that we imagine to be meaningful for both of us, in the interests of our two nations.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your kind hospitality and I naturally am available to take any of your questions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

•(1115)

[*English*]

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

We'll go to the first round of seven minutes. Then if we have time, which I think we will, we'll start a second round of five minutes for questions and answers.

Dr. Patry, the floor is yours, sir.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you, Minister, for being with us this morning. As you know, I visited your country in 2004, for the Sommet de la Francophonie. I was pleased to be in attendance and I am very proud to have had that opportunity.

You stated at the beginning of your opening statement that you are very satisfied with the work of mining companies, particularly a Montreal company—which shall remain nameless—which is involved in gold mining and is working very effectively with the government.

I would like to ask you about China's role on the African continent. I am interested in the way in which China's approach to bilateral and multilateral relations with African countries differs from Canada's?

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** Should I answer immediately?

All right.

I would like to thank you for your question, and especially for the longstanding friendship you have shown to Burkina Faso.

As I said, private Canadian companies are very dynamic in Burkina Faso. We also recognize that in recent years, continental China has made an important breakthrough economically. We currently enjoy trade relations with continental China, but not diplomatic relations. The country we have diplomatic relations with is the Republic of China, or Taiwan. However, we do maintain normal trade relations with continental China. Indeed, we were neighbours when we were on the Security Council, and as such, we would discuss all kinds of issues without that posing any particular problem.

If continental China is now making a major breakthrough in Africa generally, it seems to me it is because of a pragmatic approach which involves making investments of all kinds, particularly in

infrastructure and in the social sector, and because it is also trying to facilitate trade between Africa and China. Of course, every country has its own way of doing that, but those are my general comments in response.

I would say it is in the interests of major countries like Canada, the United States and Europe to expand their presence in order to take their rightful position because, as you know, Africa has tremendous potential and is now waking up. And I think that, in future years, it will be induced to play an important role. Naturally, countries that have had long-standing relations with Africa will enjoy reciprocal benefits.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.):** Thank you. We welcome you and your team. We're all thrilled that you're here today.

Early last year Canada's CIDA program announced that it would no longer keep Burkina Faso as one of its partner countries. At that time a number of ambassadors came here before our committee, including your own ambassador, who was a spokesperson for the group. They said that might be a debilitating thing for Burkina Faso, and they also worried what it meant about the friendship.

How have things been since those cuts were announced? Have you been able to make any other plans to make up for that shortfall as a result of Canada not giving you those funds any more?

[*Translation*]

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** In fact, CIDA people are not the ones who informed us. I believe it was the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade that decided, for a variety of reasons, to reduce the number of focus countries from 25 to 20, as I recall. In terms of the current list of focus countries, I believe there are seven African countries on the list.

Obviously, in light of the productive and long-standing relations between Burkina Faso and Canada, we felt this did not augur well; in our view, our excellent relations were such that we should have been on the list for three reasons in particular.

As I already said, the primary reason is that the private sector is extremely dynamic; private investments are rising every year. In my opinion, that is an asset that should justify our being on the list. It would mean we could receive the necessary support from the public sector that would allow the private sector to properly fulfill its role.

The second reason is that we regularly hold international consultations through which we are able to provide mutual support. In that regard, we believe we are in a position to support Canada in terms of some of its future ambitions. I am sure you understand my point.

And, as I said, Burkina Faso is also playing a major role in maintaining peace and security in the sub-region. And, for the good of private companies and our ongoing bilateral relations, there must be peace and security. Despite our limited means, we did take action to ensure that the security of some of our partners would not be threatened, or when that security was threatened, to help free the hostages.

We have also established good governance. As you know, we are subject to the APRM. I am sure you have heard about the APRM. It is a group of 28 countries that decided to assess one another and submit to a peer review. We were the eighth country to be reviewed, and the assessment was very positive.

I also referred to our orderly civil society and our free press. So, we had quite a few reasons to think that we would continue to be on that list.

Having said that, I do recognize that, in some social sectors such as education and health, Canada has provided additional resources. Thus funding increased from \$10 million to \$17 million, which is a considerable increase. However, psychologically speaking, we see our absence from the list as problematic.

• (1120)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Before we move on to Madame Deschamps I'd like to welcome the Ambassador of Burkina Faso, Her Excellency Juliette Bonkougou.

Welcome.

Madame Deschamps.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Yoda, I would like to ask one question about your last sentence. You said that psychologically speaking, you saw this as a problem. Can you explain what you mean by that?

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** Although I said “psychologically speaking”, the same obviously applies at the diplomatic and political levels as well. When you are friends with another country and your trade is increasing... I understand Canada's sensitivity to issues such as governance, gender equality and mothers and children, but we believe we have made some progress in those areas. That is why I said that, psychologically speaking, it posed a problem for us: we really did not have a clear understanding of the reason why our country had been removed from the list.

However, I must say that when I met with Canadian authorities, they explained the reasons why the list had been cut back—the idea being to secure more visibility for Canada's initiatives, and that the decision to cut back the list did not mean that Canada was no longer interested in countries that were not on it. That was reassuring to us. However, as I stated at the outset, although the amount of aid in a particular sector was on the rise, we had the impression that not being on the list meant that we would no longer receive the same consideration we had when we were on it.

• (1125)

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** An important consideration is the fact that, of 179 countries, Burkina Faso is ranked 176th on the U.N. Human Development Index scale. With that kind of ranking, you clearly still need help in the form of international aid. Since the Canadian government has announced that foreign aid will be frozen starting in 2011, that might have an impact on what you are currently

receiving from Canada. And if you receive less aid, that could have a very serious impact on Burkina Faso's development.

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** I said at the beginning that we need the assistance of developed countries. As you know, OECD developed countries pledged to devote 0.7% of their gross domestic product to official development assistance. Thus far, very few countries have achieved that goal. Furthermore, the international community set a number of millennium development goals. The fact is that if official development assistance does not increase enough to allow for the necessary restructuring and investments, it will be difficult to achieve the millennium development goals.

You are right: we are quite a poor country which needs private investments because, under any scenario, they provide value-added and jobs. But we also need official development assistance to ensure that our social systems are strong, and to support axes of development.

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** That is sort of the purpose of your Canadian tour.

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** Exactly.

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** I have one last question.

Last May, Ambassador Bonkougou, you appeared before the Committee to express concerns with respect to Burkina Faso's removal from CIDA's priority list. You also expressed the fear that Canada's embassy in Burkina Faso could be shut down. We know that embassies in several African countries have been closed and that others certainly will as well. We are expecting further closures. What would be the impact of a decision to close the Canadian embassy in Burkina Faso?

**Her Excellency Juliette Bonkougou (Ambassador of Burkina Faso to Canada, Embassy of Burkina Faso):** Thank you, Ms. Deschamps.

I did, indeed, represent the entire African group here last May, with a view to making the Committee aware of our concerns and particularly our desire to renew and strengthen our partnership and cooperation with Canada through a certain number of initiatives that we had laid out. As concerns my country, Burkina Faso, in particular, since I have been in Canada, there have been serious threats of closure twice now. The first time, when I first arrived here, I was able, thanks to friends of Burkina and the support of partners, to contact the then political authorities to explain the efforts being made by my country to favourably position itself in Africa, both in terms of democracy and governance promotion, as well as efforts to improve transparency and promotion of sustained and equitable economic development. Based on those explanations, the embassy was maintained.

When there was a change of government, the same arguments came forward with respect to the closure. I began another round of visits and had the privilege, at the time, of meeting with the former Minister, Maxime Bernier. I explained the situation in my country, emphasizing the fact that Burkina Faso is currently the main source of stability in Western Africa. Despite its modest means, as the Minister stated, Burkina Faso is making huge efforts to secure peace in the sub-region, and we believe that Canada's signal is an encouragement to those countries that are currently making an effort, our hope being that those who are doing less will fall in line with those who are putting their all into this.

We really did not understand why Burkina Faso had been relegated to the sidelines particularly because, based on the Human Development Index, we certainly were not in a very good position. We understood that it was this indicator and the fight against poverty that were guiding the desire to establish partnerships. My message was heard, and the embassy was maintained.

I thank Mr. Bernier and the Canadian government, but we are seeking reassurance that this is very much part of the past and that there is an understanding that we cannot do business at a certain level without the appropriate diplomatic support.

As the Minister has probably pointed out, Canada is now the leading private direct foreign investor in our country, with some \$800 million in investments each year. Burkina Faso is Canada's third largest mining partner after South Africa and Ghana. We believe the scope of our trade relations and the efforts that are currently being made by the government and people of Burkina Faso to emerge from underdevelopment, warrant an acceptable level of representation. Furthermore, based on the principles that generally guide diplomacy, the closure of an embassy usually occurs as a result of a deterioration in relations, or a sufficiently significant political or diplomatic event that the country decides to close its embassy to signal to the other country that things have to be done differently. That is why we see these as very serious decisions, because they can send the wrong signal.

You know—and the Minister has pointed this out—that Canada and Northern European countries are generally seen as the guardians of the temple with respect to good governance, environmental protection and human rights. So, we would not like that signal to give rise to messages that could be harmful to our country. Thank you.

• (1130)

[English]

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

We'll now move over to the government side and Mr. Abbott for seven minutes.

[Translation]

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** Mr. Chairman, please excuse me. I just want to say that, when I met with Minister Cannon in Addis-Ababa a few days ago, he assured me that there is no particular problem in terms of maintaining your embassy in Ouagadougou.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

Mr. Abbott.

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Ambassador, thank you very much for joining us here at committee today.

For the edification of the committee, the minister very kindly came to my office yesterday afternoon and I had an opportunity to talk with him. We had a very productive and I think a very fruitful half-hour discussion, and I thank him for that.

We discussed at the time this issue of the bilateral countries of focus, which is an issue of choices, of course, because the government that preceded us had funding relations, believe it or not, with 111 countries. Our feeling was that we could do an awful lot better by giving specific focus to 20 countries. We also are going into key priority areas of food security, children, and sustainable economic growth.

I had an opportunity to explain this to the minister, and I previously had a meeting with her excellency, the ambassador, and we explained this. I think that while I obviously have to respect, and do respect, the appearance—and that is something we discussed. As Minister Yoda has pointed out, in fact the aid from Canada to Burkina Faso has increased from \$10 million to \$17 million. Therefore, it is not what it appears to be. It is a case of the Canadian government managing their aid, particularly in areas of untying aid and that kind of thing.

I think it would be of value, Minister, if you could give us a bit of a sense.... CIDA has had quite an involvement with Burkina Faso in the area of education. It's my own personal belief that education is one of the most important keys to the future success of developing nations, just as it has been with developed nations.

Could you describe to us what kinds of programs there have been in terms of the use of CIDA—Canadian—funding for education in Burkina Faso?

• (1135)

[Translation]

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** Thank you, Parliamentary Secretary.

I stated, right at the outset, when the first question was put to me, that, in actual fact, we are not talking about a reduction in CIDA's activities. When the first question was put to me by the member, I stated that, on the contrary, in some priority areas such as education, there had even been a significant increase in assistance from Canada.

Indeed, the Burkinan government has three social sector priorities: education, health care and matters relating to governance and gender. In those three areas, particularly education, CIDA has made an important contribution in recent years. Indeed, the increased contribution I referred to was due to our actions in the education sector, which is a priority. Having been Minister of Health for six and a half years, I know that Canada, either directly or through its contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, has taken a number of actions that made it possible to fund the health sector.

Also, with respect to good governance, the Canadian government—and I said that here—has supported us, particularly during the 2005 presidential elections. What I said, Mr. Abbott,—and you were kind enough to point out that we had met—is that there was definitely a communication problem. We have to resolve that problem because, we had understood that this was not a positive signal. A country that is making a considerable effort to meet the millennium goals, which has productive relations with respect to private investment and, in addition to all of that, is Canada's friend and uses its own resources, in some cases, to ensure the safety of that country's nationals or to find a way to secure their safety, is not a country that deserves to be left with the impression that its relations have deteriorated to the point where it should no longer be on the list.

You provided an explanation and said that, in fact, this was not a final decision. I believe I was satisfied with the answer you gave me. In terms of information regarding CIDA's education-related activities, I have just provided that to you.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Thank you.

My colleague, Mr. Goldring, has some questions.

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Maybe in the next group—

**The Chair:** You're almost out of time, so I'll move over.

Ms. Mathyssen, welcome to the committee. You have the floor for seven minutes.

• (1140)

**Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to your excellency. It's very good to see you here, and I appreciate your sharing your expertise with the committee.

I noted, Excellency Yoda, that you are concerned about the fact that Burkina Faso has been removed from the list of countries that Canada is directing specific aid to, and I wonder if that has changed your feelings with regard to our relationship. As you know, Canada is seeking a Security Council seat. Will you be supporting Canada's efforts to secure that seat, and if we do gain that Security Council seat, what would you like to see from us? What do you expect with regard to that special status as a member of the Security Council?

[*Translation*]

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** Thank you very much, Ms. Mathyssen.

Obviously, I cannot... It goes without saying that our vote is not for sale. However, we do have friendly relations, strong relations that go back to the days following our independence. We wrote to the Canadian government to say—and I believe I can make this comment here without it being public—that we would support Canada's candidacy for a seat on the Security Council, as a non-permanent member.

Having said that, I did not come here today to sell that information; I came to explain to the Canadian government that our longstanding relations, which are productive and have been

reinforced in recent years by a strong private sector presence in our country, should be strengthened further, to our mutual advantage. That would mean that Burkina Faso would have a greater opportunity to achieve its millennium development goals, and would be better equipped to fight poverty and continue to make progress in such areas as governance and gender equality. It would also be an opportunity to state to Canada that it is very much in its interests to see that happen, since it would expand business opportunities. It would also allow us to maintain our efforts in the sub-region towards peace and stability, efforts which are useful for general economic development and trade, in particular.

We were very well received, as I said. I had the opportunity to meet with the Canada-Africa Friendship, Cooperation and Solidarity Association, where we had very interesting discussions. I also met with the Honourable Bob Rae; again, they were very interesting discussions. I met with the two whips; that was very interesting. And I see that, here as well, the questions are specific and interesting.

I think that is what it is all about—candid and friendly relations between our two countries. These are two countries engaged in dialogue are not just two governments; they are two countries talking to one another—in other words, over and above the governments *per se*, these are two countries whose interests must be preserved and must foster stronger bonds of friendship.

Thank you, Ms. Mathyssen.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Just one second. If I could just mention to the minister, we are in public, so there are media present. I just remind you this is a public meeting.

[*Translation*]

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** Ah!... You should have told me that.

**A voice:** A minor diplomatic incident.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I just wanted to reiterate that.

[*Translation*]

**Her Excellency Juliette Bonkougou:** With the Minister's permission, I would just like to add that our President intervened to ensure that the Canadian hostages would be freed. That occurred after we had been removed from the list. That is just to illustrate that our friendship with Canada goes beyond issues such as quotas, which we do hope are not permanent.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**Ms. Irene Mathyssen:** Thank you.

I'm very interested in what you said about peace, stability, and moving toward gender equality, particularly gender equality. What steps are you taking to make sure that there is that equality so that women can play a role in community and in the economy, and strengthen the economy by virtue of that contribution?

•(1145)

[*Translation*]

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** First of all, at the political level, the government introduced legislation which was passed by the National Assembly and which requires that a minimum number of seats be reserved for women in each political party.

Secondly, the government has established various funding structures—they are seven in all—which enable women to be engaged in remunerative activities.

Thirdly, we have begun large scale literacy training. As you know, if you are 30 years of age and never attended school, if you have an opportunity to improve your literacy in your native language and learn how to read, it will allow you to be a lot more productive.

We are also trying, insofar as possible, to ensure that both women and men—although we have not yet achieve parity—move up the ladder to positions of responsibility. Having said that, I should also mention that we want to take this much further, although that will obviously take time because, even in countries with advanced economies, it was not so very long ago that women secured the right to vote in certain countries. For a long time now—since we gained our independence—women have had the right to vote; that is working very well.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Mathysen.

We're now going to our second round. It looks as though we have time for two more interventions, so I'm going to start with Mr. Goldring and finish with Mr. Rae.

Mr. Goldring for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** Madam Ambassador and Minister Yoda, ladies and gentlemen, welcome. Certainly we've enjoyed very warm relationships for 30 or 40 years now.

The subject I would like to talk about first is the optimism in terms of the mining exploration that is happening, and it involves considerable effort by Canadian mining companies. I'm sure you're aware of a bill that is before the House of Commons now, Bill C-300. There seems to be quite a bit of controversy, certainly from the mining industry itself. We've all had many, many letters from the various mining companies that basically say the bill will disadvantage the international competitiveness of Canadian mining companies, which may very well impede them in being able to proceed with these developments; or the bill will create a strong incentive for multinational mining companies to relocate outside of Canada, so it may not be a continuation of mining concerns with Canadian companies.

This is very, very concerning to many here in Canada, because the mining industry in this country is probably one of the most substantial worldwide.

The question earlier by one of the members was on China's activities. If the resources are there, and certainly they have been found and certainly they will be developed, can you envision that if the Canadian mining sector did have to pull back from it for a variety of very, very restricted reasons, from our own in-Canada bill, that

shortfall could be picked up by the Chinese mining sector? Or who next in line would be very substantial in the area?

I might add, it's not a government bill; it has been put forward as a private member's bill. We are a minority government here, and quite regularly some of these initiatives do come forward by weight of the opposition parties here having greater numbers than we do.

I guess the lead question to that also would be the aid that Canada is contributing to the country. We do have a combination of economic considerations and limitations. Would that be a concern, if the Canadian mining sector had to bow out?

•(1150)

[*Translation*]

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** Mr. Goldring, I am a little uncomfortable answering that question. First of all, I would not like to see the Canadian private sector dismiss the Burkinan mining industry. On the contrary, I would like to see a stronger Canadian presence there because, as I said at the outset, we have excellent relations with your private companies, which abide by Burkina Faso's laws and regulations. However, I have no particular power over Canadian legislation, whatever direction it proposes to take. I only hope that the current situation, which is a positive one, will prevail.

Who would replace Canadian private firms if they were to bow out? Apart from the fact that I hope they will not, many countries do business in Burkina Faso—Australia, South Africa, India, and China—even though we do not have diplomatic relations with it—as well as Brazil and many other countries. The business is there, naturally, but doing business with friends is always better.

[*English*]

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

Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

We'll finish with Mr. Rae.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Welcome, Minister. I am pleased to see you again. The Ambassador is well known to us.

Minister, I would invite you to comment on two things. First of all, what, in your view, is causing the never-ending instability of the region Her Excellency referred to? Second, what is your view of political developments in the region, and even in Africa? I believe it is important that we hear your ideas on how we can really secure the necessary stability, prosperity, social justice and sustainability in Africa, which remains a priority for our government and, naturally, for your own as well.

**His Excellency Alain Bédouma Yoda:** This is a question from someone with extensive experience both in Africa and on the political scene.



In terms of what is causing instability in the sub-region, the factors in play vary from one country to the other. Togo, for example, was led by a single party for 30 or more years. That left the impression that power sharing was inadequate. I must say as well, because this is what I truly believe, that colonialization also bears part of the responsibility. Indeed, a country is considered somewhat differently depending on whether it is in the south or the north. The south, which has a much larger population, felt that the time had come for it, too, to exercise authority, authority that had very often been exercised by the north. I believe that it all began there.

Of course, the elections compounded the problem, and when President Eyadéma died, you know who his successor was. It was very difficult. That was when President Compaoré was asked to act as mediator. That is what made it possible to hold elections in 2005, which occurred in very difficult circumstances. Many people died. Fortunately, the mediation continued and elections were held on March 4, 2010, with very little violence. Of course, we are not there yet, but overall, things went well. All the observers acknowledged that. President Faure Gnassingbé will be sworn in and take office on May 3, in anticipation of the opening of the second legislature.

That situation is different from the one in Niger, for example, where, as you know, President Tandja has decided to give himself the means to extend his mandate, contrary to the Constitution. He dissolved the National Assembly, the Supreme Court and the Independent National Electoral Commission, then held a referendum for which voter turnout was extremely low. That led to the results we are aware of. There was a coup d'État—there is no other way of describing it. I believe elections will be held in a year at most, fortunately. The reasons for these events are different again, compared to Togo. There was clearly a determination to violate the fundamental law of the country—the Constitution. Amending its provisions was prohibited.

The situation is different, once again, in Côte d'Ivoire. As you know, there is still the issue of the north and south. There was a civil war and other events of which you are aware. The situation in Guinea is different again. Generally speaking, I would say that the reasons are as follows: its colonial past, non-collaborative power management, the relative youth of all these countries, probably, and ethnicity, in certain cases. Those are some of the causes, as I see it. Fortunately, my President is frequently invited to contribute his experience and encourage talks between the parties involved in the conflict. The fact is that, if there is no peace, it will be impossible to effectively fight poverty. Without legitimacy, there can be no good governance either.

• (1155)

As regards my view of political developments in the region, and even in Africa, I think things are starting to change. As a result of the vision articulated by the African Union and the ECOWAS, all unconstitutional powers are now unacceptable. Under those conditions, I think each country will tend to want to emphasize a certain recognized legitimacy, in accordance with constitutional provisions. Hence the importance of the discussions we are holding. Countries like Canada, which have experience, vision and have had a system in place for some time now, can help us to fight poverty and establish good governance. They can also provide the necessary assistance

that will enable us to redistribute the wealth that is created, thereby creating greater serenity.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bob Rae:** *Merci.*

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Rae.

I want to thank the minister, the ambassador, and all of you for being here today.

I'm just going to ask you to sit in your seats for a second. There were some journalists who wanted to take some pictures. Because of our late start, they're going to come in and do that. Then we're going to just suspend the meeting for about five minutes so we can change the witnesses.

So if I could ask you to keep your seats just for one second, we'll get a couple of shots from the media and then we'll suspend.

Once again, thank you very much for being here today.

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\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

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• (1205)

**The Chair:** Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the representatives of Agir Ensemble pour la Paix au Congo are here today. I believe we have Mr. Kabeya, who is going to be giving us a presentation.

Sir, I'm going to welcome you. I believe you have some opening comments. After your opening comments we'll go around the room and ask some questions.

Mr. Kabeya, the floor is yours. You have ten minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Lievin Mudi Wa Mbuji Kabeya (Coordinator, Agir Ensemble pour la Paix au Congo):** Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, we are an umbrella organization devoted to defending rights and promoting peace, both in Canada and outside the country. Developments affecting the democratic life of the Congo, as it transitions to a constitutional State, is mobilizing all our energy. We are engaged in a ruthless fight against anything that restricts freedom in the African Great Lakes region and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We understand that we may be a thorn in the side of those who are seeking compromise with the oppressors and expecting rewards and emoluments. However, nothing will stop our fight, as long as the bright rays of freedom are not shining on the Congo, but they will shine. Congolese with a love of peace require the sincere support of Canada. As Canadians of Congolese origin, we need the support of free and democratic countries, like Canada, to restore peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose sub-soil is described as a geological scandal. Supporting the restoration of peace is the best investment that Canada can make in the Congo's development and towards increased business opportunities. The Congo has everything, but it is lacking two things: peace and peace, which would allow it to become the engine for development throughout Central Africa.

Distinguished members of Parliament, we are honoured to have this opportunity to appear before your Committee. We want to extend our sincere thanks, on behalf of the 6 million Congolese who were killed and the thousands of Congolese women who have been raped by the soldiers of Paul Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front, which has been terrorizing the entire Great Lakes region since 1996, and particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is on behalf of these victims that we have come to meet with our elected members of Parliament today.

In our brief of November 11, 2008 and in a follow-up letter in May 2009, addressed to the Prime Minister of Canada—copies of which you have received—we provide specific, detailed information on Paul Kagame's responsibility for, not only the design, planning and execution of the April 6, 1994 attack—which triggered the genocide in Rwanda—but also the genocide of Hutus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the silent genocide of 6 million Congolese, which continues to this day.

There will be no peace, either in the Great Lakes region or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as long as the perpetrators of these war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious human right violations—which are well documented—continue to be protected with impunity and tailor-made amnesties. An illustrious Canadian of Congolese origin who lives here in Ottawa—without mentioning any names, Mr. Djamba Yohé—said this: “The ransom of crime is not impunity”.

The perpetrators of the serious crimes committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1996, are not only in Rwanda. They are also in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and are protected from legal proceedings that could be brought against them for their crimes through tailor-made amnesty legislation that they have succeeded in having passed, even though no statutory limitations apply under international law to the crimes of which they are accused.

We have therefore come before our elected members to ask you to do everything you possibly can to assuage the unspeakable suffering that Paul Kagame and his accomplices, who have infiltrated the inner workings and machinery of the Congolese government, are inflicting on the bruised Congolese people, and to immediately put him in a place where he can cause no more harm.

●(1210)

The perpetrators of crimes against humanity are also hiding in Kigali and Kinshasa. So, we are here to ask our members of Parliament to do everything in their power to ensure that Canada provides more, sustained support to civil society actors who are risking their own lives to speak out in Beni, Goma, Kisangani and Ituri against the crimes and massacres that the current authorities are attempting to cover up when they are committed by Rwanda.

We have come to give you evidence of crimes committed by members of the CNDP that authorities in Kinshasa have brought into national institutions as a reward for the massacres they committed.

Our first concern, regarding which we would like to provide relevant information to your Committee, has to do with the perpetrators of the serious crimes committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, crimes which remain unpunished.

Our second concern relates to Canada's indifference to developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo which, since the 2006 elections, has gone from drifting towards authoritarianism, to quote the words of the FIDH, to democratic initiatives that have become completely bogged down, as described by the International Crisis Group led by our fellow Canadian, Ms. Louise Arbour. In statements by the Catholic bishops of the Congo in July 2008 and July 2009, corruption is described as the “general living environment and context of political action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo”.

Did Canada spend taxpayers' money funding elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to see the establishment of a constitutional State in the heart of Africa, as opposed to giving a semblance of legality to a regime that represses and tortures people and then rewards the perpetrators of serious crimes with government positions and amnesties?

Which side is Canada on? Is it on the side of democracy and the people, or it is on the side of leaders that some say were armed by Canadian mining companies to take power through violence? We have also brought with us documentation with respect to the worries—and even complaints—that Canadian mining companies have fuelled in the DRC. That is our third concern.

Distinguished members of Parliament, our organization, Agir ensemble pour la paix au Congo, was created at the request of 23 community organizations and key figures who formed a coalition in 2006 in order that Paul Kagame would be refused authorization to come to Canada. Also, Agir ensemble pour la paix au Congo, of which I am the coordinator, gave itself the mandate to work to promote peace in war torn areas, particularly the Democratic Republic of Congo. There can be no development without peace.

In closing, I would like to present our recommendations for the restoration of a sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Distinguished members of Parliament, our recommendations are as follows: that steps be taken to put an end to the systematic looting of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by neighbouring states, armed groups and multinationals, some of which have their head office in free and democratic countries such as Canada, Great Britain, the United States of America, Australia or France; that a parliamentary commission of inquiry be set up to investigate the activities of mining companies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; that a parliamentary commission of inquiry be set up to clarify the links between the Rwandan genocide and the successive wars that have wrought havoc in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; that a parliamentary commission be set up to clarify the circumstances in which Canadian priests were assassinated; that support be provided to civil society actors in the Congo who are fighting the planned balkanization of the Congo; that ways and means be found to give effect to international arrest warrants so that the persons named in those warrants can be brought before the competent judicial authorities; that steps be taken to implement the different agreements relating to the restoration of peace in Eastern Congo; and, that Canadians of Congolese origin be involved in all activities that you undertake with a view to peace in the Congo.

Thank you for your kind attention.

• (1215)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're now going to start our first round. Go ahead, Mr. Rae, for seven minutes, sir.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Kabeya, I want to thank you for your important presentation. I think it is essential to call attention, once again, to the extraordinary level of violence that your country has suffered for 20 or more years. Members of Parliament recognize that this is, indeed, the most violent part of the world, and has been for quite some time. As a country, whatever the party in office, we continue, in cooperation with the United Nations, to try and create opportunities for greater stability in the Congo.

I would like to begin by expressing one thought. The dilemma we are facing is that a sovereign government is in power in the Congo. That is a reality. The Congo is a member of the United Nations. It has a government and a president. There is a political reality in the Congo, and it is not possible, either for a country such as Canada or the United Nations, to claim that such a government does not exist. There is a government in place.

Your recommendations lead me to believe that there is no government in the Congo. Yes, there are mining companies, but there is also a government which is responsible for legislation, the environment and the activities of those companies within its own borders. We are currently discussing Bill C-300, an Act respecting corporate accountability for the activities of mining, oil or gas corporations in developing countries, which deals directly with the issue of mining companies' activities. Naturally, Liberal members of Parliament support the important principle of the social responsibility of large Canadian companies and corporations. At the same time, we have to give some thought to the current reality. If there are

currently U.N. troops in the Congo, they are there with the support of the Congo government. If the government of the Congo said it did not want troops in its territory, there would not be any. It would be very difficult for the United Nations to be there without being invited by the government. It is very similar to the situation in Afghanistan. We are in Afghanistan at the invitation of the President of that country, even though many people have questions about Mr. Karzaï's government.

I would like to receive a clear response from you on this. Am I to understand that you and your group do not recognize the legality of President Kabila's government? This is an important question.

• (1220)

**Mr. Lievin Mudi Wa Mbuji Kabeya:** Thank you for your question. Dr. Jean M'Pania Pene Membele and Marc Kapenda will answer that question.

Go ahead, Doctor.

**Mr. Jean Pene Membele (Member, Agir Ensemble pour la Paix au Congo):** Thank you.

To answer your question about legality, there were obviously elections in the Congo in 2006, which resulted in the establishment of new institutions, with an elected President of the Republic and a Parliament, but in my opinion, elections are not enough to legitimize someone's power. Elections must be followed by actual government operations on the ground. For example, there must be a demonstration of the government's responsibility for managing the affairs of state.

To come back to the example of Canadian companies developing ore in the Congo, well before 1996, at the time of the AFDL's so-called "liberation" war, companies were already signing contracts with rebels who had not yet won power. Subsequently, when the AFDL took office, these companies signed what we, as Congolese observers, call "one-sided contracts"—in other words, contracts that in no way benefit the DRC or the people of the Congo.

If we are bringing this problem to Parliament, and to your Committee, it is because all the reports confirm that these companies are not at all complying with Canadian ethical principles with respect to ore development outside of Canada. It is a dilemma that you, yourself, have pointed to. There is a government in place, but that government is irresponsible. Yes, it does exist, but should we allow an irresponsible government to destroy an entire country, an entire nation? That government is incapable of ensuring the safety of people and property.

The eastern region of the country has been practically abandoned to the Rwandans. A responsible government should not be bringing soldiers from Laurent Nkunda's CNDP army who have been fighting and killing in the eastern part of the country, and who have raped women. He has brought them into the army. Through communiqués, we are now hearing that these same CNDP soldiers are raping women on a daily basis and burning down people's huts and houses. So, what we are dealing with is a government that is completely incapable of carrying out its duties.

•(1225)

[English]

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

We're going to move to Madame Deschamps for seven minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Time permitting, I will share some of my time with my colleague, Mr. Dorion.

Last week, Oxfam International released a report which deals specifically with the whole issue of sexual violence against women in the Congo. I took a look at it. It is quite incredible to see that these odious crimes continue to go unpunished in the Congo, even though it is said that the Congo's anti-rape legislation is among the most progressive in Africa. The current situation in the Congo is extremely worrisome. It is very worrisome to see these kinds of attacks against women.

We know that the President has called for the withdrawal of MONUC by June, 2011. What will happen after that, when there is no longer a U.N. mission there; what will the impact of that be? What will women be facing if there is no longer any international organization on the ground? Could Canada play a role there?

I have a number of questions. I would like you to comment on the tragedy in the Congo.

**Mr. Alfred Lukhanda (Member, Agir Ensemble pour la Paix au Congo):** Thank you for your question. You are right to say that this unacceptable and that these crimes continue to go unpunished. Indeed, we have come to provide evidence that they continue to go unpunished. We have tons of documents on this. If MONUC withdraws, it will be a disaster; it is as simple as that. We do not think this is the time to let MONUC leave, because we are talking about a country where the armies are going around raping, killing and massacring. There are reports on this. In terms of violence against women, we have brought with us a report by Human Rights Watch. That is made clear in the report.

Along the same lines, I would say that we have an army crossing the border. There is violence occurring, and we are doing everything we can to identify the perpetrators. That report identifies the perpetrators of this violence. They are part of the Congolese army, the FARDC. However, the Rwandan army has been crossing the borders since 1996. This has resulted in 16 deaths. From the perspective of the Congolese army, this violence is one more weapon of warfare. The plan is to rape and infect women with AIDS in order to wipe out the population and make room for the overflow Rwandan population. Imagine, a government that would ask for that to be done, when there is no army, and when members of the Rwandan army have joined the official army. It would be as though Canada was at war against a country and citizens of that country joined the Canadian army. Can that be happening?

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** How can pressure be brought to bear on the government? It is the government expressing its wishes; the government and the President are the ones calling for the withdrawal of MONUC.

**Mr. Alfred Lukhanda:** That is correct. In the latest report released on April 8 by Ms. Arbour, who leads the International Crisis Group, she says that in the Congo, plans for democratization are

completely bogged down. Even before Ms. Arbour's report, in July 2009, the International Federation for Human Rights published a report entitled "Democratic Republic of Congo: The Authoritarian Drift of the Regime". In the report released by the organization led by Ms. Arbour, one of the recommendations is that Canada tie its aid to good governance criteria. Congolese bishops came here last December. They were received by members of Parliament. They said that corruption is becoming the "general environment in which political action occurs". That is taken from their July 2009 and July 2008 statements on the occasion of the 48th and 49th anniversaries of the Congo's independence.

What do we expect from Canada? It did not fund elections to arrive at the result described by Ms. Arbour in her report. She is Canadian; she is a fellow citizen. When she publishes a report, I may read it six times over. Her proposals say it all. We only have to follow Ms. Arbour's recommendations.

In addition to that, there are other reports, and the arrest warrant issued by the Spanish authorities. We also have an arrest warrant issued by French authorities. Those reports describe the perpetrators of the crimes committed in the Congo, as well as the connection between the genocide in Rwanda and the terror in the Congo. That is part of the plan. The judicial systems of both France and Spain—two democratic countries like Canada—have said that. And the evidence is there.

•(1230)

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Finally, who benefits most from crime?

**Mr. Alfred Lukhanda:** Paul Kagame and the people who want to exploit the Congo's wealth. Those people are certainly not in Africa. In fact, Paul Kagame is only the armed branch of the large multinationals. That has been archived and documented. The report issued by the United Nations expert group is clear in that regard. We can provide a copy. The multinationals are the ones benefiting from crime. And Paul Kagame also benefits, because he has been—

It is all because of the missile fired at President Habyarimana. That is where the whole thing began. We know what the path of that missile was. It left the Soviet Union, and went to Uganda and then to Kigali. The people who fired it were trained, and we know their names. We also know in which taxi the people who fired the missile travelled. We know where they stayed, before the missile was launched. Everything is there. We can provide you with the evidence. Canada has to act now, because the evidence is there. With Bill C-300, Canada is acting based on a plan. The evidence is so clear, and we are prepared to provide it to you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Deschamps.

We now move over to the government side.

Mr. Obhrai, you have seven minutes.

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

As you know, I'm the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Coming out of the instability that has been in Congo for a long time, Kofi Annan, when he was Secretary-General of the UN, initiated the Great Lakes region initiative and asked Canada and everybody else to help bring stability back to Congo.

In that capacity, I went to Congo. I visited during election time. It was quite an exercise, I must say, to have an election with 800 candidates. It was a great election. I was there on the ground at the time. I went from Kigali down to Goma. Then I went to the Great Lakes region initiative conference that took place in Nairobi, with all the countries coming down. Canada was there.

There is no question that Canada took an active role. I met with the NGOs of the Great Lakes region initiative to see how we could assist to get Congo back on its feet.

There are a lot of challenges in that region, no question. Those who perpetrated the massacres in Rwanda moved into the eastern Congo—into Goma and that area. The LRA up north is using Congo as a base. Nobody underestimates the fact that there are serious problems of rape and all these things. I visited hospitals that are working hard to help these ladies who have been raped. There are a lot of people and NGOs working very hard.

The fact still remains, and it is a clearly important fact, that there has been progress over there. You have identified areas of concern, and we will not say that they are not areas of concern. But the fact of the matter remains that after the Great Lakes region initiative, there was an agreement signed by all these countries to not interfere with each other.

The headquarters of the Great Lakes is now in Bujumbura, and is run by the former Tanzanian foreign minister.

The fact is that it is a work in progress in Congo. It may not have been doing very well preceding that. The MONUC is there doing all these things. What we should be doing is helping civil society to build capacity and help this government, instead of saying, as you have been saying, that the current government is illegal. Now, finally, after all this fighting, there are institutions coming up in Congo.

I think I will conclude by saying that while your group is here bringing all these things out—I do not say that they are not there; they are there—I would say that your group should actually be looking at ways to assist civil society in building the capacity to bring Congo back. It is wrong to say that only the Government of Canada can do it and that the Government of Canada should do it. You are a Congolese of Canadian origin. You have an excellent opportunity here to move forward. There are a lot of good things happening in Congo. Let's focus on that.

That's all I need to say. Thank you.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Is there any response?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Kapenda (Member, Agir Ensemble pour la Paix au Congo):** Distinguished members of Parliament, what I would like to say is that the Congo is a two-tier country. You say that there are things that are working well in the Congo. For example, reference was made to the Constitution, which was described earlier as

progressive. However, the actions of the government lead us to believe nothing is working as it should. We are speaking out against corruption and the fact that a government, which is supposed to be sovereign and capable, in principle, of protecting its own territory, is totally unable to do that. On the contrary, it is selling or transferring portions of its territory, without any prior consultations with Parliament or the civil society. The rules developed in cooperation with civil society—and the same applies to the Constitution—are seen as progressive. However, when you look at the government's action, you clearly see that there is nothing positive happening.

I would just like to remind you that on March 1, 2000, we appeared before the Sub-Committee of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and International Development of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. At that time, we raised exactly the same issues. We spoke out against violations of human rights, including freedom of expression. We denounced the acts of genocide, committed with the government's cooperation, against the civilian population. The Rwandan militias were primarily behind that genocide. We also denounced the plundering of the country's mining resources by Rwanda, Uganda and the multi-nationals. That was on March 1, 2000. Today, the situation remains the same.

At the time, the President was Laurent Kabila. In 2006, Joseph Kabila succeeded him. In the 2006 elections, which brought the young Kabila to power, we had requested a contribution from Canada in the form of election observation, in order to help the Congolese civil society elect a responsible government. Canada therefore participated in the 2006 elections by sending observers. Canada was also part of the supporting committee, which included the embassies of foreign countries which supported the democratic process. After those elections, as you know, there was a tremendous outcry about the fact that the newly elected government had been brought to power contrary to the will of the people.

If a president is elected with less than 20% of the popular vote and the majority of the population followed orders and abstained from voting, what legitimacy can you really attribute to such a government? It is quite true that, subsequently, that same President elect bought the entire Parliament, so that there would no longer be such a thing—to ensure that Parliament would no longer play its role and that it would be part of its majority. So, we are talking about a government that was not elected by the majority, but which subsequently bought a Parliament and appointed all the country's institutions. What legitimacy can you attribute to such a government? How can it be called democratic?

So, there is a democratic deficit in the Congo that makes its government illegitimate.

• (1240)

The country operates at two levels, and the civil society wants a legitimate government. It is therefore calling on friendly, democratic countries to provide support, and yet we are still waiting for that legitimate government to materialize. If it has not materialized, it is because friendly countries are not sincerely contributing to the creation of a truly democratic regime in the Congo. That is a major problem. Sovereignty in that country is suffering, security is suffering, and peace is suffering.

I would like to close by saying that there is no army in the Congo. Following the departure of Mobutu, as you know, the national army was completely dispersed, and since then, the army has been made up of the current President's militias, which are composed of Rwandan and Angolese militias, as well as certain Congolese groups. However, there is no national army.

Do you believe that a country like the Congo, with such a significant democratic deficit and a problem of responsible government, cannot be helped by democratic countries to establish a truly democratic system under which the country can assert its sovereignty?

[*English*]

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

We're going to move over to Mr. Dewar for the last question of this round.

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

*Merci à tous.*

I'll start with where we might find consensus among members and you. In both your responses and your opening remarks you've suggested that Canada should support peacekeeping in the Congo. I believe that's the case.

You're aware that General Leslie has been asked to head the MONUC mission, and we're waiting for the government to respond to that. I think that's a pretty clear consensus among people here, and I think people around the table would see that as something that Canada can do.

I would agree with you. When I was in the Congo last year, there was great concern among some of the international NGOs and among some of the people I talked to in the embassies from Europe and in our own embassy around the Congolese army and how effective it was beyond Kinshasa and that region, and specifically in the DRC. One of the issues was how the army is paid.

There had been some work done to normalize the standards within the Congolese army—that is, to make sure that the people who were enlisted in the Congolese army were going to be paid. One of the concerns I heard was that basically the upper echelon were responsible for paying the soldiers and they would literally come out with bags of cash to hand out to the soldiers. Often the money wasn't being handed out to the soldiers, so the soldiers went out and got involved in activities they shouldn't have been involved in.

I would think there would be some need to normalize the standards within the Congolese army. I think you touched on this point. There has been an absorption within the Congolese army of many other factions, and it's not clear what the Congolese army is. I think that's something you mentioned, so clearly that's in need of help.

One thing I think Canadians are seized with are programs to fight violence against women, particularly rape, and for the prevention of rape, and also the health services that are required. The government has supported these programs, but I'm not sure if they're going to continue to support them. One of the things I heard on the ground when I was there last year is the need for airlift capacity in the east so

that you can take people who have been victims of the war to clinics to get the health services they need, but there is also a need to provide support for women to prevent rape, and that requires a combination of security protection from MONUC and support for women themselves.

Finally, on mining, some work is being done in the United States on legislation to deal with minerals and mining being done in the DRC and to track it. I wonder if you have any opinion on the legislation that is being debated right now in Washington and if you think that's something Canada should be doing, because we're very implicated in mining in the east Congo.

I would say to my colleagues that we're not talking about the usual list of minerals. Coltan, which is in all the BlackBerrys we use, is probably coming from the DRC. It is a conflict mineral. Recently there have also been concerns about uranium, and of course there is a concern around where this uranium is going and what it's being used for. Clearly we need to take a look at it.

Could I, then, have your opinions on peacekeeping and the Congolese army and how that can be dealt with, as well as your opinions on support for women, both for prevention of rape and for health services? Also, could you give your opinions on legislation in Washington, if you have opinions on it, and whether we should be adopting legislation here when it comes to conflict minerals?

Thank you.

● (1245)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alfred Lukhanda:** Thank you very much, Mr. Dewar.

We have always said that if we do not control the movements of terrorist groups in the East, the Congo will not be the only country affected, because this sort of thing crosses borders. We are talking about uranium. There is an ASADHO report on this. At the same time, the president of the association is in jail. The uranium leaving the country illegally represents a threat for the entire world, including Canada. We do not want to experience another Nagasaki. We do not want to experience another Hiroshima. In order to prevent that, we have to stop uranium from leaving the country illegally. I repeat: the president of that association is in prison.

In terms of helping women who are raped, there is only one thing to be done: Kagame has to be put somewhere where he can no longer harm people. The best investment for Canada is not necessarily to help women who have been raped. We have to stop the rapes from happening in the beginning. All of this comes from Kagame, so please help us. Help our fellow citizens in the Congo. Six million dead is too many! Implementing an anti-rape program is a waste of money. Bringing Kagame under control might cost a thousand times less than such a program.

With respect to the bill and the mines, I think we have said enough about that. We very much appreciate Canada's efforts with respect to the moral responsibility of corporations. I would say that this book does not really do me much credit. Everything about the Congo is in it—including the fact that the rebels were armed to take power. We know that the author has his own problems, but these are public sources that have been verified. The authors of these quoted sources are not subject to prosecution.

In closing, I would just like to talk about my colleague's report. It relates to the civil society. We talked about the fact that the civil society needs help, but the fact is that those who defend human rights are in jail. There is a report from Amnesty International. What civil society are we helping? The reports issued by the Catholic bishops of the Congo show that nothing is working and that there is no visionary leadership. The bishops' letter and the reports are there. Nothing is working in the Congo. Indeed, Ms. Arbour said precisely that in her April 8 report.

Mr. Dewar, one solution for the Congolese army would be that it no longer include foreigners. I like foreigners. The Congo welcomes foreigners. I cannot vote in the Congo because I am not Congolese. However, peace in Afghanistan and the Congo concerns me as a Canadian. We have the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We want the values that made Canada prosperous to be established elsewhere—in those countries where we are active. The Congolese army is composed of foreigners; that is a known fact. We call on you, our members of Parliament, to help us. The CNDP is not a Congolese army; it is a foreign army. That is a documented fact.

• (1250)

[English]

**The Chair:** Are there any other final comments?

Monsieur Teuwen.

[Translation]

**Mr. Albert Teuwen (Member, Agir Ensemble pour la Paix au Congo):** There is an elected government in the Congo. The road is long. Democracy is a process that takes a very long time, and it is not possible to build a democracy in the space of four years. Canada has more than 150 years of democracy. However, what Canada can do is support the Congo. We are here to ask Canada for that support.

Instability in the Eastern Congo benefits the mining companies. When certain areas are unstable, the resources are extracted and sent elsewhere. Thus they bring in no income to the Congo. The Congo's budget has been assessed at \$6 billion. However, I can tell you that,

if all its resources were accounted for, that budget would be 20 or 30 times greater. But the government is not in a position to lead the country.

And let us talk about the effectiveness of MONUC. We saw what happened in Bosnia and in Afghanistan. The United Nations mandates are often very weak. We have very often seen NATO get involved, to finally provide some direction. MONUC, ten years later, is still trying to find its way. Canadian leadership would be welcome, but at the same time that mandate must be changed: a clear mandate is needed so that the people can be protected.

And let us talk about democracy and political parties. There is a government in place, but the other political parties do not have the right to work. Let us take the case of the Canadian government. We know how it works. At the end of an election, some income is generated and, based on the voting, that income is distributed to all the political parties. In the Congo, only the party with the majority has that right. The party with the majority, that forms the government, takes that income to fund its campaign. The other political parties do not have that right.

We are asking Canada for support. There is a government in place. But the Congolese must make their own decisions. They are the ones that will help their country to move forward, but we need that support from Canada for democratic institutions, through the values that you pass on to us. We want to inculcate those same values in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thank you.

• (1255)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

With that, I'm going to thank the group for being here today. Thank you very much for your time. There's obviously no shortage of issues that all of you have to deal with, and we appreciate you giving us a chance to hear what is going on in your country today.

The meeting is adjourned.







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