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Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are doing a study on language changes at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Today we have two groups of witnesses. We have an individual witness, Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff, associate professor, department of law, Université du Québec à Montréal. Then we have officials from the Canadian International Development Agency: Michel Bélec, acting executive director and head of legal services; and Caroline Leclerc, director general, strategic planning and performance reporting directorate.

As you know, you are allowed 10 minutes for an opening statement. I will give you a two-minute notice, if you look up, so that you will know how much time you have left. It's my understanding that CIDA will not be making any opening remarks, so Madame Breton-Le Goff will begin. After you've finished, we will just move into the question-and-answer section.

Madame Breton-Le Goff, go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff (Associated Professor, Department of Law, Université du Québec à Montréal, As an Individual): Good morning, members of the committee.

As you know, several newspapers, but mainly the weekly *Embassy*, have, over the past summer, documented the changes in terminology used in Canada's foreign policy.

Included among the more notable changes are the following: the disappearance of the expression "human security" and its corollary the "responsibility to protect", or "RtoP"; the replacing of the expression "international humanitarian law" with "international law"; the replacing of the expression "child soldier" with "children in armed conflicts"; the replacing of "gender equality" with "sexual equality", "equality between the sexes" or "equality between men and women"; the disappearance of references to gender-specificity or of the term "gender-specific" itself, in other words, to gender, and, lastly, the disappearance of justice and the fight against impunity as regards victims of sexual violence, and this is specifically reflected in the national plan of action which was unveiled just last October.

If I may, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to give my presentation in two parts. First, I will tell you about the results contained in a small study on the implications of these terminolo-

gical changes, and second, I will address the potential consequences of these changes.

Concerning what these terminological changes really mean, I have to say that this was rather difficult to document. However, I have been able to establish a couple of trends. To do so, I decided to concentrate on official statements made by Canadian diplomats at the Security Council when it was debating the situation of women, on the one hand, and, on the other, the statements made at the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Further, I limited my study to two themes in particular: first, sexual violence and the fight against impunity, and then gender and gender-specificity. I also chose to work with statements which had been made over the past three years.

Here are the results. During the Security Council debate on women, peace and security in 2008 and 2009 at the Security Council, the Canadian representative to the United Nations insisted on the necessity of ending impunity linked to war crimes, in particular regarding crimes involving sexual violence. He referred to the provisions of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which dates back to 2000. He also invited other countries to work with the International Criminal Court to prosecute serious crimes, including those involving sexual violence.

In August 2009, the Canadian representative drew attention to the fact that "amnesty clauses within peace accords, which can be interpreted as exempting perpetrators of sexual violence from being held accountable, directly contravene Resolution 1820 (2008)". This was a very strong message, given the way diplomatic language is used at the United Nations. The emphasis on the fight against impunity was then renewed in October 2009.

However, when you look at other statements which were made on the same subject, this time in October 2010, you realize that Canada's message has changed. There is no more talk of justice and the fight against impunity. Canada is now emphasizing the participation of women in the peace consolidation process. There is but a passing mention of the primacy of law. This change is all the more worrying because on October 13 last at the Security Council, the discussion dealt with the development of indicators to measure the implementation of resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889. But among the indicators related to protection, the Secretary General of the United Nations clearly focused on indicators linked to the prosecution of crimes involving sexual violence.

I have to say that Canada's statement at the Security Council clearly reflects the Canadian plan of action on the implementation of the Security Council's resolutions, which, as you know, was unveiled in October 2010.

•(0850)

If you take a quick look at the plan, you will see that Canada's response to the implementation of the resolution, including the fight against sexual violence, is chiefly based on three things. The imposition of codes of conduct, the training of military and other personnel on women's issues, and peace and security, and evidence contained in diplomatic cables regarding serious violent crimes committed against women by Canadian officials.

Further in the plan, there is only a single reference to the legal and security system, and this reference is worded in an extremely vague and abstract manner.

Then, on October 26, 2010, at the UN Security Council, the Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation), took everyone by surprise when she called on countries to investigate and prosecute crimes involving sexual violence. At the same time, she also supported the creation of a list of experts in investigations and prosecutions.

If you look at what was happening at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, you will see that, on March 5, 2009, Canada declared that the elimination of violence against women was one of the three pillars of Canadian policy, but Canada never provided details about what this meant. Further, nowhere in its statement was there a mention of gender equality or the necessity to take gender specificity into account.

This marked a change compared to the statements Canada had made in 2008. It was also very different from what was said in front of the same body, or at the same session, in 2009, by Switzerland and Sweden, who both insisted on the importance of applying gender-based analysis in policies aimed at fighting discrimination against women.

However, I must recognize that, when Australia spoke on behalf of the group comprised of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the expression "gender equality" was regularly used, and forcefully so, and it was also said that impunity for crimes committed against women in conflicts "could not be tolerated".

So to conclude this inventory, I will present you with a fact which may seem anecdotal, but which basically speaks for itself. The Canadian plan to implement the Security Council's resolutions refers to "equality between men and women", as opposed to what the Hon. Bev Oda said in her speech, when she cautiously referred to the equality between women and men. As I said, this is just an anecdote, but as far as the Canadian plan is concerned, there is no mention of gender, nor of gender specificity. On the contrary, the language refers to taking the needs of women and girls into account. What this means exactly as far as policy is concerned remains to be seen.

What impact will this have? First, in the area of foreign policy, it is clear that our partners feel we are changing our policy. Perhaps—I cannot say for sure, we will have to ask political scientists—we are losing credibility. What I believe is happening is that we may be relinquishing our position as international leaders on this subject.

As for the advancement of women's rights per se, it is not enough to focus on prevention when it comes to preventing sexual violence or helping the fight against sexual violence. You just have to read,

for example, the Human Rights Watch report entitled "Soldiers who rape, commanders who condone", to realize that there is no real fight against impunity, that training is not enough to eliminate violence, especially in countries or conflicts where violence has become endemic and has basically become a routine matter—in other words, it has become part of the fabric of society.

As a matter of fact, the Belgian plan provides examples of concrete policy options or good practices which can be developed.

•(0855)

The other problem—and I will end with this—is that, when you talk about sexual equality and not gender equality, not only are you ignoring an entire segment of the population, including homosexuals, lesbians and transgendered people, but you are also discounting the analysis of those things which underpin discrimination against women, that is, the power dynamic which underlies the social and family roles of men and women.

Equality is not a matter of accounting; rather, it involves a change in mentality and a change in society. So if we choose to talk about sexual equality instead of gender equality, it is because we have chosen to ignore, or to not question, the social, family, cultural and even professional reasons for discrimination.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Breton-Le Goff.

We now move to the question period. This period has seven minutes, which includes the question and the answer. I will ask you to please remember that.

I will begin with the Liberals.

Ms. Simson.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing here today. This is a very important study for the committee as it relates to women.

For my first question, I'm going to go back to last Tuesday. Alan Kessel, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, appeared before our committee and stated, "No, there are no changes in terms", at DFAIT. On Thursday we had witnesses who gave the committee countless examples of speeches, statements, and documents that have been produced by DFAIT over the past few years that specifically omitted the terms "gender equality", "child soldier", and "international humanitarian law".

Michelle Collins, formerly of *Embassy* magazine, was kind enough to provide me with a copy of an e-mail to share with the committee, which was sent by Jamieson Weetman, a senior official at DFAIT, to nearly two dozen other DFAIT officials in May 2009. Individuals who received this e-mail included assistant deputy ministers, directors general, directors, and many other senior officials at DFAIT, including the witness who denied there were any changes, Mr. Kessel.

The e-mail states, “Some of you will have already noted over the past few months the tendency” of the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs “to change or remove language from letters, speeches, interventions at multilateral meetings, etc.”. I would like to start by tabling this e-mail for the committee and then ask our witnesses if they think an e-mail of this nature demonstrates that senior officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs were aware of the language changes that were taking place.

• (0900)

The Chair: Could you give that to us, Ms. Simson? Thank you.

Do you have a question, once you've tabled it?

Mrs. Michelle Simson: I do. I asked the question.

Do you have a response?

Do you think an e-mail of this nature, where they express concern, would indicate that the Department of Foreign Affairs was aware that this was a deliberate action?

The Chair: Madame Leclerc had her hand up first.

Ms. Caroline Leclerc (Director General, Strategic Planning and Performance Reporting Directorate, Canadian International Development Agency): Thank you, Madam Chair.

We wouldn't be able to comment on these matters pertaining to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Breton-Le Goff.

[*Translation*]

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff: Listen, I don't work for that department.

[*English*]

I'm not working at DFAIT, so I have no idea. I guess people should have received it. Did they read it? I hope so, I'm sure. I don't know. I cannot comment on that.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Actually, what they did do was convene a meeting, because several bureaucrats within the department were concerned. They'd been observing this over the past couple of years and they didn't see any tendency for it to stop. In fact, it accelerated.

I know that it may be a little bit of speculation, but if it were being done that way, wouldn't that indicate that the department itself was aware it was going on?

[*Translation*]

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff: I cannot answer that.

[*English*]

The Chair: I think it's pretty difficult for either group to answer that question, Ms. Simson.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Okay.

This e-mail gives many examples of changes from the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In “a standard docket response” regarding gender issues in the Democratic Republic of Congo, changes include, and I quote: “removing the term 'impunity' in every instance”. The author notes that some changes suggested by the

office of the minister “are more than simply stylistic changes”. The author notes, for example, the sentence cited above changes the focus from how there is justice for victims and there are victims of sexual violence to “prevention”. What they had said was that “Canada urges the Government of the DRC to take concerted measures to prevent sexual violence”, as opposed to “impunity for sexual violence”.

How do you think those changes affect Canada's foreign policy, if they do at all?

The Chair: Madame Breton-Le Goff, I think the question was for you.

[*Translation*]

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff: What becomes very clear when you read the national plan which came out in October, is that, in fact, everything which has to do with justice for the victims—including access to legal institutions, to the strengthening of judicial capacity, as well as the presence of women in the legal system—everything which deals with supporting the legal system, and the mechanisms involved in the legal system, for example—none of this appears at all in the national plan.

Further, if you look at the proposals contained in the Belgian plan, you see that there is a big difference. The Belgian national plan sets out extremely concrete actions. It states that Belgium:

- Will support initiatives involving women with regard to access to the legal system, which will encourage women to file complaints, which will offer them protection and shelter;
- Will support the strengthening of the legal system in every country where Belgium is participating in an international mission;
- Will support initiatives which strengthen the position of women (succession rights, ownership, training, forced marriages, etc.) [regarding ownership];
- Will support the International Criminal Court.

These actions could not be more concrete, and this is what the Belgian government is proposing. In fact, it has already begun to implement these measures on the ground.

As far as Canada is concerned, you might know—and Ms. Leclerc from CIDA could certainly speak to this—that there is a project to address the issue of sexual violence, which has already received \$15 million in funding.

However, unless I'm mistaken, this fund or program will end this year. Will it be renewed or not, and under what conditions?

The other problem with Canada's plan is that, when you look at the details of the actions which the Canadian government lays out, they mostly seem to focus on training. An inventory will be taken of the training given to people on the ground, and then it will be assessed.

We have between 8 and 11 military personnel in the Democratic Republic of Congo with the MONUSCO mission. How in the world is this training going to change anything? Really, is this what is going to improve the situation and prevent sexual violence from being committed on the ground?

• (0905)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now move on to Madame Demers, for the Bloc Québécois.
[Translation]

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

Thank you very much for being here, Ms. Breton-Le Goff, Ms. Leclerc and Mr. Bélec.

You have opened the door for me, Ms. Breton-Le Goff, so I will ask you a question immediately before I forget.

Ms. Leclerc, will the \$15 million fund for the prevention of sexual violence be renewed? If so, under what conditions?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for asking the question. Unfortunately, I cannot give you an answer, but I will gladly consult with the department and send you the information regarding that specific fund.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you.

Ms. Breton-Le Goff, your statement was very interesting. If I was an average citizen sitting in my living room, reading the papers and watching the news, and if I learned that there were changes in wording and terminology, I would not understand and I would not notice a change in policy. I could not imagine that the government was making any major policy changes. If I was an average citizen, if I was not an active feminist, if I did not read the paper and if I was not on top of current events, I would not see any kind of change whatsoever. Calling a “child soldier” a “child in an armed conflict” from now on is indeed a change, but a small one. Talking about the equality between men and women, rather than gender-based equality, is a very subtle change for the average citizen.

However, it goes much deeper than that. But when Mr. Kessel appeared before the committee, he made it clear that this did not represent a change in the government's policy.

Why do you think the government wants us to understand that there is no change in its policy, when, in your opinion, these are major changes?

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff: I scanned Mr. Kessel's testimony. He said, among other things, that this was not a real change, because Canada was just adopting the official terms which appear in international conventions. It is true that, in international conventions, there is no reference to “child soldiers”; rather, the expression used is “children in armed conflicts”. However, these conventions deal exclusively with the recruitment and participation of children in conflicts. Therefore, whether you call them “child soldiers” or “children in armed conflicts”, it amounts to the same thing.

Where the new terminology is important, in my view, is that when you talk about “children in armed conflicts”, you are referring to both the children who are participating in armed conflicts, that is, the children who are carrying weapons, and the other children who are the victims of conflicts, and who are thankfully in the majority. Therefore, the emphasis is less on the phenomenon of child soldiers and their eventual criminalization, or the fact that child soldiers cannot be prosecuted under international law anymore, and more on the fact that these children are victims of war.

When this happens, there is a shift towards the international rights of children, what is in the best interest of the child, the obligation to

protect children, and so on. I am not saying that this is not the case already, that we do not say these things about child soldiers, but it amounts to eliminating any and all reference to the criminalization of children and the fact that they cannot be prosecuted.

• (0910)

Ms. Nicole Demers: Does the same principle apply with regard to rape and impunity? For example, a witness told us that in the Democratic Republic of Congo, when Congolese police officers were receiving training on how to deal with Congolese women who had been raped, they were taught about the concept of impunity. If we remove the word “impunity” from their vocabulary, it won't be mentioned anymore in their training. If it is not mentioned anymore, it won't be part of their training. So when a Congolese police officer arrests someone who has committed rape, if you don't talk about impunity, then you don't have to deal with it.

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff: I trained Congolese police officers in Beni and Butembo. I talked about impunity. I trained police officers on the application of the 2006 law on sexual violence. I helped create it as an international consultant.

Bear in mind that in the field, women's non-governmental organizations that are leading the combat against impunity have been talking about combating impunity for 10 years already. If, in international programs, namely in bilateral aid or as part of Canada's involvement in combatting sexual violence in the DRC, we eliminate vocabulary on the issue of justice and combatting impunity—which is absolutely essential for NGOs on the ground—we are undermining their efforts somewhat.

What do we have? It is indeed true that the Belgian government is investing heavily, namely in mobile courts. This is a court system where judges go for a week at a time into the countryside to rule on all cases of sexual violence. You are aware that one of the DRC's problems is displaced people, and, by extension, travelling to the desired place. The department which deals specifically with sexual violence at MONUSCO and the Belgian government put a system in place. At one point, it also received CIDA funding. This system of mobile courts makes it possible to administer justice.

In a country where there is an unbelievable amount of impunity, in the DRC, most of the time, action is taken against low-ranking soldiers or little people, and not the main people responsible. Taking action for visible and accessible justice is extremely important.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Ms. Leclerc—

[English]

The Chair: Madame Demers, I'm sorry. You're going to have another round. Don't worry.

We'll have Ms. McLeod for the Conservatives, please.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I would ask our officials, Monsieur Bélec and Madame Leclerc, whether they have had an opportunity to read the transcripts of our previous meetings.

You've also had an opportunity to hear Madam Breton-Le Goff. Can you tell us if what you've heard today and read in the previous transcripts reflects reality from your perspective?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We have reviewed the transcript of the appearance of Mr. Kessel. We have also read the articles from *Embassy*. The majority of the facts, or the allegations in the articles, and the substance of Mr. Kessel's testimony, pertained to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. They're not immediately relevant to CIDA. If you had any specific questions with respect to terminology at CIDA, we could probably address them, but otherwise, the issues raised are not really within our mandate.

• (0915)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I heard Madame Breton-Le Goff talk about Minister Oda in some of her testimony earlier. Are there any comments you'd like to make about her testimony?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: No.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Okay. I know that we're into some word counting. I believe that everyone already has the statement of the Honourable Helena Guergis at the 54th session of the United Nations and the addresses of Minister of State Kent. As I go through them, I see that the words seem to be very interchangeable. The analysts have these already in terms of doing their word count, so again, we'll look at where we end up.

From my perspective, it comes down to three terms that have created concerns. One, of course, is "child soldier" or "child in armed conflict", which we seem to have had a good discussion around. It really relates to the international language and how it's used. The term "child in armed conflict" is used in formal settings, but "child soldier" can be used in more informal settings.

To me, a more lofty goal is "prevention" of sexual violence in some of these countries. Absolutely, "impunity" is important, and when you train soldiers, you need to talk about impunity, but is prevention actually our more lofty goal?

The third term, of course, is "gender equality" versus "equality of women and men". I haven't picked out any other terms that are of concern.

Could you speak to those again, perhaps, Madame Leclerc?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: Perhaps the one we can speak to, which is very relevant to CIDA policy and programming, is gender equality and equality between men and women.

You were right in saying that these terms are used interchangeably in CIDA policy. On our website, the page on gender equality actually starts with these words: "Equality between women and men or gender equality—". It points out that this term is used interchangeably.

Also, if you go back to CIDA's gender equality policy, which has been in place since 1999 and is still valid—it was just revitalized about a year ago—the policy states, "The goal of CIDA's gender equality policy is to support the achievement of equality between women and men to ensure sustainable development".

You will see those terms used interchangeably in CIDA policy and programming documents.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: So having indicated that the language is more or less interchangeable, I think part of the premise is that by changing the language—which, as I say, I'm not sure has actually been changed—we're also in some ways not being very respectful of moving the agenda forward.

So can you talk about what Canada has done recently to advance the cause of women, and do you believe that the interchangeable terminology of gender equity or equality between men and women has interfered with these initiatives?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I can try to address this question.

The Chair: You have a minute and a half to do so.

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I'll be very quick.

Our appearance today was a bit last-minute, so I did a lot of research last night on our website and in our policy documents to see whether I could find any truth to these allegations. I actually found that our gender equality policy and our programming on gender equality is as vital and vibrant as ever. The policy was evaluated in 2008, and the agency just issued an action plan to address some of the weaknesses found in the evaluation.

The evaluation findings were quite positive. Canada is still seen as a pioneer in promoting gender equality worldwide. Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme throughout all of our programs, projects, and policy.

What we've done in our action plan is improve some of the tools we have to do gender-based analysis in order to identify results throughout all of our projects and programs and to find a way to better promote gender equality with some of our partners—for example, through core funding. So I don't think we would have noticed any sort of dampening of CIDA's leadership in gender equality.

• (0920)

The Chair: Thank you. We still have about 20 seconds, if anybody...? No?

Then we'll move on to Ms. Mathysen for the NDP.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here.

However, I would like to go back to the e-mail that Madam Simson made note of, because, quite frankly, as much as I welcome CIDA here, I have a feeling that we have the wrong people here. We need to have political personnel, because this seems to me to be very political.

As I said, I'll go back to the e-mail. It says, "Some of the changes suggested by oMINA"—meaning language related to human rights, child soldiers, international humanitarian law—"are more than simply stylistic changes". It goes on to say, "So far we have largely been managing these issues as they come in on a case by case basis".

To be quite frank, I feel as though I'm being managed. I feel very strongly that there is an exercise going on in regard to lowballing the impact of these changes when we should be very concerned about them. Having said that, I do have some specific questions.

My first is to Madam Leclerc and Monsieur Bélec. I have a document here talking about CIDA's overall financial resources for gender equality. It says, "CIDA's total of GE investments (both GE-specific and GE-integrated programming) was \$793 million or 4.7% of the \$16.9 billion in CIDA-managed ODA between 1998 and 2005".

I'm wondering what it is now. What is the investment in terms of gender equality right now? Do you know?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I wouldn't know the number specifically. Actually, that's part of our action plan. Something we've already done is to introduce a better way to be able to track investments in gender equality, and you can imagine the challenges of tracking a sector that is cross-cutting. In tracking the gender equality component of a program in education or in health, you are sort of double-counting the money every time. We have the system in place now to improve the tracking of our resources.

I know that before the system was put in place there was well over \$1 billion of CIDA spending annually that was either gender specific or that had a gender component. That would be about 40% of CIDA spending. What I should probably do is go back to the department to see whether the information you're requesting is available. We could provide this to the committee.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: I would appreciate that. I think that might be helpful.

I'm looking at another document. This was provided by FAFIA. It's basically a list in reference to the national action plan on United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security. The list talks about how countries use the phrase "gender equality" or the word "gender", and the total uses of either that term or the phrase. For example, the Netherlands makes reference to gender 123 times in its literature; Switzerland is at 42; Uganda, 129 times; and for Canada, it's twice.

Is this significant? Is this something that should raise a concern for this committee, this fact that the word or the phrase is missing from the terminology of those acting on behalf of Canada?

Madame Breton-Le Goff, have you any comment?

• (0925)

[*Translation*]

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff: Yes, I think that is significant, if only internationally, as regards the countries we traditionally work with.

We have solid partnerships, namely with Holland, but also with Sweden and Belgium. Not using the same language that has been put

in place over the years is not insignificant internationally. The term "gender" was not accepted overnight. Having it accepted was a long process. It started with gender mainstreaming at the United Nations. Next, the biggest battle on accepting and introducing the term "gender" in an international document took place at the International Criminal Court.

I remind you that when the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was negotiated, the Canadian delegation was one of the delegations that actually defended including the term "gender" in the Rome Statute. That was in 1998. Twelve years later, what do we see in official documents? The removal of the term "gender". That is the first sign internationally.

I must also add a word about the need to conduct more in-depth studies on how that translates, practically speaking, in the implementation and definition of policies.

For the time being, personally, I cannot comment on that issue.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you.

It's interesting—

The Chair: You have 30 seconds left.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: I'll comment, then. It's interesting that the fight seems to have gone out of us, even in the face of what can only be described as horrifying evidence of sexual violence in places where there is conflict. I find that most disturbing.

I'll ask my other questions later, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to a second round.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Excuse me, Madam Chair, I don't mean to interrupt, but I think it's probably timely. I'd like to table a motion with respect to this particular study we're currently on.

It's based on the fact that—

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Simson. We will table the motion until after this round, because it's out of order now. We have witnesses and it's not appropriate for them to be here when we debate a motion.

The second round is for five minutes. Again, questions and answers are included.

We will begin with, for the Liberals, Ms. Neville, but before Ms. Neville begins and before you set the clock, Clerk, I just wanted to suggest that Ms. Leclerc made it very clear what she could answer from her department. I think we should therefore ensure that if we wish to get responses from the two witnesses from CIDA, we should be asking them questions pertaining to CIDA and CIDA's language and agenda, rather DFAIT's, which they cannot answer because they're not from DFAIT.

I just wanted to comment on that if you want answers. Thank you.

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

I'm not sure whether.... I'll go ahead, and you can decide.

Thank you for being here. My apologies for being late. The little green bus was slow, to put it mildly.

On this notorious e-mail we have that was the basis of the *Embassy* magazine article, I want to quote something from the author of it. He said:

And only this morning...

He names the colleague. It continues:

...and I discussed the term 'gender equality' with oMINA, to be informed that the current 'lexicon' is instead 'equality of men and women', which actually takes something away from the internationally used terminology (as well as being cumbersome and awkward).

He then goes on to say:

It is...not entirely clear to us why oMINA advisers are making such changes, and whether they have a full grasp of the potential impact on [Canadian] policy in asking for some changes to phrases and concepts that have been accepted internationally and used for some time.

There's a lot more I could quote, but I won't.

I guess my question is for CIDA. Is the language of "gender equality" now—as opposed to "equality of men and women"—used interchangeably? You referenced it earlier, but is it used interchangeably in CIDA? What are the implications in terms of the international language and international world if it is?

• (0930)

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for the question.

Yes, you're right, as I have stated earlier, it is used interchangeably in CIDA policy documents. It's also—

Hon. Anita Neville: Can I interrupt you for a moment? When did that change come about? Is it recent? Is it 2002, 2006, 2010...? When did this change come about?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: Well, I'm not sure it's a change, but CIDA's gender equality policy has evolved over 30 years. I think our first guidelines on women in development were adopted in 1976. The current policy on gender equality came into place in 1999 and it has been in place since then. This policy has moved from women in development to gender equality as a way to achieve equality between women and men. We have been using these words interchangeably since 1999.

It is on our website, so you will see both of these terms in our communications tools. I wouldn't know when this text on the website that says "gender equality" or "equality between women and men" was put up. But certainly—I've been at CIDA five years—I've seen these terms used interchangeably.

It really depends for us in which forum we are. In some places we'll use "gender equality" and in some places we'll use "equality between women and men". So it's probably, for us, just for ease of communication.

Hon. Anita Neville: I just have a few minutes.

My question is, how do you determine for which forum you use the language? Do you agree with the writer of this e-mail that there's a significant impact on Canadian policy in asking for the changes that have been accepted internationally and in use for some time? You say they're not a change, so is there an impact on the use of them internationally? Because a concern about using them is clearly articulated here.

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I can't speak to any impact that this e-mail would have had on foreign policy, as it pertains to the mandate of Foreign Affairs and it comes from Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Anita Neville: I'm asking about CIDA.

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: In terms of CIDA, because the terms are used interchangeably, there has been no change in policy or programming because of the use of one or either of these terms. Our gender equality policy is still valid, and it's actually being implemented very actively throughout the department.

You will see reflections of that in, for example, the thematic strategies that were announced over the last year and a half. For example, in terms of food security, there is a component for women; in terms of children and youth, the implications for women are very well reflected; and it's the same thing in our secure economic growth strategy. So each of these thematic strategies brings out the gender equality component.

Hon. Anita Neville: I have a question—

The Chair: That's it. I'm sorry, Ms. Neville.

Madame Boucher, for the Conservatives.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning.

I would like to ask my colleagues for unanimous consent to have access to the e-mail before it is translated. Do you agree? I would like to have it in English. I must ask for it.

• (0935)

[English]

The Chair: According to the process, the clerk cannot distribute it unless it is translated.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, but I have the right to ask for unanimous consent.

[English]

The Chair: I'm going to ask for unanimous consent now, then.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: There's no unanimous consent. I'm sorry.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): I can't read it in English; I want to have it in French.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Well, I tried.

I have two questions. I am going to be sharing my time with Lois Brown. You know that Mr. Kessel negotiated for Canada, in Rome, for gender equality in 1999. People should keep that in mind.

Ms. Leclerc, you said that since 1999, there has been a change in how things are expressed. You have been at CIDA for a number of years. Have you seen many changes over the years at CIDA? In your experience, has this happened in the past? Is it normal for CIDA to change the terminology to reflect current reality? As a result, is it reasonable to think that these changes occur periodically?

[English]

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: Thank you.

[Translation]

I would just like to clarify something. I cannot say that I have observed any changes. However, I do note that in 1999, the gender equality policy recognized both terms, both of which were in use and interchangeable. Since 1999, both of these terms have been recognized in CIDA policy.

As for the vocabulary in the articles in question, I have to say that I have not seen any change in terminology in CIDA's policy or programs.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: The fact that they are interchangeable has not in any way changed CIDA policy, whether it refers to sexual equality or gender equality. You are saying that they are interchangeable, under your policy, they mean the same thing.

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: That's right.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you, that was the question I wanted to ask.

Ms. Brown, over to you.

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you very much.

I just want to read something for you. Obviously I don't have to submit it in both English and French. I'd like to read from the words of Herman Van Rompuy, the president of the European Union, on the occasion of 10 years of the European Women Lawyers Association, in Brussels, June 3, 2010:

I am happy to say that equality between women and men is also strongly affirmed in the provisions of the new Lisbon Treaty. Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union affirms "a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail". Article 3 says the Union shall promote equality between women and men. Finally, Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union specifies that this aim is to be pursued in all the Union's activities.

These are not just lofty intentions. Gender equality has become part of the EU's daily perspective. This approach has a name: "gender mainstreaming". It is not new. It was already included in the Amsterdam Treaty. But perhaps it deserves to be better known still among men! Myself, I will be meeting with the gender equality ministers of the trio-Presidency (Spain, Belgium and Hungary) next week to discuss gender mainstreaming in the context of the European Council's work.

I ask this of Ms. Leclerc. This is a recent speech. It was made in Brussels in June 2010. This is the president of the European Union who is making these statements. If the international community is

already using this terminology, does it not make sense for Canada to use the same international language?

As Mr. Kessel said, these are based on international instruments. We don't create our own language. They are international instruments that we copy and use in our language. Does it not make sense that Canada use that terminology?

• (0940)

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: You make a very valid point. As an official, I don't think I could give my personal opinion, but I think your point is very valid.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Mr. Desnoyers, for the Bloc.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome everyone.

My first question is for the CIDA officials. We are talking about a change in vocabulary. You say that it is interchangeable and that changing the words used in speeches is purely cosmetic. Will CIDA be adopting these changes and changing its documents? Will CIDA be changing its approach to NGOs working with CIDA in the field by adapting its documents to reflect the language currently used by the government?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I am not sure I understood your question, but since the terms are interchangeable, there is no change in our dealings with our partners.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: You say they are interchangeable. Ms. Breton-Le Goff said that all reference to impunity and justice had disappeared. If I understood correctly, you are saying that you will be keeping the words "impunity" and "justice" in your documents dealing with NGOs.

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: As far as the terms applicable to CIDA programming are concerned, there has been no change.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: You will be keeping the words impunity and justice, and you will require your partners to champion these causes in the field. Is that right?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I cannot answer that question.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: For example, CIDA deals with OXFAM and MATCH in the field. There are some rapes. Oh, you no longer deal with MATCH! That's too bad, it was an excellent organization.

In the field, the partners you work with will continue to use a different vocabulary. You say that it is purely cosmetic. The words that Ms. Breton-Le Goff mentioned and those used by the government you report to are interchangeable.

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: The only answer I can give you is that any of our partners' programs that are in keeping with CIDA's thematic priorities and strategies will be treated in the same way, regardless of terminology.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: So you will see to it that your vocabulary changes. In the field, the language will vary from one party to the next. You are a major spokesperson and you will be using a different vocabulary. I mean, you will not be using the terms “impunity” and “justice”, among other things, isn't that right?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: No, I cannot confirm that.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: So you will not be keeping step with government statements.

Mr. Michel Bélec (Acting Executive Director and General Counsel, Head of Legal Services, Canadian International Development Agency): If I may, I believe that the substance of your question is political and has less to do with everyday operations.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Normally, CIDA takes instruction from the government on how to deal with its partners. It's the government that provides the money. The government may be heading in a certain direction, but you say that it's interchangeable and purely cosmetic. Ms. Le Goff and other speakers have said there was a major change in vocabulary, but you are saying that isn't true. That suggests that in the field, you are going to continue to champion the cause of women, you are going to talk about impunity, you are going to talk about justice, and that is quite different from the language the government is using.

Mr. Michel Bélec: I can tell you that as we speak, as Ms. Leclerc said before, there has been no policy change, there has been no deliberate change in terminology by CIDA. We have said that since 1999, the terms have been used interchangeably, without any intention of setting off in a new direction.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: You talk about interchangeable terms. That means that the terms used by the government, which is getting rid of the word “gender” and replacing it with “men and women”, are interchangeable.

Mr. Michel Bélec: I can tell you that...

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: In the dictionary it says that...

Mr. Michel Bélec: Look...

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: I am just trying to understand.

Mr. Michel Bélec: I repeat, there is no change in CIDA's policy, there is no statutory change.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Do you acknowledge that the words currently being used in speeches could eventually lead to a change at CIDA?

• (0945)

Mr. Michel Bélec: That is a political question and I cannot answer it.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Ms. Le Goff, you had a lot to say about the Belgian plan, the Australian plan, I would like...

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Desnoyers, we've run out of time. I'm sorry about that. I think we may be able to do another round so you can have a chance.

Ms. Mathysen is next, please, for the NDP.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I feel like as though we're going in circles here. There is discussion about changes in language and interchangeable words. Have there been changes in terms of CIDA practices?

I'm thinking, for example, of a discussion we had in this committee about child and maternal health and the fact that there was a definite change of policy in regard to the use of family planning. First of all, there was to be no contraception, and then that changed. Then the minister said that there was to be no use of funding for abortion. That seems to have gone into the ether as well.

So we have this argument about language and practice, and there doesn't seem to be any sort of resolution to the argument, other than the fact that I'm still mystified that “[s]ome of the changes suggested by oMINA are more than simply stylistic changes”, which causes me concern, as I said.

When I reflect back to child and maternal health, there were policy changes. There were changes in terms of practice on the ground—or at least, the government announced that. Should we not be concerned about further changes in policy and practice?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: Thank you for your question. I'm not sure that this question is relevant to the topic for which we're here to testify in terms of changes in terminology—

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I'm sorry. I think it is. Because we hear very clearly that language is significant, that it determines how a country behaves and what its policies and practices will be in the international realm, and here, I've cited the example of child and maternal health. The way we behave on the international scene is reflected by what we say.

We take our direction from the ministers of the crown. They send signals to departments, very clear signals, in terms of what they say and how they say it.

I feel very strongly that we need to come to terms with that, and we're simply not coming to terms with it. We're going around in a circle and I simply want clarification.

On child and maternal health, the government sent signals by its use of language, and things changed. We fought about it all spring. So it is important, and I would like to know what kinds of policy changes are in the works. What can we expect in the future?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I could not speak to upcoming policy changes. The terminology involving “gender equality” and “equality between women and men” did not bring about changes in our current policy.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: And were there no changes to the policy around child and maternal health?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: In terms of the impact of using “gender equality” or “equality between women and men”, no, there were not. Whether we used one term or the other did not have implications for the way that policy evolved.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Okay, but I still have to underscore, Madam Chair, that what ministers said, what governments said, affected policy in terms of Canada's behaviour on the international scene.

I'm going to switch gears here.

Madame Breton-Le Goff, when Ms. Neville was asking questions about the interchangeable use of language, you had your hand up, but you didn't get an opportunity to speak. I would like to give you that opportunity.

[Translation]

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff: Thank you, Madam.

As Mr. Kessel said, it is true that in international treaties, terms like “the equal right of men and women” are used to refer to non-discrimination. These terms are found in the international covenant on civil and political rights, and similar language is used in the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, as well as in the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

What matters is not necessarily the interchangeability of the terms, but rather what comes with the term. It's important because that is what may raise questions about gender, and may, for example, challenge the social and family roles assigned to each sex. Take, for example, a text of the United Nations Commission on the status of women. It is entitled *The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS*.

The debate had to do with the responsibilities of men and women within the family unit. What is the upshot? It is not just about a formalistic equal sharing of tasks between men and women, with the men doing 50% of household tasks and the women doing the other 50%. No! It's about questioning the traditional roles assigned to each sex, roles which are ultimately forms of power in relationships between the sexes.

● (0950)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. McLeod is next, for the Conservatives.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think I want to bring this down to its being a study on language changes at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Again, I believe we only have three areas around which we've perhaps heard concerns. For two of the areas—gender equity and the equality between women and men—I am very comfortable with the interchangeable use, and I hear strongly that it's not impacting programs, policies, or where we're going as a country. As to the words around the international...the children in armed conflict, again I think that has been very well described.

I guess my final comment or point is the discussion around “impunity” versus “prevention”. I talked to the lofty goals of prevention. I think it's absolutely incredible that anyone could suggest that there's anyone in this committee or in Parliament who is not absolutely horrified and who does not believe that Canada should be doing everything they should in terms of some of the things that are happening in the Congo, for example.

So I guess I would put that final language around “impunity” versus how we talk about “prevention”, and of course, to me prevention is a big envelope, and under it are all sorts of different

strategies around how you ultimately prevent such horrific abuses in countries. Could you maybe talk a little bit about that particular aspect?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: Only superficially.... I'd like to bring to your attention CIDA's strategy on securing a future for children and youth. The strategy has three paths for action, and the third path is that of ensuring safety and security of children and youth.

The strategy does a really good assessment of the impacts of “conflict and fragility” on women and on children. It's a core part of the strategy to address safety issues for women and children in conflict areas. It is something that is very relevant to CIDA programming, and that is part of our current policy and programming as we implement the children and youth strategy.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I have no more questions, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have an opportunity to go to a third round for three minutes. We're due to finish this particular part of the meeting at 10:15 and then we have committee business to do for the next half hour.

I will extend it for three minutes. If you do not have any more questions to ask, you could pass. But I think we have some people who have put their names forward.

Ms. Neville, for the Liberals, three minutes, please.

● (0955)

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

My question is to Ms. Breton-Le Goff. I missed part of your presentation, and you may have spoken to this—you have spoken a little already—but I'm wondering if you can elaborate further on the language of “gender equality” versus “equality of men and women” within the context of international humanitarian law.

[Translation]

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff: Within the framework of international law, gender equality goes beyond a mere bookkeeping equality that would aim at establishing, for example, quotas for the representation of women in a parliament or within the armed forces, or peacekeeping forces.

Gender equality will require, beyond a purely numerical analysis, that we review the nature of the functions of these women who were permitted, for example, to have positions within the armed forces or to discharge responsibilities within mediation teams, for instance, such as those that were implemented by the Secretary General of the United Nations or in the operational commands of the United Nations. There is a common command, and then, of course, there are national military contingents.

We want to know the real criteria that allow these women to occupy positions of responsibility that are equivalent to those occupied by men in general. Now, we know, especially in the context of the peacekeeping forces, that the military world is extremely virile by nature. In fact, it greatly glorifies heroism and courage, the courage being that of a soldier bearing arms.

In military history, the role of women has been considered of very little value in wars or in conflicts, apart from the role that they have sometimes played as nurses, for example, or sometimes as spies.

Let us go beyond the anecdotes. Gender equality does not merely consist in having the same number of women and men in a contingent or a command, it means having women occupying positions of equal responsibility.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I have Ms. Brown, from the Conservatives, for three minutes.

Please make sure you fit that in. Thank you.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you very much. I'm sorry, I was just looking something up.

Ms. Leclerc, I wonder if you can tell us who the minister for status of women was in 1999?

The Chair: I can answer that: I was.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you very much.

Has there been any change from the language that was used in 1999 to 2010?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: In CIDA policy and programming, no.

Ms. Lois Brown: You tell us there has been no change in language use or the outcome. Mr. Kessel told us there's no change in language or the direction.

You know, the sign of a good teacher is always that you can say the same concept many times until people grasp the concept; when you're working with children, oftentimes you have to go over the same material from a multiple number of angles to get the point across.

I guess what we're hearing here is that we've heard from you and we've heard from Mr. Kessel that there's no change. I just wonder how many times we have to say this same...you can't take yes for an answer. I just wonder how many times we have to say this: that there's no change in policy, there's no change in direction, and there has been no change since the minister was in place in 1999.

Thank you. It's just a comment.

The Chair: You're right. That was not a question. That was a comment.

Madame Demers for the Bloc.

• (1000)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, let me remind my colleague that I have worked in the field of education. It is certainly an environment in which I have been fortunate enough to participate, and where she has not been. I know that there are good teachers and I know that there are bad teachers. I know that some teachers use time-tested methods and others do not use them. I know that there are teachers who use

science and Ms. Breton-Le Goff has certainly used some very well-tested science to tell us what she knows about the changes that have been made and reported. It is not sufficient for two persons to say that there has been no change to conclude that there was no change. Madam Chair, let me submit to you that there has certainly been change, because far more than two people have told us that change has taken place.

Ms. Leclerc, we were told that in 2009, some changes were made in the CIDA subsidy applications and that you changed the applications by asking the organizations to strike out the term "gender equity". Is it true that you asked the organizations to strike out the term "gender equity" from applications for subsidies?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I could not confirm this information.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Ms. Leclerc or Mr. Bélec, could you tell us why MATCH international stopped receiving subsidies from CIDA after 34 years, in 2010?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I can neither comment nor confirm this decision.

Ms. Nicole Demers: As opposed to what Ms. Brown told us this morning, you cannot tell us much about this.

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I cannot discuss this subject.

Ms. Nicole Demers: You could tell us that there has been no great change or that, in your opinion, the change is not substantial, but in fact, you can hardly tell us anything at all.

Ms. Breton-Le Goff, do you know if changes were made in applications for subsidies?

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff: No.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you very much.

That will be all, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: You have about 40 seconds.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. That's it, then.

Ms. Mathysen for the NDP.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madame Demers has reminded me about MATCH. Last week, MATCH International told us they had a funding proposal rejected by CIDA because women led the project. It was a region-wide agricultural proposal for organic gardening in the Caribbean, and, according to Ms. Bulger, they were specifically told that it would not be accepted because women were at the centre of this leadership farming proposal, because women can't lead such a proposal—

Ms. Lois Brown: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I asked last week that this document be tabled with the clerk and that we see the specific reason—

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Perhaps, Madam Chair, if I could finish my question...?

The Chair: Just a second.

Ms. Mathysen, a point of order has to be answered first. I'll listen to Ms. Brown and then I'll rule on her point of order.

Ms. Lois Brown: Sorry, Madam Chair.

When the MATCH individual was here she made that allegation against the government, that the grant was not given because women were leading the project. I think that's a direct quote. I'd check the blues, but I think that's a direct quote. I asked that this project be tabled with the committee and also the rationale for why the project did not meet the criteria. Has that been tabled with the clerk?

The Chair: I don't know if it has. MATCH International does not exist anymore, so she's not able to do that, but I will suggest, however—

Ms. Lois Brown: The point—

The Chair: May I rule on your point of order? You've given your point of order. You've given your reason for it.

Ms. Lois Brown: Madam Chair, I think that the committee needs to be very circumspect on allegations that are made against the government when there is nothing that we can base that on. I would think that Ms. Mathysen is repeating to this committee an allegation that has not been proven and is unfounded.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brown.

Now, I will allow Ms. Mathysen to continue her questioning mainly because it is pertinent to what we're doing here, and it is acceptable for a member to ask any question they choose as long as it's pertinent to the topic.

Go ahead, Ms. Mathysen.

• (1005)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is, can you please provide the committee with all documentation surrounding this proposal, because I'm sure that there is interest in seeing it. Is that possible?

Ms. Caroline Leclerc: I can take that back to the department.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: We would appreciate that very much.

My next question—

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I hope Ms. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff can answer this. We heard last week that Canada has no benchmark for gender equality issues in Afghanistan. I'm mystified by that. Do you believe it's important that Canada have benchmarks for gender equality in Afghanistan and in other places around the world in terms of solid foreign policy?

Prof. Gaëlle Breton-Le Goff: Definitely, it's important for every program. There is this report—

[*Translation*]

Excuse me, I will speak in French. The Auditor General's report has made note of the difficulties that various departments and programs have in systematically including evaluation criteria to measure the degree to which the objectives of gender equity are being met.

As soon as Canada stands up on the international stage as a state that wants to defend equality between men and women or that wants to take gender specific issues into account, it is important to have criteria with which we can measure our progress and our achievements.

Now, with regard to Afghanistan as such, I cannot give you an answer; I have no specific knowledge on this matter.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you. Of course, benchmarks are important.

The Chair: Sorry, Ms. Mathysen. That's it.

I would like to now thank the witnesses for their presence. I'll ask us to just suspend for about a minute so we can get to the next phase. We're not going in camera, but we just need to move into the next phase, and we need to give the witnesses time to depart.

• (1005)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1010)

The Chair: I'd like to call the meeting to order. There has been a question about the letter that was presented to the clerk by Ms. Simson.

While the clerk cannot distribute the letter because it is not yet translated into French, as the chair I could read the part of the letter... I understand that Ms. Simson has a motion she would like to present, which she told us about, and it relates to this. I spoke to Madame Boucher, who would like to hear the content of the letter. I can read it for you.

Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: This is the whole letter you're reading?

The Chair: It's not very long.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you.

The Chair: The letter states:

Dear all:

Some of you will have already noted over the past few months the tendency from oMINA to change or remove language from letters, speeches, interventions at multilateral meetings, etc., on such interrelated issues as Child Soldiers, International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights, and R2P. A recent example is a fairly extensive set of suggested revisions to a standard docket response on DRC. Suggested changes to this letter include removing the term "impunity" in every instance (eg "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" is changed to "Canada urges the Government of the DRC to take concerted measures to prevent sexual violence"). Furthermore, the word "humanitarian" is excised from every reference to "international humanitarian law". References to gender-based violence are removed and every phrase "Child Soldiers" is replaced by "children in armed conflict".

Some of the changes suggested by oMINA are more than simply stylistic changes. For example, the sentence cited above changes the focus from *justice* for victims of sexual violence to *prevention*. And only this morning, Gwyn Kutz and I discussed the term 'gender equality' with oMINA, to be informed that current lexicon is instead 'equality of men and women', which actually takes something away from the internationally used terminology (as well as being more cumbersome and awkward).

So far we have largely been managing these issues as they come in on a case-by-case basis. However, Jim Nickel and I have been wondering if it might be necessary for a more coordinated approach, as these issues interest a number of different bureaux, and are recurring fairly frequently. It is often not entirely clear to us why oMINA advises on making such changes, and whether they have a full grasp of the potential impact on [Canadian] policy in asking for changes to phrases and concepts that have been accepted internationally and used for some time.

We would like to know whether you might find it useful to meet with us to discuss these issues as a possible precursor to a meeting with oMINA staff. I do not believe the requests from oMINA to make these kinds of changes to language will diminish. It will be useful for us to know here when oMINA-suggested changes are not consistent with accepted [Canadian] policy. The ultimate objective would be to work with oMINA to find language that is more palatable to them and which also accurately reflects [Canada's] policy approach.

It is signed by Jamieson Weetman, from the ministry of international affairs.

I've read it so that we can move on with the motion, because this explains the motion, and then we don't have to have everyone not knowing what it's all about and we can do this more effectively and efficiently.

Now, Ms. Simson, your motion, please. I'm going to read it in English and French:

That the Committee extend its study on language changes at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade by two (2) meetings;

That, for the first meeting, the Committee invite Jamieson Weetman, David Angell, Elissa Golberg, Jim Nickel, and Gwyn Kutz, all current or former officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs that were aware of the language changes; and

That, for the second meeting, the committee invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ross O'Connor, former Foreign Affairs Policy Advisor in the Prime Minister's Office, to explain why the government made the language changes.

Ms. Simson, would you speak to your motion?

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair—

The Chair: Excuse me.

Ms. Neville, you wanted to just put your name down? All right.

Sorry, Ms. Simson.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: The reason I wanted to bring this motion forward is that last Tuesday was an absolute and total waste of the committee's time.

The witness who appeared.... And I understand that I was only elected in October 2008, but I've never sat on a committee where the briefing notes and suggested questions were leaked to the witness, and where the witness, Mr. Kessel, spent almost the entire time critiquing and in fact making a mockery of the work of the analyst of our committee. He suggested that we had inadequate information with respect to even holding the meeting. It was perhaps the most insulting exchange that I've ever seen. That would constitute requesting one meeting.

Today, with the exception of Ms. Breton-Le Goff.... And I'd like to remind the committee that the study is on the language changes at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, not CIDA. And I think it's clear. We then went back and did our homework. We got hold of the author of the magazine article, who was kind enough to produce evidence. Mr. Kessel himself is on that exchange and clearly grossly misled this committee and also mocked it when he did it.

I do believe that it merits.... To my way of thinking, despite what Ms. Brown says, yes, they may be saying it enough times, but we have evidence that changes are taking place in Foreign Affairs that their own bureaucrats are unhappy with and are trying to raise the red flag about.

I think this is a very important issue and, as such, I think requires further study, and we need witnesses who are really salient to the subject at hand.

• (1015)

The Chair: Ms. Neville, your hand was up.

Hon. Anita Neville: I have a question for you, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to support the motion, but I'm wondering if there's some futility in it. We're asking for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to attend this meeting. We've asked for several ministers to attend at this committee and, to date, to the best of my knowledge, we've not had a response. I have no problem extending an invitation, but are we extending an invitation to be snubbed yet again?

Can you report on whether we have heard from any of the other ministers and—

The Chair: So you're asking a question with regard to the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs that's in Ms. Simson's motion.

Hon. Anita Neville: Well, we're asking for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but I'm asking whether any of the other ministers we have invited have responded.

• (1020)

The Chair: The only minister we have heard from has been the Minister for Status of Women Canada when we asked her to come to the committee to—I'm just reading carefully—"explain the manner and criteria by which funding is distributed by Status of Women Canada through each of the Women's Community Fund and Women's Partnership Fund". We got a response from the minister that said she had received the letter. She has yet to give us a date to appear. Now, I would like to remind the committee that the letter was written on June 7.

We also have letters written on September 23 to the Minister of Justice and to the Minister of Health asking them to appear: to explain what the Minister of Justice intends to do with the \$11 million that was transferred to his department, and to ask the Minister of Health to appear before the committee to explain what she intends to do with the money that was transferred to her department for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

I have spoken to the whip, as I said earlier on, who promised me that there would be at least a courtesy that said "thank you, I got your letter". We have received neither the courtesy nor anything else.

I repeat and I reiterate here to this committee that this is totally unacceptable. It is not a case, Ms. Neville, of being snubbed. It is a case of a minister having to be accountable. That's a word that is used. That is why committees of Parliament exist: it is to ask ministers to be accountable.

They come to committee to be accountable. This is not a political committee; it is a committee of Parliament, duly made up of all of the political parties. When a minister refuses to even acknowledge the letter, I consider that to be a case, first, that the minister obviously does not care about Parliament and has no respect for Parliament and has no respect for parliamentary committees. And it's rude not to even respond and say, "I got your letter and I couldn't care less"—at least that would be a response—or whatever.

We have had no response at all from these ministers, and that has been now going on for two and a half months. This is unacceptable. I can tell you that as a minister I would not take two and a half months; I would respond to any letter from any standing committee within a week. It is just good manners. It just shows respect for Parliament and parliamentary democracy, which is in this room right now asking a minister to be accountable for moneys that were accepted by this House when it accepted the budget.

This is something that concerns me a great deal. I will tell you that I agree with you that we probably will not get the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but I believe that we should ask ministers to continue to be accountable, and so I will accept Ms. Simson's naming of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to come and speak to this issue.

Now, is there anybody else to speak to this?

Madame Boucher, is it to speak to the motion?

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No. I want to talk about the letters.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You know that we spoke to the whip. The whip also spoke to you. This morning, I will go back to see him again to be sure that you will get an answer.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

I have to suggest, Ms. Boucher, that you have been excellent in taking this message back, and the whip has at least been fairly responsible by speaking to me about it within 24 hours of your speaking to him. So I am not faulting anybody in this committee. I'm suggesting that ministers have responsibility to be accountable. Thank you for your help in getting this done, but it should not be the case that we should have to have you go off and speak for this committee, because the committee by itself is a part of the parliamentary institution.

Is anyone else speaking on this motion?

Ms. Cadman.

Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC): I was going to follow up with what Ms. Boucher said. Is it Justice, Health, and Foreign Affairs that you haven't heard from?

The Chair: No, to date I have written to Justice, to Health and to the Minister for the Status of Women. It was all to do with responding to the \$10 million in money that has been set aside in

regard to violence against aboriginal women, how that money is being spent, and whether it has been distributed to these three departments. This is an accounting for moneys that have been okayed by Parliament.

But I think Madam Neville was speaking to the issue now of whether we should bother to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I think we should bother, because it isn't about "bothering"; it is about ministers understanding their role and their responsibilities. So I think we should continue to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs to come and present on this issue as well. That's it.

Now, is anybody speaking to the motion? If not, I will call—

Ms. Brown. Is it to the motion?

Ms. Lois Brown: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is probably a very unusual suggestion to make, but given the fact that we've heard from two departments now that changes in language have not been made and that we've been using the same language since 1999, I think it would be interesting to find out from you, from when you were minister, how those language terminologies came to be used. Would you be one of the witnesses?

The Chair: I can't remember that far back, and I don't have access to information from the department anymore. Now, what I would like to suggest, though, is that in Rome, this is not a status of women committee. It is not the status of women minister who was there; it was the Minister of Foreign Affairs who presented in Rome, because this was speaking to the foreign affairs component of this.

When I was minister, I can say now, we never changed the language at all. At the United Nations, that was the accepted language, at CIDA it was the accepted language, and it continued to be the accepted language.

I think we need to be very clear what language we're speaking to. The Minister for Status of Women would not be speaking to issues of "impunity" and would not be speaking to issues of CIDA. The minister for CIDA would be speaking to those issues. But it's my understanding that CIDA only spoke to the issue of "equality between men and women" and "gender equality". The other issues that one is discussing here are issues of taking "humanitarian" out of international humanitarian law, etc., which would directly be associated with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

It is not my understanding that this was ever done in 1998. The only thing that was referred to by the witness concerning 1998 was the interchangeability of language in "equality between men and women" and "gender equality". That was the only thing that was used interchangeably in Rome.

Ms. Lois Brown: Madam Chair, may I just follow up on that?

I just want to be very sure that... On the page I have here, which was given to us as the front page from CIDA, the terminology is "equality between women and men". I just want to be sure that we don't turn that around and keep saying "men and women".

● (1025)

The Chair: It doesn't really matter—

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you.

The Chair: —because if you are saying “men and women”, or “women and men”...I don't know. The bottom line, however, is that I just read a letter from policy, from bureaucrats, at the Department of Foreign Affairs who were concerned that the change in language actually impacted on policy, especially the term “gender equality”. It is my understanding that Mr. Weetman suggested that this changed policy.

CIDA's policy is very different. CIDA is not the group that was asked to appear before us, in any case. They asked if they could come. But they do not deal with some of the other issues we were talking about here because they're not within their mandate.

Ms. Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Chair, I think that the letter that you read out to us is very important.

The fact that Mr. Kessel and all the officials were present at that meeting tells me that they were aware of the changes that were developing. Moreover, the fact that the person signed the letter tells us about the importance given to these changes. This leads me to believe that the changes have been substantial even within the department and that people are aware of these changes.

This is why I believe that we should meet these people. In fact, I am a good student and I want to understand my subject matters so that the teachers can give me an A+. I want to understand and I want to be sure that I am not making any false allegations.

[English]

The Chair: So now what are we going to do? Anybody...?

Ms. Neville. Then I will call the question on this, because we have another motion to deal with.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair. I certainly support the motion. I think it's even more important now that we have the other members from the Department of Foreign Affairs that Ms. Simson cited in her motion, particularly in light of the apparent discrepancy on Mr. Kessel's part—I wasn't here.

But I also want to emphasize that I think it's equally important to note that we have had 10 organizations, including some long-standing organizations that are always willing to appear before a parliamentary committee, decline their attendance here. I'm speaking of organizations such as Amnesty International, Care Canada, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, World Vision Canada, and the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Anecdotally what we are hearing is that there is a fear on their part to appear, because it will potentially affect their funding.

In light of the unwillingness or problems with so many organizations.... The list we have that the clerk sent out is for 10 people; we have six more people pending who have not responded. There's something amiss here, and I think it's important that we hear from as many people in government as we can so that we can try to get to the bottom of this.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll call the question.

Those in favour of the motion? Those opposed?

Ms. Cadman, are you abstaining?

Ms. Dona Cadman: Yes.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: All right. The motion carries. We will send out the letter inviting the various people. The clerk will do that as soon as possible.

We will have to discuss when we hold those two meetings, given that time is moving here. It may mean that we cannot finish these hearings before the House rises, so we may have to bring this back when we come back in January. I just want the committee to understand that this is probably what's going to have to happen.

I have another motion, a motion from Madame Demers, which everyone would have been given on December 1. It states:

[Translation]

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee believes that polygamy goes against the right the equality between men and women and recommends that the government affirm that this practice does not reflect the values of democratic societies.

That this motion be reported to the House at the first opportunity.

[English]

Madame Demers.

• (1030)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let me simply note that this very morning, a newspaper article asked the Department of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism to be very careful because some polygamous men are trying to enter into Canada. Prime Minister Stephen Harper personally asked that they be turned away.

This is straightforward. We must not accept polygamous practices in Canada. We must not accept them, especially as Bountiful is on trial in British Columbia at this time. We must make sure that all polygamous practices are rejected.

These women, these young girls have very often been married against their will, even before reaching the age of 15 or 16, which is the legal age for sexual relations.

I think that it is abominable for women to be in such a situation. I tabled this motion so that we will be sure to vote against polygamy.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm certainly not against the motion. I look at what's happening—and it's next to my riding—with great concern. I do want to note that it's before the courts right now and I think we'll all be watching that very closely. I wonder, pending what that outcome is, whether this might actually be a good study for us to do at some point. I think we should be looking at it in more detail.

My question is, would it be a little premature? Certainly at the end of the day I will support this motion, but should we actually do a bit of a study on this issue first, is my one question?

The Chair: Ms. Demers, do you have a response to that?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Chair, I think that a study will probably be called for, but first we must make sure that we vote against polygamy.

I do not see how going ahead now with a vote to make sure we vote against polygamy... The Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion against polygamy. I was hoping that our committee would also unanimously adopt a motion against polygamy so that we could study it in the House afterward.

Certainly, we will be able to study this topic afterward, but, at least, it would be good to unanimously adopt a motion against polygamy, so as to affirm that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women has joined the fight against polygamy.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

So you're not ruling out the study; you're just ruling it out at this point in time.

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wonder if Madame Demers would accept a friendly amendment in the last line and change it to “does not reflect the values of equality”. I think that might focus it a bit more.

But I did also want to say that Madame Demers has pointed out quite rightly that some of these children, these young women, are 15 years of age, and that goes against the passage of the government's own law on sexual interference in regard to women under the age of 16. I think it is appropriate that we go to the House, have this concern raised, and have the government affirm that this is a practice that Canada does not accept.

The Chair: You are suggesting the change of the word “values” and from “democratic societies” to—

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Equality.

The Chair: That is “values of equality”.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: But in the sentence it says:

[*English*]

“the right to equality between men and women”.

An hon. member: Or “gender equality”.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I was about to suggest equality between men and women, between women and men, gender equality, whatever.

An hon. member: It's equality between men and women. That's all we need to say.

Mme Nicole Demers: It's written....

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I understand that. It's just that sometimes the values of democratic societies get a bit muddy.

The Chair: Because there are many democratic societies that on religious grounds do practise polygamy, so it really doesn't hold here.

Do you want to say “gender equality”?

•(1035)

Ms. Nicole Demers: Yes: “values of gender equality”.

The Chair: Okay. There is a actually a difference between gender equality and equality between women and men.

That's it. Now I will call the question. I don't see anybody else wanting to speak.

Go ahead.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Read it with the change, please.

The Chair: Gender equality...“les genres”....

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: The *genres*.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: And not the *gendres*.

[*English*]

The Chair: That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee believes that polygamy goes against the right to equality between men and women—

Actually that's repetitive, you know, Irene.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: It's just that, as you so accurately pointed out, there are some democratic societies where polygamy is the practice, and I was aiming for clarity. I recognize the repetitive nature of it.

The Chair: Okay. I'll continue:—and recommends that the government affirm that this practice does not reflect the values of gender equality; and

That this motion be reported to the House at the first opportunity.

All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: It is passed unanimously and that will be so noted when we report it to the House.

Thank you.

We have about 10 minutes to talk about new technologies. We agreed to do that last week, I gather. The committee will hear from the witnesses for as long as members have questions. The committee will go into committee business to discuss with the analysts the direction they want to give to the study on new technologies and also will give drafting instructions on the DFAIT study.

Obviously, since we are expanding the DFAIT study, we won't talk about drafting instructions at this point, but do you wish to discuss the direction you want to give to the study on new technologies in the 10 minutes left?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Chair, with my cynicism, we'll never get to it. It's been two years, and we're having more studies on other issues.

The Chair: Do you wish to discuss the direction they want to give to the study on new technologies now for 10 minutes?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We have talked so much over the past two years about the reasons why we wanted to conduct this study.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm only reading what you said. You said last week that you wanted to do it today.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: But we are postponed again and the study has always been postponed.

The Chair: But that should not stop us from discussing it. If you want to discuss it, we'll go in camera. If you don't want to, we'll adjourn.

Can I get the sense of whether you want to discuss it now?

Ms. Nicole Demers: Yes.

The Chair: All right. we'll go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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