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—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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•(0845)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC)): I'd like to call this meeting to order. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are doing a study on language changes at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

We have two guests with us today. I'd like to welcome Kate McInturff. She's from the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action. Also, Kim Bulger is here as an individual. She is the former executive director of MATCH International.

Welcome. Thank you both for coming. I think you have probably both been at hearings before. You'll have 10 minutes each for your presentation. Then we'll go to questions and answers.

Can we start with Kate McInturff?

Ms. Kate McInturff (Executive Director, Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action): Good morning. My name is Kate McInturff. I'm the executive director of FAFIA. I'm also the former coordinator of the gender and peace-building working group of Peacebuild. I appreciate the invitation to come to speak to you this morning.

The question before the committee, as I understand it, is one of language. However, as I think you probably know, the issue at stake here is not only the words that come out of our mouths but the actions we perform and the effect of those actions on our common well-being, on the ability of all of us to live lives free from violence, fear, humiliation, and suffering—to live lives with dignity and security.

I'm going to make three points today: first, that there has been a shift away from the use of the term “gender equality”; second, that the changes in language are symptoms of a more significant shift in the human and financial resources that are earmarked for work on gender equality; and third, that there are immediate and progressive changes that can be made to support the work of the government in advancing gender equality internationally.

First let me speak to the language changes.

Public foreign policy statements by the Government of Canada show a strong and demonstrable preference for the phrase “equality between women and men” or “the human rights of women and girls” or just “women and girls” over the phrase “gender equality”. The significance of this shift is that “gender equality” encompasses the social and cultural forces at work in fostering equality or inequality.

I understand that you heard from Mr. Kessel on Tuesday. Mr. Kessel suggested that if he were to put himself in the place of a university professor, he would not find that there was sufficient evidence to support this claim concerning language use. In particular, he suggested a review of speeches by ministers, of government positions, and of government websites.

Well, I have been in the position of being a professor at a university and indeed have taught courses on research methodology, and I have reviewed speeches by ministers, reviewed government positions, and reviewed government websites. So let me take a moment to provide some of the evidence for which Mr. Kessel called.

Of the 47 speeches delivered by Minister Cannon during his term, he makes 17 references to “women”. Minister Cannon makes one reference to “gender equality”, and he does so in the course of offering congratulations to Michelle Bachelet on her new post. He says it when he states the proper name of the UN entity to which she has been appointed; that is, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality.

Number two, none of the stated priority concerns for 2010/2011 on the Foreign Affairs website mentions either “women” or “gender equality”.

Point three, at the three United Nations Security Council debates on women, peace, and security that have occurred between 2008 and 2010, Canadian ambassador Normandin uses the phrase “women and girls” nine times, “women” 26 times, and does not use the phrase “gender equality” once.

Four, in a speech delivered by Foreign Affairs official Peter Kent at a United Nations meeting on peace and security through women's leadership, delivered September 24, 2009, Mr. Kent uses the phrase “women and men” or “equality between women and men” seven times, the phrase “women and girls” three times, the word “women” three times, and does not use the phrase “gender equality” once.

Five, in the six statements delivered on international law, “gender equality” is not mentioned once.

Six, in the 10 speeches delivered by the UN mission in New York on human rights between 2008 and 2011, the term “gender equality” is only used twice, and on both occasions it's used to refer to the proper name of a pre-existing policy document.

Seven, the new national action plan on women, peace, and security contains 62 references to “women and girls”, 10 references to “men and women”, 34 references to “women”, and one reference to “gender equality”, again as part of the proper name of a pre-existing document.

I can go on. I have more lists. I won't go through all of them here, but I'd be happy to elaborate during the question period.

I also want to make an additional point. I understand that Mr. Kessel suggested this usage is standard and part of what countries are doing everywhere, and I want to come back to the example of the national action plan. Canada's national action plan has one reference to “gender equality”, and that is as part of the proper name of another document. I spent some time counting. There are currently 20 national action plans from countries ranging from Chile to Uganda, Sweden, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Philippines, and so on.

● (0850)

If you count the usage of the term “gender equality” collectively in these 20 national action plans, you find that “gender equality” appears 139 times, and “gender” appears 1,046 times. The average per national action plan is seven uses of “gender equality”, and 52 uses of “gender” to say things like gender-focused, gender lens, gender-based violence, and so on. So Canada is well below the international average.

On the affirmative side, in the 18 speeches delivered by the UN mission in New York on economic and social affairs between 2008 and 2011, the term “gender equality” is used 12 times—an average of less than once per speech. As well, although gender equality and women's human rights are not part of the Department of Foreign Affairs priority concerns for this year, the DFAIT website does state that Canada's foreign policy priorities include the elimination of violence against women, the full and equal participation of women in decision-making, and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective. Also, as of this October, the Government of Canada does have a national action plan for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security, and this plan was developed with input from civil society.

I see all of these as very positive signs.

In conclusion, although the term “gender equality” is used on occasion, there is a demonstrable preference for the language of “women” over “gender equality” in official public and policy statements related to the Government of Canada's foreign policy.

Now, does language matter? Yes. The question of language changes is important to the extent that it reflects changes in the capacity of the Government of Canada to promote the aims of international norms and laws regarding gender equality and women's human rights. I can tell you what those norms are later if you have any questions.

To take the example of Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security—a file on which Foreign Affairs specifically has the lead—there has been positive progress in achieving the aims it sets out. The new national action plan is a very important step toward ensuring that Canada is making a meaningful contribution in achieving these goals. However, for that document to be meaningful, there must be sufficient human and financial resources, and there has

to be a means to ensure accountability for all the arms of government responsible for its implementation.

I have tremendous respect for the expertise and experience of those working at Foreign Affairs. I do not question their commitment, demonstrated in important policy and programming changes and developments over the past years that have had meaningful impacts on the lives of women and girls. I'd be happy to speak about the impacts of some of this programming on the lives of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example.

However, there have been changes within Foreign Affairs that may affect its capacity to implement the new national action plan. In 2008, there was a reorganization of what is now the human rights policy and governance division. At that time, as part of that reorganization, the position of deputy director for women, peace, and security was eliminated. The money previously earmarked specifically for projects on women, peace, and security was made part of a larger pool for which projects under six or seven different priority areas competed. The positions with the specific mandate to provide gender-based analysis were re-categorized as human rights policy positions.

Responsibility for the women, peace, and security file was shifted from the human rights policy division to the stabilization and reconstruction task force, where there is currently one “specialist in women, peace, and security”. Partly as a result of some of the funding changes, there has been a concomitant decrease in the capacity of civil society to be a strong interlocutor and a source of support and innovation on these issues. I'd be happy to speak about that as well later on.

Finally, the national action plan requires accountability from departments and agencies responsible for its implementation. In order to measure the success or failure of the implementation of the national action plan—and indeed all progress on international norms and laws related to gender equality—there must be consistent and expert gender-based analysis of the policy and programming outcomes of the responsible departments and agencies.

● (0855)

However, the 2009 report of the Auditor General of Canada on gender-based analysis concluded that there was no government-wide policy requiring departments and agencies to perform gender-based analysis. The Auditor General also found that few of the departments that do perform gender-based analysis can provide evidence that these analyses are used in designing public policy. Thus, both the achievements and the gaps of the responsible departments and agencies appear not to be consistently measured at present.

Moving forward, there are a number of steps that can be taken to ensure that Canada is a leader in achieving the aims set out in its international commitments to gender equality and that require no additional financial resources.

First, there must be positions specifically earmarked for specialists or policy advisers with expertise on gender equality within the departments and agencies responsible for this work. There are people with this expertise within our government, but we cannot depend on the goodwill of knowledgeable individuals when those individuals may be in positions that have an entirely different mandate.

Second, there must be ongoing and consistent gender-based analysis of policy and programming. There is no other way to measure progress or effectiveness.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): We're way over the 10 minutes, if you want to—

Ms. Kate McInturff: Okay. I'll wrap it up. Can I have one minute?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): We only have two witnesses today, so I think we can be indulgent.

Ms. Kate McInturff: I appreciate that very much.

So in conclusion, why is this important? Canada's role as peacekeeper and peace builder is central to its citizens' view of their country—and I can give you the sources for this later.

Canada has significant public and private investments in conflict-affected countries, most notably in Afghanistan. Support for Canadian involvement in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan rests largely on claims that Canada is working to protect the rights of women and girls. The Government of Canada consistently underlines this connection in its own representation of the mission. For example, in over two dozen speeches on Afghanistan made by Prime Minister Harper, he mentions the rights of women and girls in all but two of those speeches.

There is anecdotal evidence that international norms related to gender equality have been integrated into some of Canada's programming in Afghanistan; however, it is equally evident that this integration is not happening in a systematic way. A particularly striking example is to be found in the current benchmarks for Canada's work in Afghanistan, not one of which is gender specific.

Canada has decided to extend its presence in Afghanistan past 2011. The benchmarks for success of this mission are being defined right now. Public statements thus far indicate that the central mandate of this extended mission will be training. Recent hearings by the Senate human rights committee suggest that our troops receive little or no training that would equip them to meaningfully address the gendered aspects of, for example, security sector reform, demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration programs, and the protection of women's human rights or the integration of women into the security sector.

Training makes a crucial difference—and I'd be happy to talk about how it does—and requests for training are coming from our troops and from people engaged in peacekeeping missions. This kind of knowledge doesn't fit in a holster, it doesn't cost a billion dollars, and it doesn't go boom, but it is essential.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

We will now go to Ms. Bulger, please, for 10 minutes.

Ms. Kim Bulger (Former Executive Director, MATCH International, As an Individual): Good morning and thank you for the invitation. I appreciate the opportunity to come here this morning and speak on this important issue.

The importance of the change in the language, whether it be deemed semantics or policy change within DFAIT and the Government of Canada, is useful to visit, as both have a pronounced impact on women and children and other vulnerable populations in the global south.

I'll try to be brief and not repeat what Kate has said, knowing that there are a lot of things we can't cover in this 10-minute time period.

To illustrate the importance of words.... I feel a bit odd quoting an American male in a Status of Women committee, but Barack Obama connotes the importance of words. He said:

Don't tell me words don't matter. 'I have a dream'—just words? 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal'—just words? 'We have nothing to fear but fear itself'—just words? Just speeches?

I think this underlies the importance of words in terms of aspirations of a people. People's political or philosophical values undergird what words we use.

I think the corollary of that is also that words have the power to render people invisible, to exclude people, to retain or sustain an untenable status quo. So I think it's really important that we unpack the meaning of words and also of the policy change.

I'd like to make three points on the language changes as they pertain to why we're here this morning. The first is the issue of the word "impunity" around sexual violence in the DRC and the lack of congruence with the UN Convention known as CEDAW, the convention on the elimination of discrimination against Women—resolution 1820.

Resolution 1325 notes that Canada urges the government of the DRC to take concerted measures to do whatever is necessary "to put an end to impunity" for sexual violence. It's changed to: "Canada urges the government of the DRC to take concerted measures to prevent sexual violence". It's a major paradigm shift.

I'll read for you the specific portion of CEDAW that is a much more robust, inclusive, comprehensive notion of women's protection in terms of sexual violence. But I think what's important, too, is the lack of congruence and coherent alignment with international conventions to which Canada is a signatory.

CEDAW's section 10 “[c]alls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict”. Section 11 “[e]mphasizes the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls, and in this regard, stresses the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible from amnesty provisions”.

I think to relegate it to the prevention of sexual violence really is a major shift. It lowers the threshold of our commitments on the international front. As I say, if we want to have congruence and philosophical alignment with other protocols, conventions, and things we are signatory to, we need to ensure that our language and our policy statements are congruent with that.

Another concern is that it creates a double standard. We heard this in connection with the maternal health issues around the G-8 and G-20, where women in the global south were very concerned and said they were being treated differently and to a double standard: that their rights in the south were different from what women in the global north experience. If we have the rights and protections of the judiciary as that relates to sexual violence, why wouldn't we extend that—quote—“generosity” to them? I think there's a whole double standard.

Third, and this undergirds the whole thing, these language changes weaken our reputation on the world stage. If we are to regain our international status as a global leader in terms of gender equality, we really need to be unequivocal in our principles. We've been unequivocal in other aspects as they pertain to international activities and development, whether it be trade with China or human rights violations with China and other countries. So why wouldn't we be congruent and unequivocal about protecting women's rights and allowing them the robust spectrum of support, from prevention to judicial measures, to deal with people who have perpetrated violence against women?

• (0900)

On the whole issue of gender equality, I think Kate spoke to the issue of power relations, the social and cultural context of that terminology, and how it has evolved from talking about equality between men and women. Again, who's excluded? Who's rendered invisible? Who's not able to participate in capacity development funding decisions? Look at gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals and their experience in certain countries, where they're sentenced to death or imprisoned for their sexual identity. I think this is about making sure that we have an inclusive paradigm and inclusive terminology so that all people are included.

This is a bit of an aside, but I know that MATCH applied for funding, and we were told that women cannot lead any proposal. So it does.... Everybody's open to apply—it's like saying that everybody's open to going to the Ritz—but the criteria certainly do exclude people. And the people we're excluding are the people most in need of protection, support, and capacity development to raise awareness and to change the experience of oppression in the world.

The third thing that really struck me is the removal and the uncoupling of “child soldier” and wanting to basically render children as equivalent to mini-adults. I think this is so regressive. We've spent almost a century talking about child development and about Piaget's milestones in a child's development in abstract thinking notions and other developmental milestones. To go back and treat them like they have the autonomy and independence to make the decisions of adults I think is a major step backwards. I think there's a context when you say “child soldier”, and it is the context of being forced into war, into doing acts that wouldn't happen if they weren't within the context of war.

If it's “voluntary”—I'll put that in quotes too—it may be about survival or about avenging people who have committed atrocities upon their families. So I think there's a whole context you see with the two words “child soldier”. To delink these two words really looks at them within a vacuum and not within the context of war as a determinant of some of these other activities that happen. For young women, too, participating in conflict could be to escape domestic servitude, or violence within the home, and/or being forced to engage in these activities. I think semantics matter, if we kind of unpack what's beneath the intent.

The policy changes I think are doing Canada a disservice in terms of reputation. Also, for the vulnerable groups, whether it be women, children, or other populations impacted by these changes, I think it's really a step backward. I think this is an opportunity. I'm grateful that the committee is taking a look at some of these language changes to revisit what some of these mean, who they impact, and who's being harmed, and to move forth from that. I think Kate gave some great recommendations.

I know that we didn't come here to talk just about the issues of human protection and human security and some of those other language shifts. I'll leave it there. I thank people for the opportunity to speak.

• (0905)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you so much.

We will begin our first round of questions and answers. It will be a seven-minute period for each person.

We'll start with Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Let me thank both of you for coming here today. You must be particularly brave, because we've heard anecdotally that many organizations are fearful of coming to present on this issue for fear of reprisal. So I say a particular thank you to both of you for being here today.

I have a number of questions. I'm going to put some of them out there, and then if we have more time, I'll come back to them.

My first question is to both of you about the change of language. I realize you're not party to the decisions, but what would you speculate motivates the change of language? I'm interested in your perceptions of that.

My second question is, does the change in language reflect the systemic changes at DFAIT?

Kate, you spoke to it, particularly when you talked about the removal of the position of the deputy director for women, peace and security.

Then I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit more about the importance of the training you referred to.

Kim, I'm particularly distressed by your comment that women cannot lead any proposal. I think that's what you said. I'd like to hear more about that, please.

I'll stop there, and then come back to other questions.

• (0910)

Ms. Kim Bulger: Maybe I'll speak to the first one briefly.

Ms. Neville, we haven't had an opportunity to know what underlies or motivates the change in language, so it's unfortunate when you see who is being impacted—that is, women. You think, could this be a sexist decision? With the DRC, it's about Africa, so you think, is it about women in Africa? So I wonder if it's an attempt, as I say, to maintain the status quo.

I don't know. It's a hard one to judge, but if you look at the patterns of some of the decisions that are being made, it's hard not to draw other conclusions. If we look at the G-20 decisions about women not having opportunities around choice with some of the funding, and at some of these language changes over time, it's hard not to say that there's some kind of underlying issue around power relations and that African women aren't important. I don't know, but that's what I extract from it.

Second, regarding the issue of women not leading any proposal, we had submitted a region-wide agricultural proposal, an organic gardening thing in the Caribbean. We were specifically told that because women were at the centre of this leadership farming proposal, it would not be accepted, because women could not lead a proposal. It had to be in the three thematic areas. We had incorporated one of the thematic areas, economic development, but we had to revamp the proposal. I think it was the director who told us that women cannot lead any proposal, because it wasn't a priority. So that was the particular experience we encountered.

An hon. member: A point of order, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Madame Boucher.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): Madam Chair, on a point of order.

We invited people to talk to us about terminology. If we have other topics to discuss, that should happen later. Today, our guests are here to talk about the terminology used by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada. That is what we are studying at this time.

[*English*]

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): On a point of order, Madam Chair, I think that if Ms. Bulger is going to make that kind of allegation against the government department, she needs to

submit to the committee what the proposal was and the determination of why they didn't receive the funding.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I think I'm hearing two very different things. One is that we need to reflect on terminology. The other is that if we are going to deviate we need to actually be tabling some evidence for what we do.

In some ways, those points of order are sort of contrary to each other, so I will remind our witnesses that we're trying to reflect on languages and perhaps someone will be asking for tabling of documents.

Ms. Kim Bulger: If I could just.... I think it speaks to the issue of gender equality. It was framed under the issue of gender equality. It was making a point about the difference between gender equality and equality between men and women. I hope that point was clear.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Ms. Neville, we're getting close to being out of time. I think there were some questions directed at Ms. McInturff that we could look towards.

• (0915)

Ms. Kate McInturff: Sure.

I have no idea what motivates the language changes. I can't speak to that. All I can say is that they are out of step with international norm-building and with the kinds of language being used by countries all over the world to talk about the same set of international norms.

As for training, there's one thing I want to say about training on these issues—which involves understanding what this language means and involves the social and cultural norms that create gender roles—and that is the significant difference between saying “gender equality” and “equality between women and men”. This kind of training is not something being called for only by civil society organizations; this training is being called for by the head of international policing in the UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur. He requested that the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre provide them with training on the prevention and response to sexual violence. This was so successful that they offered a second course and then a third. I don't know if they've offered subsequent courses.

Likewise, Major General Patrick Cammaert, who was the Deputy Force Commander for the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, spoke about the need for this kind of training and the need for troops to understand, including, as a matter of the language of gender equality, what this means to their mandate, their role, and how they perform their duties. To quote Major General Cammaert, “It's not rocket science”.

His example was this. When he came upon some troops who were patrolling a displaced persons camp in Eastern Congo, they were inside their armoured personnel vehicle. There had been attacks on women and girls on the borders of those camps, and he said they needed to know that they had to get out of their vehicle and walk around the border of the camps. That's what we're talking about, and that's the point at which he said, “It's not rocket science”.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

With the unanimous consent of the committee, Ms. Mathysen has to go to the House to table our report entitled, “Building the Pipeline: Increasing the Participation of Women in Non-Traditional Occupations”.

Could we switch the order to let her go next so that she gets the time for her round? Is there any objection from the committee?

An hon. member: No.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that very much.

I also want to give my thanks to the witnesses for their presence here, because as Ms. Neville indicated, I, too, have had a very real sense from conversations with women's organizations and those who receive support and funding from the federal government that there is a sense that if you speak too loudly to power you will be punished, that funding will be withheld or you will somehow suffer because of your perspectives and point of view.

I would most certainly hope that this is a situation we're cognizant of and want to change with regard to this country. The one thing about this country that I've always believed, and that I think most Canadians believe, is that there is fairness here and the ability to state opinions without any concern about retribution.

Again, thank you for being here. I hope other groups will be able to come to provide information.

What you're saying is quite, quite different from what we heard on Tuesday. In fact, this committee was admonished, it felt like, for pursuing a subject that some regarded as frivolous. It's very clear to me that this is anything but frivolous.

I'm also interested in the discussion around child soldiers, because this week we've heard some very, very disturbing information about children being transferred to the NDS in Afghanistan.

Canada of course has a duty to protect children from torture. We've signed international agreements to that effect. I think back to the horrific events that took place in Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast and involved the coercion of children. They were compelled to do some dreadful things. Canada's response was that they are children and we must provide the support, care, and therapies needed to make sure they're whole and can become contributing members of society.

That seems to have gone by the wayside. Here, we are talking about a situation involving Afghani children, and of course there is the situation involving Omar Khadr. He was a child, yet he has been treated and is being treated as an adult.

I'm wondering about the legal and political impact of changing “child soldier” to “children in armed conflict”. Can you provide some sense of what that means and how we need to be very aware of it with regard to what's going on in Afghanistan?

● (0920)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Who would like to answer that question?

Ms. Bulger?

Ms. Kim Bulger: I'm not a lawyer, especially on international law, but from common sense.... in our own country we have an age of majority. We switch from being a child to being an adult and we become responsible and culpable for our actions. We have that cut-off point where we think we're fully matured and we have developed.

To take away the notion...or to delink “child soldier” and not look at the context these children are operating in is treating them as mini-adults, meaning they are accountable and responsible with obligations just from a legal point of view, while not recognizing their vulnerability, dependency, and lack of ability to choose otherwise. There is no choice, obviously, within their circumstances. This is not legal or political, but it's not a very compassionate, rehabilitative way to go, I wouldn't think.

As you mentioned with Sierra Leone and whatnot, there was a more compassionate understanding of the predicament these children were in. There were attempts to try to reintegrate them into society so they would have productive, useful lives, versus rendering them as criminals.

I think that's the difference. Do we treat them as children who need support and help to find their way out of those wars and to deal with all the atrocities, or do we treat them as criminals and put them in jail without looking at the circumstances they live in?

I'm sorry, that wasn't a legal or a political thing; it was more of a social kind of—

Ms. Irene Mathysen: No, but I think it's important to underscore what's happening and what's going on.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Ms. McInturff, did you want to comment on that?

Ms. Kate McInturff: Yes, just quickly. I understand that “child soldiers”...and Mr. Kessel made the point that it's a colloquial term. But what I would say about that is yes, it's colloquial, but if it's the term that's being used, it does affect public opinion, and public opinion, as we all know, in turn can affect political will to follow the international norms, which indeed refer to and use the phrase “children in armed conflict”. There's a set of United Nations Security Council resolutions on children in armed conflict.

Again what I would say is that the real issue for me is the actions that we're performing. The question is, are we adhering to the norms set out under what are binding Security Council resolutions on children in armed conflict, which do define age of majority and do have specific prescriptions around the treatment of children who have served as combatants?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Madame Demers.

● (0925)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much, ladies, for being here this morning.

I find my colleagues' interruption very disturbing. I would have preferred them to interrupt Mr. Kessel when he was here and almost told us we were inept because we dared challenge the section that said there had been changes in terminology at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. He stated that we could not go by one section, although there were several that referred to terminological changes. When I referred to the 2010 AFAI report, he interrupted again to say that there had not been any terminological changes at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, that we were completely mistaken, that there were none, that there had not been any terminological changes, and that things were just as they always were.

I understand, Ms. McInturff, that you have done an in-depth study. Earlier you provided dates and very concrete examples. Could you explain the methodology you used to arrive at these conclusions? I want us to be sure here this morning that what you have shared with us are certainties and not only ideas that you concocted out of thin air. Otherwise, others could tell us later that what you presented was groundless and that these were only things that you had heard. I want to be certain that what you have told us this morning cannot be refuted.

[English]

Ms. Kate McInturff: It would be my pleasure. What I did, for example, with the speeches delivered by Minister Cannon, since that was one of Mr. Kessel's suggestion for review.... There were 47 speeches that he has given since he has taken office as Minister of Foreign Affairs and they're all, happily, available online. I did word searches of every single speech, counted the number of references to women and to gender equality, and then looked at the context of those references.

I did the same thing in looking at the priority concerns on the website, the Foreign Affairs website. Again, it was Mr. Kessel's suggestion that we examine that.

For the UN Security Council open debates, I was able to find Ambassador Normandin's presentations. Two were on the website of the Canadian mission in New York. One was not, but I found that through the Security Council's own records.

The speech delivered by Mr. Kent was something that I happened to have been present for. To be frank, somebody handed me the transcript, so I happened to have a copy of the transcript. I can testify that the transcript is more or less identical to what he said on that occasion.

For the statements on international law, again, they were on the website of the Canadian mission to New York. Again, I did a word count, and then I looked at the context in which the words did or did not appear. I did likewise with the 10 speeches delivered on human rights.

With the national action plan, it was the same thing. I went through that, did a word count, and looked at the context in which those appeared. I then spent a very long time last night reading the national action plans of the other 19 countries that have them, and counting the incidences of use of the phrases "gender equality", "gender", and "women and men". Then I used an Excel spreadsheet to calculate the average.

• (0930)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Kessel was utterly convinced that there had been no changes, and he tried very hard to convince us. However you, Ms. McInturff, are telling us that there are some. According to you, are people attempting to convince us that there are no changes even though they know that there have been some? It is rather perverse to attempt to have us believe that there are no changes, to try to convince us of that, when there have been changes. This implies that people know that these modifications will bring about a big change in the way things are done, but they do not want the population to know.

What dismays and upsets me the most is that they want to have the population believe that no changes have been made. If they want it to believe that, it is because they know that this changes the way things are done profoundly. Otherwise, they would admit that there have been changes. If they knew that this did not affect the way things are done, they would admit that there have been changes. What do you think?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Just a 30-second response, please.

Ms. Kate McInturff: That's a good question. About whether or not there's an effort to obscure the changes, I think it's a question you should pose to Mr. Kessel. All I can say is that they exist, that they do have an impact on the lives of women and girls, and that impact is real and meaningful.

I noted, for example, that the other person who testified about the capacity of the folks giving advice—Mrs. Bejzyk—referred to the folks in human rights policy, and those are precisely the people who no longer have a specific mandate to do gender-based analysis.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

We are on to Ms. Brown, please.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to say that I do take language very, very seriously, having done a lot of editing in my lifetime. Language is very important.

Ms. Bulger, you reflected on some words of Barack Obama, and you said that words matter. I'd like to reflect just for a moment on another committee on which I sit. I sit on the transport committee, and I'd like to suggest that during his election campaign, Mr. Obama used the term "high-speed rail" frequently in his discussions. There was speculating and decisions were made during that election process. As the transport committee, we went to Washington to meet with the congressmen down there to discuss high-speed rail, their intentions, and how that might have an impact on Canada and some of the decisions that we might need to make.

What we discovered in our process down there was that high-speed rail was never the discussion. The term was “higher-speed rail”. What they were prepared to invest in was the amount of money they would need to incrementally increase their rail by 13 miles per hour—not the 300 kilometres an hour that most people were basing their discussions on. So words are absolutely critical, and I will suggest that the terminology we're looking at is very important.

If I may just backtrack again, Madam Chair, before I go on, the whole issue of allegations that the government is not considering applications because they're being put forward by women I think is something that needs to be taken very seriously. I again ask, through the chair, that any of those articles or projects be submitted to this committee so that we can take a look. I would also like to see the words that were put down as to why the project was not accepted. If it was not accepted because women can't lead a project...? First of all, I would be absolutely blown away. I would be offended by that. I think it's something that we need to take a look as a committee. Please submit that through the chair, if you would.

Mr. Kessel is a public official. He's responsible for carrying out the directives of the government. He is a person who has been in his job for many years, through multiple governments. He is not philosophically driven. He is not ideologically driven. He is responsible for carrying out the directives of the government.

Mr. Kessel said in his submissions to us the other day that there is no policy change and that Canada is using language used in international instruments. In fact, I can quote him. He said: “As you know, the language that we use is based on international instruments, and it's those international instruments which dictate the terminology that we use. We don't create our own terminology”. He also talked to us after he was asked by Ms. Simson about rebranding. He said: “There is no rebranding. There's no change.” Then he went on to say, “It hasn't changed since the terminology was used under the Liberal government, and it certainly hasn't changed within the context of this government”.

My question, first of all, is to Ms. McInturff. You say that you did research on 47 speeches, that you did a word count on 47 speeches by the current Minister of Foreign Affairs and ambassadors. Have you done the same word searches on previous ministers and done a comparison?

To both of you, are you calling Mr. Kessel a liar? Or are you suggesting that he is intentionally misleading this committee?

• (0935)

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Chair, that's out of order—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Yes. I'd like to call that last question perhaps out of order. It's inappropriate to ask them if they're suggesting that someone is a liar. Could you rephrase that, please?

Ms. Lois Brown: Yes. I would be happy to rephrase it.

Given the fact that you are suggesting the opposite, are you suggesting that this committee was misled on evidence that was presented here in the previous committee?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Ms. McInturff, would you like to respond?

Ms. Kate McInturff: Sure. I'll give the same response that I gave to Ms. Mathysen, which is that I can't speak to Mr. Kessel's intentions and I don't have his full testimony in front of me; that's not available to me right now. I do understand that he said there had not been this kind of research, so I took it upon myself to conduct that kind of research. That was how I followed from his recommendation. Essentially, I was following his recommendations, because I thought that might be useful, and—

Ms. Lois Brown: Ms. McInturff, if I may just interrupt, then, are you basing what you heard on one opinion?

Ms. Kate McInturff: I'm sorry. I don't understand the question.

Ms. Lois Brown: This committee has a history of looking at one opinion and making a decision based on one opinion. The evidence that was presented to this committee for this subject discussion was one article that was in *Embassy* magazine.

Ms. Kate McInturff: Yes.

Ms. Lois Brown: Sections were taken out of that article and presented to this committee as the evidence that changes were being made in foreign policy.

Ms. Kate McInturff: Yes, and—

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Kessel has said no change has been made.

Ms. Kate McInturff: Yes.

Ms. Lois Brown: There is no directive. There is no evidence that there's a policy change and yet you're saying, based on one opinion—

Ms. Kate McInturff: No. What I'm presenting here is based on the evaluation of—and I don't have time to do the math—47 speeches from the minister; three open debates on women, peace and security; six statements on international law; 10 speeches on human rights—

• (0940)

Ms. Lois Brown: And are any of those same—

Ms. Kate McInturff: —20 national action plans—

Ms. Lois Brown: Is any of that same terminology used in 47 speeches of previous Ministers of Foreign Affairs...?

Ms. Kate McInturff: I didn't do comparisons to previous ministers, and I'll tell you why. I think the important question is whether or not our current policy is in step with the international norm-building on these norms. That's why I did the comparison of national action plans. So I looked at 19 other countries' national action plans on women, peace, and security, compared to our own.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you so much.

We're on to our second round, which will be a five-minute round.

We will start with Ms. Simson.

Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank both the witnesses for coming. This has been a much more informative session than Tuesday's. I did lead off the questioning, and it had nothing whatsoever to do with a change in policy.

My question related to terminology—and I have the testimony here—and how a change in terminology could affect or could indicate a change in policy, upon which the witness, Mr. Kessel, launched into an attack on the analyst and was extremely rude, demeaning, and insulting in his testimony. That's precisely how I see it. There was no antagonism on the part of my question. I greeted him as I would any other.

I'd like to pick up on what my colleague Ms. Demers said, because now we're into a situation where, quite frankly, it wasn't misleading—what Mr. Kessel had to say was totally inaccurate. In a subsequent article in *Embassy* magazine, the minister himself is interviewed and admits to the fact that the terminologies have in fact changed.

Because Mr. Kessel was so abrasive and so utterly defensive, I'd like both of you, one at a time, to elaborate a little bit more on what this potentially could mean to Canada on the international stage with respect to the child soldier, and also international humanitarian law, and on the fact that “humanitarian” has been dropped from usage or is used a lot less.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Who would like to tackle that first?

Ms. Bulger.

Ms. Kim Bulger: Again, I think it just seemingly looks like Canada is not the compassionate leader in terms of our international reputation. I think, as mentioned before about the child soldier, our generosity seems to be eroding in both these instances by taking out the word “humanitarian”, as well as not linking “soldier” with “child”. I just think our international reputation as a compassionate, caring country that traditionally has been a pioneer in terms of well-being, human rights, and peacekeeping and that kind of thing is diminished.

It's unfortunate, because I think we've really enjoyed a well-respected reputation. I think to continue that, to build on our past...I don't think we can get there by becoming more ruthless, uncaring, and mean-spirited.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Ms. McInturff, just before you answer the question, I did have one request. Is there a possibility that you could supply us with the full list of the speeches and any documents with respect to dates? Because I'd be curious as to when this really started occurring and if we're seeing an acceleration...if you wouldn't mind.

Ms. Kate McInturff: I would be happy to supply them. I would need a couple of days to arrange translation.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Absolutely. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Ms. Kate McInturff: I'll just clarify, too, a point from the previous discussion: that what I did here was quantitative. It was counting. It wasn't a question of opinion; it was just math.

● (0945)

Mrs. Michelle Simson: It would still be very helpful, though.

Ms. Kate McInturff: I'd be very happy to provide those.

What does this mean for Canada on an international stage? Well, what I would say is that in my opinion—and I should say that I'm not a lawyer, but I do have some experience with norm-building—one of the really important ways in which international norms come to be accepted and put into practice is through the reiteration of those norms.

You'll see this at the beginning of most Security Council and other UN resolutions. They begin by citing and recognizing previous norms—and I'm out of time. This reiteration is very important, and reiteration in the same terms of the previous norms, so we don't really undermine—

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): We will have time to pick up on that train later if the questioner so chooses.

Madame Boucher, five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Good morning, ladies. I apologize, I've lost my voice.

This is very interesting, although very disturbing, as Ms. Demers was saying. When Mr. Kessel came here, and I don't want impugn his motives, he did say that the terminology had remained the same, both under the Liberal government and the current government. In addition, Ms. Michelle Simson asked you to provide certain speeches, in both official languages if possible, so that we can see what the terminology was at the outset and whether changes were made.

That is what you asked for, correct?

I am going to ask you for the same thing, but from 2003 to 2010. I want to make sure...

[*English*]

Hon. Anita Neville: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I don't think the committee can assign research tasks to witnesses. If we want additional research done, then I think it's up to us to ask our Library of Parliament researchers to do it.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I will rule in favour of that point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I'm going to ask the researchers to... That would help us to understand what you have been saying to us from the beginning. Perhaps it would also help us to better understand certain other things. We need to obtain the speeches of all the ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Trade from 2003 to today, to at least verify the terms that they used.

Since this seems both very interesting and very disturbing to me, I'm going to ask you a question. I suppose that you have heard and read a lot of speeches in the course of your research. When a minister delivers a speech and repeats the same terms often, does that necessarily mean... How can I explain what I'm thinking? If there is a change in the terminology used by their department...

Even we MPs, when we address the House, sometimes use the terms that we are most familiar with. According to you, if we don't always use the same terms, does that necessarily mean that there has been a change in policy in a department?

[English]

Ms. Kate McInturff: I think the first thing I would say is that I'm not really the best person to answer that question. That's really a question for people who have experience working with the cabinet and within those departments. The public servants would be better positioned; they have experience with that connection between the minister's speeches and their own work. I'll leave it at that. I don't think I'm qualified to answer that question.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Very well, thank you.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): We will go on to Monsieur Malo.

• (0950)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. McInturff, earlier, in the reply you gave to my colleague Ms. Nicole Demers, you said that to your knowledge, this change in terminology has or will have important consequences for women and girls.

I would like you to provide further detail on that aspect of the reply you gave to Ms. Demers.

I also have another question to ask you. Afterwards, I will give you the rest of the time to reply to it. I'd like to know what sparked this realization for you. At what point did you realize that there had been change in terminology and that that change had brought about important changes, as you were saying, for women and girls?

[English]

Ms. Kate McInturff: Let me speak to the first question on the language changes and what the impact might be on the lives of women and girls.

I'll give you an example of a woman who I've had the pleasure of working with. Her name is Justine Bihamba. She is a woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo, from the eastern part of Congo, where there has been ongoing conflict for over a decade. One of the tactics of that conflict is the use of sexual violence.

I don't think I can put into words the kinds of horrific acts of sexual violence that have been perpetrated against the people of that region. Her work is to assist the victims of sexual violence, those who live through the attacks, and to attempt to prevent, as much as she is able to, incidents of sexual violence.

There is a link between prosecuting crimes of sexual violence and decreasing sexual violence. If we prosecute it, then we send a message that it's not legitimate, and there is a fear of reprisal. There is a documentary made about her work. In it, you see her go into a police station, where a police officer has just let someone go who was accused of rape. She says to him, "I know that you know you

can't do that, because I know you went to that training course on the prosecution of sexual violence and the end of impunity for sexual violence".

She can say that and she has that leverage with him because he went to the training course. He understood his duty, and she understood his duty in those terms, with that language. That gives her the leverage to attempt to make a difference in the lives of the women and girls who are experiencing immense suffering. That's a small anecdote to clarify how language changes can lead to real impacts on the well-being of those living in conflict.

The spark of the change, I can't speak to. As I said, I was an academic and I haven't been doing this work for the many decades that some others have, so I don't feel that I can give you a good answer. I can only tell you what is the case now, and that's what I've tried to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo: When did you realize that? What event specifically led you to wonder about this, and to observe this change?

[English]

Ms. Kate McInturff: I can answer from my own experience.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo: Yes, that is what I'm after.

[English]

Ms. Kate McInturff: This isn't a comprehensive analysis. In my own experience, I noticed the changes that occurred during the reorganization in 2008 at Foreign Affairs. I should say that I became aware of them because I was part of an organization that was applying for funding.

This organization had applied for funding before, and we became aware that the money that previously had been earmarked for women, peace, and security was no longer earmarked in this way. We were competing with people working on several different areas. In fact, we were encouraged to work with someone who worked with children and armed conflict, and to submit a joint project, which we did.

That's when it became clear to me. We noticed that the people we had worked with before were not there anymore and that their positions were not being filled by other people. The positions were going away.

• (0955)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

The NDP's spot will be reserved until Ms. Mathysen gets back.

No one from the Conservatives would like to speak?

We'll go to our third round with Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Hello to everyone. It's the first time I've been here in quite some time. It's as lively as usual.

Welcome to our guests.

To start, for the record I would like to say that tomorrow being December 3—I'm from Newfoundland and Labrador—we're swearing in our first-ever female premier. I don't know if this makes history or not, though I suspect it does, but there are three political parties in Newfoundland, and all three—NDP, Liberal, and Progressive Conservative—are led by women.

[Applause]

Mr. Scott Simms: I talk to people about it, and a lot of people, instead of saying “way to go” or “congratulations”, say, “About time”.

I don't know if my question is germane to the material in front of me, but it's something that has always occurred to me about language. It's not so much about language in describing a policy, but language about condemnation.

Just two days ago, I read an article about a woman who was executed in Iran. What I noticed was that the language to condemn this was just not strong enough to me. I found that some of the countries, including our own.... Is our country as strong as others in condemning these actions? It seems to me that the charges that were brought upon this person—which she was convicted of and died of—were the result of situations of relationships she had with men, being subservient to men, and so on and so forth, for whatever reason—religion or anything else.

It just struck me that it just wasn't harsh enough in our condemnations, and to me, that's a question of language, not just the action that followed. Could you comment on that? Is that something you've looked at within a study or informally?

Ms. Kim Bulger: I think it does matter. If we look at the circumstances in which the government shows its outrage, I think we're all kind of...we know it. I think what's happening—and I may be skirting your issues—is just the parallels between how we have traditionally coined women as madonnas or the polar opposite, and now with children as criminals or victims.... Doing that really doesn't show the complexity of people and of women's and children's lives. It doesn't show the whole spectrum.

I agree with you. I think the language we use when we condemn really connotes when we're really offended by something and when we're mildly kind of annoyed. That's what particularly bothers me about the prevention part of the sexual violence thing. Prevention is a bit in the health spectrum; it doesn't have the judicial kind of model or undergirding necessary for recourse dealing with sexual violence. To me, prevention sounds like such a mild-mannered way to deal with sexual violence and the brutality that women experience.

Mr. Scott Simms: That's it exactly, because I'm reading this, and I'm thinking this woman was executed because of a social norm, not even for a crime that she perpetrated or for taking someone else's life. And yet I'm reading this on page 6. Is that our fault to a certain degree, as far as awareness is concerned?

Ms. Kim Bulger: I think it's again a question of who matters. I think it was out west—and maybe some of the MPs know this better—but how many aboriginals committed suicide before it became even a news story? If that would have happened to white middle-class men, it would have been front page news. I think it does go back to who matters in this world, in our lives, and in our

communities, and who doesn't, and who gets headlines and who doesn't. I agree with you: for that to be on page 6...it's an outrage, really.

● (1000)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): You have 20 seconds.

Ms. Kate McInturff: I can't speak to Canada's responsibility on this, and I haven't studied the issue of condemnation, but I can say that one of the primary ways in which international norms come into force is through naming and shaming.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Is there no one from the Conservatives for the next round?

Ms. Lois Brown: Let me just respond to that, Madam Chair. I don't really have a question, but to follow up on condemnation, certainly our government has made every attempt in the situation in Iran to condemn Iran for the actions they have taken, particularly as they relate to Ms. Ashtiani, who was condemned.

Certainly there have been people of high profile who have taken issue with this. Megan—I am sorry, but her name escapes me at the moment—the woman from Indigo Books, along with the wife of the Prime Minister, took a very strong stand on that, so I believe that—

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Ms. Lois Brown: No, no. I am just saying that as Canadians I think there is a responsibility to condemn these actions, and certainly words are used to condemn those actions, and I believe we have, whether it gets a front page profile or not is not within the purview of the government. It is media that make that decision.

It would be really nice if we could see some of those things brought to the forefront, but without our own media.... We have freedom of the press here, and we value freedom of the press as Canadians. So seeing that on page 6...it should sadden all of us that it isn't getting more profile.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): We will now go to Madame Demers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

You had a point of order, Mr. Simms?

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I'm sorry. Did you have a point of order?

Mr. Scott Simms: No. I wanted to make a point of clarification, if it's okay to respond to that. Can I?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): This is not a debate between members.

Mr. Scott Simms: I understand. Was that an official...?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): That was her five-minute time slot, for which we allow some latitude concerning how people use their five-minute time slot as long as it's focused on the topic.

Mr. Scott Simms: I understand. I apologize.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Madame Demers, we'll start you over.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Earlier, my colleague Mr. Malo put a question to Ms. McInturff in order to find out when she first saw the light, at what point she realized that these changes were happening. I would like Ms. Bulger to pursue that, because it seems important to know when in the international community, in NGOs or other organizations, people realized that changes had been made. I also think that in the field, with MATCH International on site, there were even more people who realized the effects of the changes, and when these were made.

Could you continue on that topic, please, Ms. Bulgar?

[English]

Ms. Kim Bulger: Thank you.

Let me just take a moment to talk about getting materials to the committee. MATCH is no longer in existence so I'm not sure how we could do that, except maybe through somebody submitting an ATIP request. Because there is no office, there are no materials; the office is shut down.

In 2009 I hadn't been at MATCH long. I started in the spring of 2009. Shortly after I arrived, our project officers noted that CIDA had stated that within all written documentation it had to be "equality between women and men"; the words "gender equality" weren't to appear in any proposal. That was in 2009, around the late spring or early summer.

As well, in this other concept paper that we put forth, it wasn't that women couldn't submit proposals, but that within the proposal women couldn't be the drivers, just to make that distinction. I don't know whether that makes a distinction for you.

•(1005)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: How long before this did MATCH International have activities on the ground, and for how long before did that organization make subsidy applications that contained the terms gender equity and gender equality?

[English]

Ms. Kim Bulger: Well, MATCH had been in existence for 34 years, so the term "gender equality" has been in existence for a number of years—and maybe somebody else on the committee can speak to that—because it was more comprehensive and inclusive term that noted the power differences and the cultural and social distinctions of gender equality, versus the former term.

I'm sorry. I can't give you an exact timeframe. Maybe Kate...?

I don't know if you know or anybody else knows when the terminology changed, but the term "gender equality" was seen to be more progressive.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Even if international legislation was amended, the term continued to be used over the years, I presume?

[English]

Ms. Kim Bulger: Yes, and it's consistent with the international norms used throughout the development community.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: MATCH International always obtained funding for its projects?

[English]

Ms. Kim Bulger: Yes, and just to make a point: this concept paper where it was noted that women couldn't be the drivers was outside our core funding from the partnership branch. So it was different funding.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: And that is when you realized this?

[English]

Ms. Kim Bulger: The usage of the term "equality between women and men" was happening at about the same time. It was almost concurrent. So anything we were submitting had to use the term "equality between women and men". This other process was happening almost simultaneously. It was a concurrent process where we became aware that there were shifts in language.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Several other organizations in the field were experiencing the same thing as your organization?

[English]

Ms. Kim Bulger: Yes. It seemed the discussions around other agencies funded by CIDA had the same request for those agencies not to use the term "gender equality" in their proposals.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: It was CIDA specifically who asked you to stop using those terms?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): If you could, give a quick answer.

Ms. Kim Bulger: Yes, it would be the public servants, the bureaucrats within CIDA.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

We'll go to Ms. Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown: Madam Chair, I would just ask that our witnesses submit to the committee the articles they are basing their assumptions on so we can see as a committee the definitions and where they have accessed all of this. I would like to reflect on that myself

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): So it would be anything available that Ms. Bulger and Ms. McInturff have that are not part of research....

If you could just table them with the committee, that would be great. Thank you.

Is there anything further?

Ms. Lois Brown: No.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Okay.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is a rather circuitous discussion we're having. I think I asked this question earlier, but I would still like your comments on how the changes in language reflect more systemic changes in the department. I think you both touched on it.

But I would also like to comment on something else and table an article. I wasn't here last week, but I gather the committee was criticized for quoting *Embassy* magazine. I will table this article, wherein the Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated that language was designed to move the country's foreign policy in a direction decided by the government. He said that government actions were what mattered. He went on to say: We've been elected to govern the country and the government of Canada puts forward, sets forward its objectives, its policy objectives as it does in any other department. And it is up to the departments to execute the policies.... And that is exactly what we are doing.

He also said that "if anybody is not happy with these policies that we're carrying out, well all they have to do is go and run in the next election and get themselves elected and support a policy that is different from ours".

My question is, in your mind, how does language reflect the changes in policy and capacity within the department?

• (1010)

Ms. Kate McInturff: Let me give you a specific example. If you have positions within the Department of Foreign Affairs called gender advisers or specialists in gender-based analysis, gender equality focal points, or gender focal points, that means when you put someone in that position there's an expectation that they'll have expertise in that area.

If there's a position referred to in terms of human rights—which I believe is what has happened in the human rights policy division, although you would have to ask them because these processes aren't totally transparent to me—as a human rights adviser or someone who does human rights analysis, you may have someone in that position who is extremely expert on the protection of civilians, for example, but may have no expertise in international norms and laws related to gender equality.

I understand that Ms. Bezyk said specifically on Tuesday that those people would be giving advice to our foreign service officers about international norms and laws related to gender equality and women's human rights. So a change in language around the position can lead to a change in the expertise of the person in that position, which affects the kind of advice our foreign service officers might be getting.

That means our foreign service officers, who are extremely bright, well-educated, and well-trained people, may have a gap in their knowledge. At best, that gap could result in the kind of miscommunication Ms. Brown spoke about around "high speed" versus "higher speed". Then, in interactions with other members of the international community, there could be miscommunication because the language being used is different. But at worst it could mean that they just don't have the tools at their disposal, because of the lack of expert advice on these issues, to engage substantially in building these norms.

On these norms around the protection of women, the response to gender-based violence, and women's equality and gender equality, it is rare that we have economic sanctions or send in peacekeepers—on

occasion, but very rare. Mostly these norms are built through international cooperation, international consensus, international dialogue, naming and shaming, discussion, and incorporation and reiteration of the language in these norms. That process can be undermined if people aren't using the same language.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

We have finished the third round. I wouldn't mind asking a quick question, if that's okay.

Absolutely, we agree that words are important. Right now in my own media there is this furious debate going on in terms of the decision of one school board in the province of B.C. to rename the winter holiday the Christmas holiday. As I say, the debate is sort of big and furious, with all the connotations around whether it's right or wrong....

I think when you live, sleep, and breathe a certain sort of international standard and language, you have this expectation around what the language is and what the proper language is. For example, if I were in my constituency and talked about gender equity, a lot of people would be much more comfortable and familiar with and would understand the concept of equality between women and men. It would be easy for them to understand, whereas if I started to talk about gender equity, some of them would think I wasn't talking in a way that made sense.

So it depends on where you're delivering a speech. My constituents would understand the concept of equality between women and men if I were delivering a speech in my riding. Do you believe I should use the term "gender equity" all the time to start to shift the norm and the concept within that riding? Or should I use language that the people would be more likely to understand? I guess that's my question.

• (1015)

Ms. Kate McInturff: I wish I could say that there were documents that came out of the United Nations Security Council, for example, that were readily comprehensible to a broad public, but there aren't. None of these documents, whether they deal with gender equality or anything else, are written in language that I think would be readily understandable to the average person. They are international instruments. They're, in some cases, legal documents.

Communicating in terms a broad public understands is very important, and a great deal of my own work has been to do popular language versions of these norms and explain in words that people understand what they mean and how they impact their everyday lives. There is a difference between the kind of language we use when we're speaking in a public forum to a general audience or to the media and the language used in official policy documents, such as the national action plan or a presentation by the ambassador to the Security Council. Those are different audiences, and they have different implications.

Looking at what Ambassador Normandin says at a reception at the UN mission to an audience of women's organizations—and I've seen him give those speeches—there the imperative is to communicate with the people you're talking to in terms they can understand. Looking at speeches he gives to the UN Security Council, part of the imperative there, as a representative of our government, is to position our government on that norm. Part of that has to do with whether or not you reiterate the language of that norm.

There are different contexts with different implications.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): To take that through, if the norm is “children in armed conflict,” which I understand it is, then it is appropriate in those settings to be talking about “children in armed conflict”, because of what you just stated, as opposed to “child soldier”. Is that fair enough?

I've done the same as everyone else—I've left with you 15 seconds. Sorry.

Ms. Kate McInturff: Again, to use the example of our ambassador in New York, if he were speaking to the Security Council, I'm guessing very strongly that he would use the term “children in armed conflict”, because he would be at a debate on children in armed conflict.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen, we're through our third round, but I would expect that you want some time to wrap up.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I appreciate that very much, Madam Chair.

I will say that the report is tabled, and I'm very pleased to have had that opportunity.

Forgive me for having had to leave. I have been told that you had some recommendations you were in the process of making. I believe they had to do with gender-based analysis and so on. Of course, we're very much interested in the accountability piece, because I think it's already been stated in many ways that when ministers of the crown stand up and speak, the words and language they use sets out government policy, not just for Canadians but for the world.

I'm wondering about those recommendations you might have.

Ms. Kate McInturff: Thank you.

Again, I have a long list of recommendations, but the recommendations I could make that would require no additional financial resources would be, first of all, that there be positions specifically earmarked as specialists or policy advisers on gender equality. As I said in response to one of the previous questions, if the position is defined as being about human rights policy, you may have someone who is very expert in other areas of human rights policy. We should have those people, but we also need to have people who can speak to gender equality norms.

Second is that we implement the recommendation provided by the Auditor General in her report on gender-based analysis, which is that we conduct gender-based analysis of policy and programming.

Third, which is again a recommendation from the Auditor General's report in 2009, is that gender-based analysis be part of the evaluation of the programs tasked with implementing those international commitments to gender equality so that the success or

failure of a program is defined, in part, in terms of the outcome of that analysis.

Again, this speaks to the accountability piece. Not only do we have the analysis, but when programs are deemed to have been successful—or not—part of the term, for programs where it's appropriate, where we're dealing with international norms related to gender equality.... Their success and failure is measured in part on the success or failure of the implementation of these norms related to gender equality in things like the government's own national action plan on women, peace, and security.

• (1020)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

I appreciate that. It is up to countries like Canada to set the example, to set the stage. If we want to see improvements for women in Afghanistan and the situation in which they find themselves and their children, we have to be prepared to step up to the plate. I'll leave it at that. I don't want to repeat questions that have already been asked.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I have only one more speaker, and that's Madame Demers. Then we'll go in camera for some committee business.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: I have one last question for Ms. McInturff or Ms. Bulger.

If in the Republic of the Congo a young woman goes into a police station to tell a policeman that she knows that he released a person who was accused of rape and that he had no right to do so, what difference does it make if Canada changes its terminology and talks about prevention rather than about responsibility and impunity? What difference does it make for that woman in the Congo if Canada has changed its terminology? She can still go to the police station and remind the policeman that he took part in the training session and that he knows that that man is guilty. Explain to me why the young woman could not act in the same way as she could before.

[*English*]

Ms. Kate McInturff: I know that Ms. Bulger mentioned the changes around the term “impunity”—is that right?—in relation to sexual violence in DRC. With that example, as part of the international community that is engaged in security reform, if the training.... Let's imagine that Canada was offering this training or was part of a group of countries offering this training to police and other members of the security sector in Congo. If that training didn't use the term “impunity”, then in fact there would likely be no discussion of impunity. I mean, if you're not using the term, I don't know what else you would say.

That would mean that when Justine walked into the police station, in the example I gave you, there might have been a different result. She's not tall and she's shouting at a big guy with a gun in a setting where there are armed forces. There's regular violence occurring. She's saying to him that he knows he can't do this, that there cannot be impunity for sexual violence, and that it means he must prosecute people for this crime. If that term and the norm and values embodied in the behaviour embodied in that term aren't there, then it would be perfectly reasonable for him to say that it depends, that there are conditions, that sometimes it's okay. It would be the opposite of impunity to say, "In some cases, we let people go, because you have to understand the context". That's the difference I can see it making.

• (1025)

Ms. Kim Bulger: I'm not sure of the exact process, but I think countries come up on a rotating basis. Every four years or so, people feed into the human rights issues that they're concerned about, and it's taken to the UN. I think there are different levels to intervene on: the individual, the community, the policy, the politics, and international relations. In respect of the brutalities and situations of violence, Canada has an opportunity to feed into the country's record, and that is vetted in the appropriate place at the UN.

I think it does matter. It's a matter of collecting the information and ensuring that it's fed into the proper places, and that the people responsible are named and shamed. That can happen at multiple levels.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I would like to thank both witnesses.

Ms. Mathysen, do you have a last question?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: No, I would only like to say that this provides some balance, and we desperately needed balance in this discussion.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I'd like to thank both witnesses.

We'll suspend for two minutes and go in camera for committee business.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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