



House of Commons  
CANADA

# **Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development**

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SDIR • NUMBER 052 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, March 24, 2011**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Scott Reid**



## Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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•(1305)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)):** Good afternoon.

[Translation]

This is the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today we are holding our 52<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are looking into sexual assault on women and children during peacekeeping operations in fragile states and in situations of conflict.

We are fortunate to have with us today by video conference from New York, Margot Wallström, who is the special representative of the secretary-general of the United Nations on sexual violence in conflict.

Ms. Wallström, our normal practice is that you give your presentation and then we'll go to questions from the members. I would invite you to begin whenever you wish.

**Ms. Margot Wallström (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, United Nations):** Thank you, honourable members of Parliament, for giving me this opportunity, although from a distance. I would prefer to be there in person, but since I'm travelling a lot, it is not possible this time. Thank you for allowing me to participate through video conference.

Allow me to put this in a bigger picture. As you heard, I'm the first one to hold this post, the secretary-general's special representative on conflict-related sexual violence.

Why are we talking about this? I would say it's because of the changing nature of war. We have traditionally thought of war as a conflict between two well-disciplined and well-trained armies on the battlefield, but this is no longer the common feature. Modern wars and conflicts are often in failed states, or they are civil wars; they are intra-state. They are often carried out by armed groups that are difficult to control. This has left women and children, that is, civilians, on the front line not as armed soldiers but as victims.

Today most of the victims in fact are civilians. It is very important to understand this phenomenon. Historically, it is actually described

in the Bible. In stories about the Trojan War, we can read about virgins being a war prize. It could seem that this is something inevitable, but it is not. It is important to understand that first and foremost.

It has been referred to as history's greatest silence. It is still surrounded by silence and, I would say, shame. Unfortunately, the shame falls on the victims, not the perpetrators.

This issue is important and is being placed on the Security Council's agenda because it is such a heavy impediment to building a sustainable peace. It undermines social security and destroys families and society. It also prevents women's participation in economic activities and often prevents girls from going to school. The trust in the construction of a country's justice system and a state's ability to protect its citizens are also undermined. It's a very serious phenomenon.

We have seen it recently being used as a political tool to punish political opponents. We've seen this in Kenya. We saw it in Conakry, Guinea. We are seeing it now in Côte d'Ivoire. It was acknowledged 10 years ago by Security Council Resolution 1325, which framed it as a resolution on women, peace and security, giving women a particular role when it comes to war and peace and peace-building. Since then, we've had a number of follow-up resolutions which mention specifically sexual violence as a weapon of war or a tactic in modern warfare.

•(1310)

Last year the resolution that set up my post was adopted by the Security Council. Last December, Resolution 1960 gave my team and me access to the tools we need. That is, the Security Council said that it is willing to use all the tools available, including such things as sanctions, the freezing of assets and visa bans to prevent rapists from having a political, military, or civil career. That is extremely important.

In closing, I have set an agenda for myself with five points.

Number one is to end impunity. These types of crimes have been met with total impunity and amnesty. We need to empower women, and that goes hand in hand with fighting impunity. We have to create the political ownership of this issue for both women and men. It is not solely a women's issue. It is a human rights issue. We have to rethink rape as a tactic of war. We have to understand the phenomenon better. We have to harmonize and coordinate better within the UN system because today, the majority of the mandates for our peacekeeping missions contain a paragraph about protecting civilians. Civilians are men and women, but women have their particular needs and it has to be designed that way. This is what we are doing.

We have also identified seven focus countries. We have to engage more long term and in a deeper way with a number of countries. Five of them are in Africa. But this is not a cultural problem; it has also occurred in Europe, as we know from the war in the Balkans. Bosnia-Herzegovina is one of our focus countries, as is Colombia. But the five countries in Africa are: Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, and Liberia, a supposed conflict country. This is also something that we need to follow up to see how it affects a country long term.

We are working full speed to make sure this is an advocacy task, to make sure there is better knowledge and better awareness of this phenomenon. You can be sure it is also part of what is going on now in northern Africa, unfortunately. This will remain a very heavy impediment on restoring sustainable peace, which is why I am grateful that you and your committee have supported it on your agenda.

I'll answer any questions you may have.

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

We have a reasonable amount of time here, so what I would suggest, members, is I will set the clock at nine minutes for questions and answers. If we have time left over, we'll see if anybody has supplemental questions and we may have time to do one or two questions for those who have had particular issues raised by the first round.

With that in mind, Mr. Silva, would you like to begin?

• (1315)

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, first of all, I want to thank the special representative of the secretary-general. I had an opportunity to look at some of the recommendations that you put forward, Ms. Wallström, and I suggested your name as a witness to this committee. I am glad that you are before this committee on this very important debate we are having on the issue of sexual assault on women and children during peacekeeping operations in fragile states and in situations of conflict.

I think you set it out correctly by talking about the changing nature of war, which is now affecting civilians, not soldiers any longer, as it was in historical times. You listed five countries specifically in Africa where post-conflict rebuilding is taking place.

Maybe you could give us an assessment of what is happening on the ground. Are things improving or not improving? I am also concerned about sexual violence in terms of displaced persons in some of the camps. What is the UN doing to deal with that issue?

Could you give us an analysis of some of the initiatives that are taking place and whether you have seen progress? Are some of the initiatives that are taking place, not just by the UN but also by western countries, having much of an impact?

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** Thank you very much, Mr. Silva, for that question.

I don't think we are capable of answering in an authoritative way whether things are improving or not because we are only now starting to monitor and report on this particular phenomenon.

It comes with war and conflict, of course. When I visited the Democratic Republic of Congo, women said repeatedly, "if it were not for the war". They see the things that have come—and we've seen this in Liberia—as a phenomenon that has been introduced during a war or a conflict situation. Things such as gang rapes or very, very brutal sexual violence, unfortunately stay in the society after the guns have fallen silent, as in Liberia. Assaults on children and gang rape, which were unknown before the war, are crimes which are still occurring. Rape is the number one reported crime there still. It affects society in a very deep way.

I think that where there is active conflict, this is still being used. The new phenomenon is that it has been used to punish, I mean in the political context, in connection with elections. In Angola we have seen it as a phenomenon with the expulsion of illegal migrants.

This is why I don't think anybody can give you a really clear answer as to whether or not it is improving. We are hoping that the attention this issue is being given, and the fact that the media are reporting and there is more political will will help us to improve the situation. I think impunity is at the core of all of this. If it continues with almost total impunity and there are no risks involved in doing this to women, then I don't think we will be able to tackle it properly.

With camps and the problems of IDPs, internally displaced persons, we made an inventory of what are the best peacekeeping practices. A lot has been done ad hoc and on the ground in a number of countries. We put the information together in an inventory which was presented last year. Now we are following up with the training of peacekeepers to make sure they can protect civilians effectively, using these methods. That includes everything from joint protection teams engaging with civil society, to having more fuel-efficient stoves so that women don't have to walk so far to get firewood or water. The women are accompanied to the market or to the water well. That has also been proven to be effective.

The whole design of camp areas is also very important. Women need particular protection. They need to have separate showers. They need to have all their needs met. I think that is being done sort of step by step. There is a better understanding of those needs. But it is not perfect, as we have seen from Haiti, for example, where this continues to be a huge challenge and there are a lot of problems with sexual harassment and rape.

• (1320)

**Mr. Mario Silva:** I have a brief question before I turn it over to Professor Irwin Cotler.

You do have an obligation and a responsibility to call out those who are committing these types of atrocities, including leaders of certain countries. We talk a great deal about impunity, and I agree with you totally on that, but we can't allow these people to get away with it.

As a special adviser you have a responsibility, I believe, to call out those people who are committing these particular crimes.

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** Exactly. This is what I got by Resolution 1960, which was adopted in December by the Security Council. I now have that tool available to me so that I can name them and shame them. We can list them. We can engage with different armed groups in order to get commitments from them so they can avoid being listed. That includes sanctions also. Until now this was only done for those who committed sexual violence against children. There was an artificial divide between children and grown-ups, and we got rid of this with Resolution 1960.

Now we are making sure we have a monitoring and reporting system and that we can also do the listing and the naming and shaming. That's correct.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we only have two minutes left in this round.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** I'll be very brief and I'll deal exactly with this point, because I appreciate the importance you gave to combatting impunity, your reference in that regard to the listing mechanism, UN Security Council Resolution 1960. I know Sudan is one of your two priority countries.

Given that the vote has been for independence in southern Sudan, there's been talk about waiving the indictment against President al-Bashir, or another one of the Sudanese leaders, Ahmad Harun, who have been indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. In other words, in order to further good relations between the north and the south, we should waive or ignore these indictments. What is your view on that? Would you regard waiving such indictments really as defaulting on the struggle against impunity?

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** I trust, a lot, the work of the International Criminal Court. It's extremely important that we work with the criminal court in the Hague. I am already cooperating with the ICC and, of course, they are calling for Mr. al-Bashir, so I would trust them on this. It would be unfortunate if, again, they were let off the hook. I personally wouldn't like to see that. It's very important that, in all the cases that are in front of the ICC at the moment, this is one of the elements they are accused of, including Jean-Pierre Bemba, including Mr. al-Bashir. It's very important to follow up and follow it through, also legally. To me, fighting impunity is core to any success on this issue.

• (1325)

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Thank you. I appreciate your commitment in this regard.

**The Chair:** If we stay on schedule, we should have time for an additional question or two. Perhaps we could return to you then, Professor.

*Madame Deschamps, s'il vous plaît.*

[*Translation*]

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

I am going to address you in French, Ms. Wallström. First, I would like to thank you for joining us to talk about your mission. It's a relatively new position, since it was just created last year, and you mentioned this in your remarks. You also told us that the resolution—the number escapes me at the moment—gave you tools to prevent perpetrators from committing their offences. You also mentioned five objectives.

I would like to know what you are doing to attain these objectives. How are you managing to coordinate your efforts and your work, given the presence of civil society organizations on the ground in the countries where these conflicts and actions are being committed? How can you have some influence on the government?

Early in the week, we had a representative from an NGO who is currently working in Sudan on the situation with women. She was trying to have changes made to the legislation that does not recognize the rape or assault of women as being criminal offences. It is very difficult for them because they have little or no access to the government. So they are working with the civil society, with the women in the north and south. It is very difficult for them to put pressure on the government. What would be your role with these women?

You also mentioned that you are working with seven countries, or that you have targeted seven countries, five of them in Africa. We are talking about countries in conflict or countries that have been affected by a serious earthquake. For example, the case of Haiti. How are you working with the women in Haiti, particularly women in refugee camps where it appears that there is a great deal of violence against women?

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** Thank you very much, Ms. Deschamps.

[*English*]

With respect to how my team and I work, there are nine people in total in my team. We are working politically. We are working within the UN system to influence everything from how mandates are formulated to how our peacekeepers are working on the ground. It's a very political role. Also, as you might know, this is my background.

It is my obligation to engage with governments, and I always aim for the highest level. I try to meet with presidents, prime ministers, and government ministers to mobilize them and to work with them on these issues. For example, the last time I visited the DRC, I managed to get a long meeting with President Kabila.

It is extremely important that we create political accountability and ownership of this issue. Without the work of NGOs and civil society organizations, we wouldn't know that much about this whole issue. We are dependent on, and indeed are very encouraged by, the work that NGO and civil society organizations are doing. They are also helping us to report about what happens on the ground.

I agree with you that the situation in Sudan is extremely difficult, as we learned from meeting with Sudanese government representatives. They underlined that they take rape so seriously that actually four witnesses—four male witnesses—are needed in order to report a rape. Of course, this means that no rapes will be reported because very rarely will there be four witnesses to report on such a crime.

You are also correct in describing the challenges in Haiti. We have to decide how to engage, because it is not really a conflict-related situation for me and my team. The whole UN system is engaged in finding solutions. It also engages with donor countries and others, the organizations that are active on the ground, to see how they can prevent sexual violence and rapes from happening.

I think that includes a lot of solutions, from patrolling during the night and making sure they are let into the camps to do more policing and monitoring of the situation with the possibility of intervening. There are more civil criminal elements who are raping women and children in Haiti. For me and my team, Haiti has not been given to us as a priority country, but of course we are keeping an eye on the situation. We are trying to collect as much information as possible from all areas in the world where sexual violence is used.

• (1330)

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** I will come back later, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Marston, then, please.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam, I want to commend you on taking up the challenge of this problem and your decision to help confront this horrendous crime against human dignity. The task today is quite huge, quite daunting.

I'm also pleased, though, to hear from you that you have a number of tools at your disposal that have not been there in the past. I'm of the opinion that historically, the countries you have named have been in conflict for generations now. What's very troubling for me is that it seems to be quite clear that the institutional memory of those countries is starting to accept that sexual assault is somehow acceptable in itself, both during and after the conflicts.

In the context of where we are in the world right now, when we see the situation that's happening in Libya, I'm heartened in a way, because part of what's purported to be coming to the fore in the situation in Libya via the United Nations is a sense of the responsibility to protect innocent non-combatant citizens.

I'm wondering if you see that sense of responsibility spreading into the area of sexual assault. In countries where this appears to be part of the culture at this point, are there religious organizations that have taken a stand against this practice, or are they somehow condoning it?

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** These are two very relevant and important questions.

Has sexual violence also become accepted in post-conflict situations? Certainly, it has lived on in post-conflict situations, and this has deeply affected those societies in countries that have experienced long civil wars. Of course, it will never be the same in a country where many young people have been recruited as child soldiers, for example, and maybe have had to rape a family member, a mother or a sister, and then have had to kill their mother or sister in front of their other family members and their villages, or perform other violent acts against their family members. This lives on for generations.

It is also important to see progress. The Security Council has decided this is part of the peace and security agenda. This is something they are willing to use all their weaponry to fight. We've also had these resolutions pointing to solutions. We are formulating protection of civilians in almost all the new mandates for peacekeepers. We are training peacekeepers. We are doing so much more in recognizing this as a plague and something we have to deal with.

I think you have both, but it has to do with the role of women and the respect for human rights. It is important to see this not solely as a women's issue, as I said before. It's a human rights issue. It is not cultural. It is not even sexual. It's criminal, and that is how we have to treat it.

You are also right in acknowledging the role of religious leaders. They are engaging more and more. We are also able to mobilize more men in the fight against sexual violence. So far this has been very problematic, because women carry the shame and the stigma of having been victims of sexual violence. Very often they are not allowed back into their families or their communities. They are extremely traumatized by this. We are also trying to reach out to religious leaders, to community and village leaders, to discuss with them what they can do to deal with the problem of the stigma. We have not been that successful in doing so yet, but we are continuing to target religious organizations because they play a pivotal role in many of those countries.

• (1335)

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** I think it was a year and a half ago that this committee did a study on the case of Omar Khadr, who was a child combatant. I'm sure you're aware of the case. We heard testimony about the kinds of things that were forced upon child soldiers, particularly on many who had been in Africa, in Sierra Leone, and places of that nature. You can understand that at the end of the situation the victims of the sexual assault have post-traumatic stress and all the complications of that mentally, plus the societal problems they face. In addition, the perpetrators will face horrendous guilt at some point in their lives; at some point they will address this in their own lives.

Until society as a whole in these countries not only accepts responsibility and stops that sexual assault and deems it to be the horrendous crime it is and comes to terms with addressing both the victims and the perpetrators, it will be a very difficult situation to change. It seems to me there's a horrendous need for on-the-ground education and understanding.

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** This is a huge challenge for the international community and also for donor countries. For example, in Liberia there is not one psychiatrist in the whole country. One can understand the need for psychosocial counselling and so on in dealing with the trauma from a very long civil war. They don't have any forensic expertise. They have asked us to look into this to see if we can assist, if we can mobilize donors and others to look into that and help them.

It is also important to learn from this post-conflict situation. We have to acknowledge this as a phenomenon that needs to be dealt with. Maybe sometimes we move too quickly into development, saying that once a war is over we can go on as if everything has been taken care of. We have to look into the psychosocial needs of the population, and in particular the child soldiers, and the traumas that have been experienced by the population. I can only agree with you.

• (1340)

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're starting with Mr. Sweet, and then we'll go to Mr. Hiebert.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you Madam Wallström.

I have two questions, and my colleague has some questions.

The first one is with regard to Mr. Cotler's concern about impunity. The subject of naming and shaming the perpetrators came up. I'm just wondering what level of mandate you have. Do you name the countries where the impunity is happening? Do you have a mandate to name the political parties? You mentioned that it was used by political parties to punish those who would run against them. To what level can you actually name as you gather evidence?

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** That's a good question. The mandate given to us in resolution 1960 is to name and shame, as has been done for these types of crimes committed against the underaged, that is, for sexual violence against children. That is for individuals and also for armed groups, militias or armies. Those are the ones we target. This has already been done. For example, there was mention of the famous, or should I say infamous, blacklist from the DRC. They are individuals, but we can also engage with armed groups, including national armies.

**Mr. David Sweet:** You could name a captain, a lieutenant or a general if you found evidence that he was actually commissioning troops to do such a thing. Do you have such a list right now?

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** We are working on our list. This has been done already when it comes to sexual violence against children. We have experience working with those types of lists. We need first to establish a monitoring and reporting system so that we have reliable data. Until now we have not had that, but this is exactly the mandate we were given in December. We're working on that at the moment.

What has been promising is that in the DRC, it is commanders who deal with foot soldiers, normal soldiers, because until now, it has been.... We want to go for the commanders, and the higher up the better in the chain of command. This is how it has to work to address the situation.

**Mr. David Sweet:** That's the process right now. I want you to know that no matter where we are in this study or in the future, anytime that you gather names on that list, the clerk of this committee would be glad to accept them. We would act upon that post-haste. I'm certain all my colleagues agree in that regard.

You talked about peacekeeping best practices. I had already made a list of things I wanted to find out about. Do you have a model? I understand that you go into an area where there has been devastation, whether it's natural devastation or whether it's caused by human conflict, and you set up camps for displaced people. Is there a model where you determine how much is needed per person for security, medical aid, food distribution, education, and hygiene? Is that one of the items you're working on as far as best practices are concerned to make sure that in those camps the best atmosphere is created to reintegrate those people and keep them safe?

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** As you know, in the UN we are very specialized. There are those who work on IDPs, on camps and on the design of the camps. I think this is still developing. This is not my direct task, but of course we are looking into this and the phenomenon of sexual violence being used in connection with, for example, expulsions of people who are in and around these camps. It's the peacekeepers and those who work on designing those camps who have to address this. We are trying to look into the rest.

Many of these peacekeepers, for example, come from India, South Africa, Uganda, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and they are placed in the jungle of the DRC. They don't speak any of the local languages. Suddenly this half-naked woman comes into view on the dirt road. She comes up to their vehicle and seems to be crying for help. What are they supposed to do in a situation like that? They don't understand what she's saying, but she seems to need help. They know that if they take her in the vehicle, they themselves might be accused of sexual exploitation and abuse. There has been a very lively debate about peacekeepers going to prostitutes or being accused of sexual violence. They cannot leave her there. They understand that this is a risky situation.

This is exactly the kind of training we are doing now. We are doing scenario-based training on the ground. We are trying to help them to deal with those different situations. We are also working with those who designed those camps.

When we visited Angola we discussed with the people there what was going on in connection with the people being expelled. Is it that the chain of command does not work? The police and border control allow this to happen, maybe around the chaos that exists in many of those situations. We have to make sure that it works, that the whole chain of command works, and that impunity is not the rule.

We have to address it on parallel tracks and at the same time in an effective way. My direct task is not exactly these camps, but this is definitely for the UN. This has to be part of how war support camps are designed. I'm sure there are calculations in terms of how many people are needed, how much this or that service is needed.

•(1345)

**Mr. David Sweet:** Thank you.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** What's the attitude of the local governments in the DRC and Angola? Are they complicit? Do they have an attitude of concern? Is there legislation on their books which, if enforced, could be used to prevent this sort of activity?

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** In most of these countries there is already a normative framework which is good enough, one could say. They very often have ambitious legislation against rape. They have the laws and the rules are there, but it's a matter of implementing of them. Unfortunately in the DRC, as you might know, they were not happy with my repeating the notion that the DRC was the rape capital of the world. I did not coin the phrase, but I said that as long as they allowed this to continue, their reputation would be taken hostage by the rapists and by the armed groups that use sexual violence as a tactic of war. It's very important that they themselves show that they are serious about fighting impunity, that they actually arrest these commanders. I think the whole attitude from governments and ministers has been lax until now, but I think we are seeing progress. We are seeing that we can mobilize them and that there is more of an accountability. It has become a liability also for governments that the international community is reporting on it and is following up, that the Security Council is discussing it, that there are sanctions committees in the UN dealing with it, and that there are these lists that name and shame. That is extremely important.

In Angola they were very clear and very much on the defensive. They said that this is not at all systemic, that they have found one case of a police officer who has done this and he has been arrested and put in jail. The attitude can be a little different, but they have to show they are serious by addressing these problems of impunity. Also there is the role of women. They have to give women a voice. They have to give women influence if this is to be changed over time.

•(1350)

**The Chair:** That uses up the available time, Mr. Hiebert.

I did ask about people wanting to ask further questions. Madame Deschamps indicated a desire to ask one more, as did Mr. Marston.

I'm going to try to leave enough time at the end. We'll finish with Miss Wallström, and then Mr. Silva wanted to bring a motion before us.

Let me turn to Madame Deschamps for a four-minute round.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to get things in order and for giving me an opportunity to ask another question.

I would have been very disappointed if I couldn't have asked it. Ten years after Resolution 1325, the Canadian government has proposed an action plan. That was a few months ago.

Have you had a chance to read the Canadian National Action Plan to Implement Security Council Resolution 1325?

[*English*]

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** Thank you very much for that question. It's an opportunity for me to say that I hope other countries will follow the example of having a national action plan as the implementation or the follow-up to Resolution 1325.

I have to be very honest with you and say that I don't know your national action plan by heart, but I know from contacts with Canadians here in New York and everywhere I've been that you've been extremely helpful. I have felt the support and the backing of Canada in everything I do. Also in the Security Council setting and around New York and through my political contacts, I must say that I have felt the support of Canada and your government. That has been very important. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Do you have any other questions?

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** I could go on a bit.

Aside from the action plan, do you think that Canada could do more internationally?

[*English*]

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** That's an invitation for me to say that I always think that member states can do even more. I think the elements of Resolution 1325 are very good. In particular, an extremely important part of it is the participation and representation of women. We can always do more in prevention. Of course, we will always need more resources for the work that is being done in practice and on the ground.

Integrating the whole thinking about sexual violence is extremely important. Maybe mentioning it explicitly would also be possible, so in any review of national action plans, I think this is what can be done.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** And you heard some...?

[*English*]

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** For example, one of the things that we have seen as extremely important is more women police, more women peacekeepers.

I would add one more element that I did not mention in my introduction, and that is the whole issue of conflict minerals. For example, in the DRC, there's the extraction of coltan and tungsten, rare minerals that are used in mobile phones. This is something that is keeping the conflict alive and will continue to fuel the conflict. Unfortunately, for the poor people in the DRC, nothing from the extraction of these conflict minerals gets back to them.

It is important to be able to trace it and hopefully one day be able to establish a global regime, such as the one that exists for diamonds, in order to be effective in fighting sexual violence.



• (1355)

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** So, to conclude, we could give the final word and say that, basically, for Canada to be realistic about its action plan, you need to be given more funding, perhaps long-term funding, as well, so that you can achieve your objectives.

[English]

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** I hope what we do will be long term, that we can keep these issues on the agenda of the Security Council, and that it will continue to be identified as a security issue. It is important for member states to decide in their bilateral programs, in their aid programs, how this is being addressed and if sexual violence is explicitly mentioned. That could be a way forward. I would need to study your national action plan. Unfortunately, I did not have time to do that before today to be able to comment on your specific action plan.

I hope we have placed this on the radar of member states and governments when they now look at those national action plans.

**The Chair:** Mr. Marston.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** I'll try to be to the point. What I was going to ask you, Madam, was whether there was a specific ask of the Government of Canada that this committee might present that you might offer to us.

You may be aware that Bill C-300 failed in our Parliament. It called on Canadian mining companies in foreign countries to observe the same rules and regulations they would in this country. We're about to go into an election, but I'm telling you right now that in the next Parliament, and should I be re-elected, I intend to present that bill again and make another effort, particularly in the area of conflict minerals.

This committee is probably going to dissolve within 48 hours. The past history of our committees has been that once we return to Parliament, they'll look back at the studies that have been done and will resurrect certain studies. I believe that we would want to resurrect this particular study.

In the meantime, if something comes to your mind that you would like to ask this committee to consider adding to the report, please let us know.

I don't have a specific question.

**The Chair:** Mr. Sweet, I believe you want to comment.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Yes, I have a follow-up question.

With regard to the immediate damage to children as well as the long-term repercussions, what is the difference as far as sexual violence that's perpetrated upon them? How do the repercussions differ between children and adults?

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** The last question is also a very important one. I have to think, so I can answer it in a serious and correct way.

Of course, it depends on circumstances, but very often a child's, and especially a young girl's, life opportunities are hampered by being exposed to something like this. Very often they cannot go to

school. Very often they will not be able to bear children, and that of course affects their whole lives.

At the same time, it's important that this be looked upon as a crime that is committed not only against children but also against adult women and that it not be played down. I call it a false hierarchy of war horrors that it is compared. They say that men get tortured or killed so what is a rape? You have to understand the effects on an adult woman. A child's whole future can be determined and destroyed by being exposed to rape, very often violent and brutal rape, or by being taken as a child soldier.

I met with grandmothers in the DRC. What they told me was absolutely horrific. They told me they pleaded with these young men. They told the young men they were the same age as their grandchildren—they could be their grandchildren—and asked them why they were doing this to women like themselves. They did not think they would have to go through this as 70-year-old women. It takes away the self-respect. Also there is the shame that surrounds this. It is so awful.

Very often women are the economic backbone of their societies, and after this occurs they are often depressed and they develop physical problems, medical problems such as fistula problems. It is difficult for them to bear more children.

There are all these effects on children and adult women. There is a whole range of effects.

To go back to the other issue, I understand I have to tread carefully here in the politically sensitive situation that you are in, so I won't take sides in a way that would put me in trouble. Let me say that I really hope other countries will follow the example of the United States of America. As you know, in its financial reform package it passed legislation on conflict minerals. I'm not saying it is perfect, but they are in the process of implementing it now.

To be effective it needs to be a global regime. I encourage all member states. I encourage the European Union as well as your country to look into conflict minerals and how to trace them and maybe even get to the certification process. But as a starting point, maybe following the model that will be introduced by the U.S., I think, will be very important for this whole issue to be solved.

• (1400)

**The Chair:** Please be very brief, Mr. Sweet.

**Mr. David Sweet:** I have just one last question on the sexual violence towards youth and children.

We had testimony from Afghanistan about a practice with young boys, boy dancing I believe it was. The additional traumatic thing about that situation was that the boy was actually enslaved for a time. Do you find those kinds of things happening in these focus countries that you're talking about? Is there long-term enslavement of young people? Are they repeatedly subjected to this sexual violence?

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** Yes. Unfortunately, this is the experience in these countries. The LRA also very often takes sex slaves. What you are saying is important. This is being done to men and boys as well as to women. It's useless to try to compare their suffering, but the stigma is also enormously strong for boys and men. Very often they hesitate to admit that this has happened to them.

I listened to one of the witnesses on the panel on reparations that was undertaken in the DRC. One of the men said that he had no idea that this could be done also to men when it was done to him. It was clear just how traumatic it had been for him. If we get more men on board in the fight against sexual violence by mentioning that this is also done to young boys and men, we can have more political ownership from men. Thank you for mentioning it.

This is also done in a form of sexual slavery. They're often forced to follow an armed group for a long time. It's not unusual that they're killed afterwards and just left in the forest.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Wallström. We very much appreciate your making yourself available to us today. It was very helpful.

At this point we'll wrap up this part of the hearing.

• (1405)

**Ms. Margot Wallström:** Thank you very much, honourable members.

**The Chair:** For the rest of the committee, we have a motion that Mr. Silva has put forward to the committee. I'll turn to that now.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Yes. It is that pursuant to Standing Orders....

Is everybody okay with the motion?

**The Chair:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Could the motion also be made public?

**The Chair:** Yes, we'll put out a press release with the motion.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

There is a high probability that this will be our last meeting of this Parliament. In an elegiac tone, let me take a moment first of all to say thank you.

[*Translation*]

Thank you to all the committee members. It has been a great pleasure to work with a group like yours in a non-partisan way. That's the exception here on Parliament Hill, and I would like to thank you all.

[*English*]

I want also to take a moment to thank other folks. As MPs, we are used to getting lots of credit for stuff, whether we deserve it or not. The translators and technical personnel don't get that chance, and we very much appreciate the fact that they run everything in a very competent manner, unsung. We appreciate it.

I see Mr. Hiebert applauding.

Likewise, our analysts; we have two excellent analysts with us. I get to work with them all the time. Melissa Radford and Erin Shaw are really fantastic.

Finally, we've gone through a number of clerks in the last little while, all of them very good. I want to thank Julie Prud'homme, who was our first clerk in this Parliament, Julie Pelletier, and finally Mariane Beaudin for their outstanding service, even by the high standards of the clerking and Library of Parliament services we expect here on Parliament Hill. I think they've all performed outstandingly, and I thank them.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Chair:** We are adjourned.







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