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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Good morning.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) our briefing on the situation in Mali will continue. I want to thank both of our witnesses for being here today.

From the Canadian Council on Africa we have Lucien Bradet, who is the president and chief executive officer. Welcome, sir.

From Project Ploughshares we have John Siebert, who is the executive director. Welcome, John.

John and I go back. He used to live in my riding a number of years ago. I've known John over the years, so it's nice to have him here in front of the committee today.

Why don't we get started with you, Mr. Siebert? We'll start with your opening statement, and then we'll move over to Mr. Bradet, and then we will go around the room over the next hour to ask questions back and forth. I believe you have a presentation of between eight and ten minutes. We look forward to hearing from you, and then we'll go back and forth with the members of Parliament to ask questions.

Welcome. The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. John Siebert (Executive Director, Project Ploughshares): Thanks for this opportunity to discuss Canada's current role in Mali.

Let me start by saying that the cautious approach being taken by the Canadian government is welcome.

In the detailed briefing I have sent to you, I propose five principles to guide Canada's decisions on how to contribute to the creation of sustainable peace in Mali. Specific initiatives can be tested against these principles.

The first three, dealing with humanitarian assistance, democracy and restoration, and building peace between the south and the north, have been spoken to very eloquently by other people who have appeared before this committee. I want to focus on the fourth and fifth principles that deal more directly with the military mission in Mali.

The crucial decision from my vantage point isn't boots on the ground or not boots on the ground, but what those boots do when they're on the ground. This applies to boots whether they're from Canada, France, Chad, Mali, the Economic Community of West

African States, ECOWAS, or the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Canada should press Mali and other military forces to make protection of vulnerable citizens their primary mission, displaying the highest respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Protecting vulnerable civilians will win and maintain the support of the local populations and should be the primary mission of Malian and international troops. Concrete military operational implications flow from this principle.

It's worth remembering that al-Qaeda and affiliated groups have a clear strategy for drawing western militaries into debilitating fights in inhospitable terrain. They use asymmetric tactics to exhaust the will and resources of their opponents. Why let them set the agenda when alternative frameworks for restoring security in Mali and the broader Sahel region are available?

The actions of Canada and others in Mali should not be characterized as being part of an anti-terrorism struggle. Instead, we should see Mali's current challenges as the culmination of political, military, and ethnic breakdown in Mali, which various groups have exploited.

The initial success of the French, Chadian, and Malian armed military forces in dislodging al-Qaeda and other insurgent forces from various urban areas is a welcome development, but as you well know, it's not definitive. In the vast countryside, AQIM and some Tuareg factions have reportedly established bases and supply lines that will permit them to carry out asymmetric attacks well into the future.

It is tempting for French and other military forces with advanced technological weaponry to now engage in search and destroy missions in the desert using air and drone strikes and to send special forces on raids to kill insurgents. This is a whack-a-mole strategy that has actually been counterproductive in other settings. As they say, for every insurgent killed, another 10 brothers or cousins step forward to repel the apostate enemy.

Instead, the military mission in Mali should continue to focus on protecting civilians in main population areas and along travel and trade routes. Keep open humanitarian assistance corridors. Patrol the borders as well as possible to disrupt supply routes for insurgents. Contain those who use terrorist methods, and then capture and submit them to democratic processes of justice. Military capabilities may be needed on an interim basis for these tasks, but the function is more akin to policing and should in fact devolve over time into a policing mission rather than a military mission.

The Malian military is reportedly engaging in human rights violations and targeted killing of civilians, particularly people identified as Tuaregs and Arabs. These actions are morally reprehensible and contrary to international law. Such behaviour also deepens the alienation of local populations and makes the tasks of re-establishing democracy and negotiating south-north peace much more difficult.

Robert Fowler, who appeared before this committee earlier in the week, said in his book that during his captivity in northern Mali, on a regular basis he and his colleague, Louis Guay, were subjected to al-Qaeda propaganda loops on laptops.

• (1105)

Always part of the show were pictures and videos of Abu Ghraib in Iraq and Guantanamo in Cuba, where western human rights standards were sacrificed on the altar of the great war on terror. Fowler bitterly detests and denounces these violations of fundamental human rights.

The deployment of ECOWAS troops to Mali under the auspices of UN Security Council Resolution 2085 is welcome. The problems in Mali threaten a broader range of countries than just Mali.

As a general principle, Canada should support policies and provide assistance that encourage and enable regional and sub-regional bodies like the African Union and ECOWAS to directly engage in peace operations in their own territories, assuming, of course, that the mission is properly authorized and implemented. Neighbours know the problems better and likely are more attuned to cultural and other dynamics.

Canada should strongly consider providing financial and technical assistance to the African-led international support mission to Mali, AFISMA, and to its UN successor, if AFISMA is re-hatted in some way as a UN mission. It should then address the problem of illegally circulating small arms and light weapons in Mali and its neighbours, and implement, as soon as possible, a program of disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation of fighters on all sides of the conflict.

Controlling and reducing the number of small arms and light weapons in Mali and the broader Sahel region should be a pressing priority for Canada and other new national actors in Mali. ECOWAS has enacted a convention on small arms, light weapons, their ammunition, and other associated material. This legally binding sub-regional instrument can provide the framework to attack this menacing reality. Canadian police and military have expertise in weapons stockpile management and control of guns in civilian possession and would make an important contribution to Mali's long-term stability.

Finally, peace agreements, when they're reached, often fail when combatants are not disarmed, properly demobilized, and reintegrated into the social and economic life of their communities. DDR programs have been established in many countries after peace agreements were reached and, again, Canada could provide leadership to define both the need and the plan for implementation in the medium and longer term. There is a range of non-combatant but military contributions that Canada can make to Mali's long-term peace and stability.

In closing, allow me to agree with Major-General Jonathan Vance, who appeared before this committee last week and said:

...there is a tendency sometimes to see military kinetic action as being the silver bullet on the Islamist threat. In fact, kinetic action does not address root causes. An appropriate balance between hard military and all of the other things that have been mentioned here is what actually stops the Islamist threat. You simply are unable to use kinetics to stop this.

Thanks very much.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Siebert.

We're going to turn it over to Mr. Bradet from the Canadian Council on Africa.

The floor is yours, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lucien Bradet (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Council on Africa): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, good morning.

[*English*]

I'll just give you my background in Africa. I think I am the only Canadian who has ever graduated from the University of Rwanda, so it goes a few years back, just a few years back, fortunately, but Africa has been a little bit in my blood since then.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for giving the Canadian Council on Africa an opportunity to talk about such an important issue for Africa, but also for many Canadians.

[*English*]

In October 2012, in Paris, our Minister of Foreign Affairs declared the following: We must not allow the same problems that the world allowed to happen in Afghanistan to show their face in the Saharan region and Mali. The territorial integrity...the humanitarian situation, the fight against terrorism must remain a priority.

The minister expressed, I think, at that time, what Canadians believed then and still believe now. We should then look at Mali with that frame of mind, with the same glasses. Does it require the same action, the same approach? Maybe not, but one thing is for sure in our minds: that to be absent, to do nothing, is definitely not the response for such a condition.

CC Africa is an organization that was established about 10 years ago in the footsteps of Kananaskis. We're a group from the private sector, education, universities, and colleges. All of the government departments interested in the economic development of Africa also are members. Our mission is the economic development of Africa. We're not as much on the humanitarian side as many others are. We work with them, but our main focus is the economy of Africa.

[*Translation*]

Canada cannot afford to adopt an attitude of indifference or inactivity. That would be a serious mistake, as we would be failing to meet our responsibilities as a rich and developed country.

[English]

I realize a number of witnesses addressed the humanitarian issue as well as the stability of the region. Today I would like to shed some light on the economic aspect of the crisis, and what it means for Canada.

[Translation]

I will not go into all the potential scenarios in the region.

[English]

Again, there are many ways of looking at the region and what might happen there.

[Translation]

Many people have probably painted a bleak picture of the situation. Unfortunately, that could become a reality faster than we think. I would like to raise three reasons for Canada to play a role in this conflict.

For starters, some Canadian companies have major investments in Mali and the neighbouring regions. In Mali alone, we have 30 mining companies, which have invested a total of \$400 million. Although those companies have not decided to leave the country, they may have to do so if peace is not restored. Some companies have already started slowing down their investments.

For the same reason, no new investments should be expected. Mali is a poor country in great need of those investments. So we have to protect the asset those natural resources represent. If investors continue to pursue economic development, those resources will help the countries make progress. The investments are even larger in the neighbouring countries—especially Niger and Burkina Faso—totalling billions of dollars.

Canada also continues to play a key role in Mali's economy. For those who are unaware, since the 2000s, a Canadian company, Canadian Bank Note, which is based here, in Ottawa, has been in charge of Mali's whole passport issuing system. It has also been responsible for the border control, tax documentation, license tax and tax systems. That's an enormous amount of work. An interesting fact about that huge job is that Canada won the contract over France, its competitor in that case. Some would say that France is creating an amazing springboard for itself going forward. So if Canada is not involved, it will lose out considerably.

More recently, a Montreal-based company, CRC Sogema, developed in Mali what could be referred to as a key element—a tax system. That project has been in the works since the 2000s and has just been revived with the setting up of a property tax system. That represents a revenue of 67 billion CFA francs for the Malian government. That figure is now over 200.

●(1115)

Canada has set up basic economic systems in Mali. It continues to provide Malians with very considerable assistance. Unfortunately, the conflict has led to a drastic drop in some of that revenue. The tax recovery rate is now 30%. It was much higher before the conflict began.

There is another reason for Canada to answer the call. My colleague here has talked about that. Despite all the good will of a

number of African countries that have volunteered to help restore peace or perform peacekeeping activities, most of them do not have the required financial resources to equip themselves properly. The same goes for human resources training.

Given those circumstances, how could a military or peace force ensure peace, be it in large cities or across the country? I think that an exclusively African intervention would be very risky and would fail to achieve the desired outcome—peace, security and democratic governance.

As for the third point, I care deeply about Mali. I am sure that's the case for some members of the committee and perhaps even, I hope, for everyone around this table. Mali is one of the rare francophone African countries that could be qualified as a “country of focus”. Since the government made changes one or two years ago, only 2 francophone nations out of 26 remain countries of focus—Mali and Senegal.

If we reduce our presence in Senegal, the situation in certain communities will become even more of a purgatory than it currently is. In other words, that country is very appreciated by Canada. Its governance has been used as an example for a number of years, and Canada has carried out some amazing assistance programs there, as I just mentioned.

Can Canada afford to be a casual observer in this conflict? We don't think so. We have played an important role in Afghanistan, be it when it comes to assistance, development, logistics or training on the front, among other things. A few minutes ago, we talked about boots. We also played an active role in Libya. To a lesser extent, we play a role that has an impact on Syria, even though it is outside its territory. The terrorism issue is not close to being resolved. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs said, that issue is still very real in Mali and the region.

Why are we considering taking an almost-neutral approach in the case of such a poor country? I may be exaggerating a bit. We are not neutral; we say we are in favour of a solution. However, some of our actions indicate that we are not far from being neutral. Yet that is not in keeping with either the statements made by the minister or those made by Canadians.

We do not recommend an approach similar to that used in Afghanistan or Syria. However, we believe that Canada can increase its humanitarian aid and public safety assistance, and provide logistic support to African troops that are in the field and will probably remain there for quite some time. I am talking about support in communications, training and transportation. Finally, we recommend that Canada be very active when it comes to diplomacy and trade.

Knowing that I would appear today before this committee, members of certain companies asked me to give a clear message to the elected representatives. They want you to know that they continue to work in Africa because they have access to a system that complies with laws and regulations. According to them, if they leave or drastically reduce their presence, Canadian investments will be withdrawn or the commercial territory—if I may use that expression—will be totally taken over by others. If that is the case, Canada will lose out in one of the only two countries where it has some presence.

We risk losing a great deal, be it in terms of our influence in Africa, as I mentioned earlier, our trade interests—especially when it comes to investments—or the francophonie. I constantly hear other governments in Canada talk about that. I think that the Canadian government should also pay attention to that aspect.

I have gone slightly over my 10 minutes. Thank you.

• (1120)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to start with the opposition. Mr. Dewar, for seven minutes please.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): I thank both of our witnesses today. I think they both provided us with some very precise advice.

Mr. Chair, I will share my time with my colleague Madame Laverdière. I have one question.

Mr. Bradet, I'm going to start with you. I'm going to read from your presentation back in 2009 when you said the following to the committee. I think you'll be okay with this. We'll find out. You said:

Africa shares the concerns of the African diplomatic missions. In the last few years we have clearly observed a trend that indicates the Canadian government, in general, is less and less present in Africa, whereas the Canadian population is doing more and more there. We are here today to ensure that this concern is communicated clearly to the members of Parliament, and that this issue is taken as a priority by the committee. We understand you have many priorities, but we believe this is one that should be considered very seriously.

It is our assessment that there is an emergency and that Parliament must take necessary action to stop it and put in place a moratorium on budget cuts, on embassy closings, until a comprehensive strategy is developed after appropriate consultations with Canadians.

You said that in 2009. I want to get your assessment in 2013. Do you stand by those words?

Mr. Lucien Bradet: As I said to one of your colleagues before the meeting, I'm a missionary for Africa in Canada. I think the mission is having a number of successes. I think I would not repeat exactly the same words on that one. I think in the last year or so, I definitely have felt a renewed interest in Africa by the Government of Canada. There's no doubt about that, and I'm so pleased. I'm seeing some success in some places. It's not 100%, but we are succeeding.

In the last six months two presidents came from Africa, the first in six years. That was major progress. We've had about four ministerial visits. Two weeks ago we had the first business mission ever to Ghana and Nigeria by the Minister of International Trade.

[Translation]

So things are warming up.

[English]

I think the United Nations episode will have wakened a few thinkers. Also, the economy of Africa is really going up, contrary to that in the rest of the world, and that attracts attention. Our government has decided that trade is one of their priorities. There are emerging markets in Africa, and I think we are getting to the right place, and I'm very pleased about that. I will be able to retire soon because I think we are succeeding.

So I will not repeat that judgment. I think we're making progress.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Would you agree.... I have to share my time so I'll be quick. We should not close further missions—

[Translation]

Mr. Lucien Bradet: No.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar: When I asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs how many we closed in the last number of years, he wasn't sure. He'll get back to us on that. But I could tell him it was five in the last number of years. Should we at least stop that trend and maybe even open some new missions?

Mr. Lucien Bradet: You're preaching to the converted. I'd like to have more missions.

I'll tell you a short story. Ten years ago, we were exactly where Brazil was with 17 missions. We are now at 14, and they are at 32. All I'm saying is that I'd like to be like Brazil today. I don't know if we'll get there. Also, when you look at the numbers, we were at \$2 billion; they were at \$2 billion. We are now at \$12 billion and they are at \$35 billion, so do the math. If you go there, you develop friendships. Friendships cannot be developed at a distance. You have to be there. So yes, is the answer, I'd like more. There's no doubt.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Paul Dewar): Now I'll hand it over to my colleague.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both presenters.

As a former diplomat, I have to say that, yes, you have to be on the ground. You can't do it from the outside.

I have a question for Mr. Siebert, who mentioned the tool acquired by ECOWAS to control arms. I'd like to know more about how the tool is being used in the region right now. There is something else I'd like to know.

• (1125)

[English]

If we had a global arms trade treaty, would that provide more support or more prevention tools? Would it be useful in that region?

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

[English]

Mr. John Siebert: The ECOWAS small arms agreement has been in place for a number of years, and like for many of these sub-regional or regional agreements on arms control and disarmament, implementation is a huge challenge. There is great support both by civil society in that region and more broadly to assist in that process.

The arms trade treaty certainly would help because it would be comprehensive, in other words worldwide, if it was passed in a comprehensive fashion and also had implementation assistance attached to it.

The instrument is in place. It is a way to work with our African colleagues who are there on the ground. It's a very difficult situation. We talk about controlling, and then reducing. The illegal trade across borders, which are obviously very porous, is a huge challenge throughout Africa, in Mali, in Niger, in Algeria, and other places.

Yes, an arms trade treaty would help.

The Chair: There is about 30 seconds left. We'll give a little extra time next time.

We're going to move to Mr. Dechert, for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Gentlemen, thank you for being here with us today.

I'd like to start with Mr. Siebert. You made a number of interesting comments about military action in Mali. You obviously heard what Mr. Fowler had to say on Tuesday. He went into some detail about how he thought Canada should have a greater military role than we're currently doing there, that we should have special forces there working alongside French special forces, and we should provide logistics and intelligence support.

Basically he was encouraging us to get more involved in fighting the terrorists, rooting out the terrorists, specifically with a focus, I think, on the people who perhaps had kidnapped him and caused so much grief to him and Mr. Guay. We certainly sympathize with that. I can certainly understand that. It's the way I'd feel I guess if I went through what he went through.

But I sort of hear something different from you. You mentioned a comment about.... I'll come back to it. Mr. Bradet made the comment I want to come back to.

I want to hear from you in terms of what you think about what Canada is currently doing in supporting the French army and the Malian army in the fight against the terrorists, and stabilizing, and bringing peace to northern Mali, and whether you agree with Mr. Fowler that Canada should be sending more military personnel there to take on a greater role.

Mr. John Siebert: Thanks very much.

Obviously with great respect for Mr. Fowler and for the experience he went through, which none of us would like to experience ourselves, I think the notion of offensive special forces, drone, and other kinds of attacks in the long run can be

counterproductive, and not only should Canada refrain from these things, but so should the French, and so should the Malians.

You want to stabilize the population centres and over time spread that stability. Clearly there are a range of insurgents in Mali as has been reported. Some are extremely difficult, hard people, and over time, like spoilers in any insurgency, they are going to need to be confronted or they will come too and be confronted.

The emphasis should be on protecting civilians rather than offensive military action primarily because over time that's what works.

In 2006 there was a Rand study, not exactly the starting point for a Project Ploughshares reference, but it looked at how insurgencies end, and 93% end not by military or offensive military action. There are different ways of handling insurgencies.

• (1130)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you.

Mr. Bradet, you said a number of things. One was that terrorism is not about to disappear, and in your view we are getting perilously close to neutrality.

How does transporting troops and weapons to Mali to support the French army and the Malian army in this conflict make us neutral?

Mr. Lucien Bradet: In the paper recently, I saw that we had a plane and we had some of the logistics. I was very prudent in not saying total neutrality; I said it's quasi. I don't want us to be neutral. I want to go further than that. I could have used other words.

Mr. Bob Dechert: I just want to clarify because I'm assuming, and we're all assuming, that some of the equipment and personnel that we've transported to Africa has been killing people and terrorists, the bad guys, in northern Mali—

Mr. Lucien Bradet: If the decision of the government is to do all of that for the next period, and that's what we see at the end of my proposal, we should do those things. I agree that we should not send boots by the hundreds and things like that, but we should have logistics support and transport if we can, and so forth. I retract that word.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Okay.

Mr. Lucien Bradet: That word "neutrality" was a little bit too strong.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Okay.

I want to switch gears and talk about the return to democracy in Mali. As you both know, the Malian government has adopted a road map to return to democracy. They've put forward a date for elections of July 31.

Can you tell us what you think are some of the specific challenges that Mali faces in preparing for those upcoming elections? What are some of the benchmarks we should be looking at prior to July 31? Do you think that Mali will accomplish the goals in the road map to democracy? I'd like to hear from both you and Mr. Siebert on this.

Mr. Lucien Bradet: There's no doubt that what's happening now will definitely determine if they are able to respect that calendar. I must admit that in countries where there has been conflict, it's always very challenging to respect election dates. I'm not saying it never happens on the right dates. It always happens at one point in time, but it's rare that the dates are respected. I think that when we have to watch it is when all the pieces are coming back and if it's durable, because if there is another surge from one area to the other, it will change. The best barometer or the best way to watch for it is to see the intervention of the French and when they are going out. They will play a major role. If the French go out very soon or rapidly, then it may be chaotic very rapidly, too.

There are a lot of questions that we don't have answers for that will have an impact on that question of the dates. Am I an optimist or a pessimist? I don't know. We should be very realistic and say it's a little bit soon to think about a specific election, but it's important for the government to declare itself. I know people there who were Canadian who are now in the Government of Mali as ministers. There are very good people there, too. They will fight for democracy but they don't manage everything. I agree that the coup did not help because the former president was a very good president, as far as I'm concerned. The fact that it was *renversé* didn't help at all.

The Chair: Very quickly because we're almost out of time.

Mr. John Siebert: I wouldn't hold to a fast election date. There has been experience in war-torn countries where having elections too soon actually exacerbates conflicts. Obviously, it's for the Malians to decide ultimately, but if there are interim arrangements that are stable and that are still in the direction of democratic elections, that's helpful.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Siebert and Mr. Dechert.

We're going to move to Mr. McKay and Mr. Eyking for seven minutes, please.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you both for coming.

I'm going to split my time with my colleague, which is regrettable since I would really like to pursue a conversation with you, Mr. Siebert. You know I've been a huge fan of Ploughshares for years and will continue to be so.

As you know, Mr. Fowler was here earlier this week, and he probably had the clearest thinking in certainly all of the testimony we've heard. Like him or dislike him, ignore him or accept him, he certainly was clear. The government has chosen, for whatever reason, to just dismiss him as a former diplomat who is somewhat obsessive because of his kidnapping.

Nevertheless, he does join the point with you on, if you will, the initial stages of the military response. The point is that you see this conflict as an insurgency, an insurgency being, if you will, a claim for political territory or a claim for geographic territory, or some ethnic dispute.

Mr. Fowler's point, on the other hand, is that this is not an insurgency, that this is a jihad and they actually don't care about the territorial integrity of Mali, they don't care about the politics of Mali,

they don't care about anything Malian. They have a greater mission, and that is to spread some sort of 7th century Islam across the Sahel.

Therein lies the difference. Where you describe the military response as kind of whack-a-mole, Mr. Fowler would say the only point at this point is that you have to degrade and decapitate al-Qaeda and all of their friends to such a point that they cannot pose a national, a regional, or an international threat, and that is your military goal. Without achieving that military goal, all else becomes fantasy, i.e., the road map to democracy, the restoration of any economic semblance of activity, etc.

I'd be interested to focus on that difference between responding to a jihadist threat versus responding to an insurgency that may or may not have territorial or political ambitions.

• (1135)

Mr. John Siebert: Clearly there are a number of sides active in the north. There has been a civil war off and on with Tuaregs for many years. Some of the factions currently engaged in activities in the north are Tuareg and militant and might identify themselves, but others are not and others are willing to speak with Bamako, mediated by their neighbours.

The problem with focusing this as a jihadi terrorist sort of mission is that you give them too much credit. They can say what they want.

Being a religious person, I know many religious people who make quite grandiose claims. They're not necessarily true. Fundamentally, an insurgency or any kind of group active in a territory depends on the goodwill, or at least the passive support, of the local population. That's also true in northern Africa, whether it's Somalia, Tunisia, or elsewhere.

What you need to do, in my view, is to create as many of the conditions as possible to isolate those who have this foreign intrusion sort of jihadi apocalyptic approach and say that's not in the best interests of Mali. And Malians, no matter who they are, will say that's not in their best interests.

In Iraq—

Hon. John McKay: It's an excellent response.

I think, to be fair, Mr. Fowler would describe it as a naive response. I'm not being pejorative about that. You and I share the religious experiences, shall we say.

But if you look at the Arab Spring and the intense destabilization by various Islamic groups across the north of Africa down into the Sahel, this is déjà vu all over again.

Again, I don't want to disagree with General Vance, because I like and admire him a great deal. It's not entirely a kinetic response, I agree. But in this particular instance, a kinetic response in a very forceful fashion is the only thing that's going to stop this advance.

I appreciate what you say and I think that joins the issue.

I'm pretty mindful of my colleague's wish to ask other questions. I don't know how much time we have left, but not much, I'm afraid.

• (1140)

The Chair: You have a minute.

Hon. John McKay: Okay, well I'm going to have to pay for that. Go ahead.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): I'll be quick.

I want to get off the topic of the military role. I'd like to talk about the economy.

Former prime ministers Paul Martin and Tony Blair have done a lot of work on the Congo Basin...better economies, better peace.

You alluded to concern about a vacuum with our companies there. How can we as a country foster better economic activity in the area, not only helping our companies going through the transition, but also trade and buying goods. How can we do more? I really believe when the dust settles that if the economy is moving fast for them, it's better. How can Canada as a country do more in that region?

The Chair: Mr. Badet, there is about half a minute so could you be succinct.

Mr. Lucien Bradet: Okay, I will be fast.

It goes by the action we may or may not take. If we take no action, and I agree that we are already taking action, if we don't continue those actions and reinforce some of them, we're going to disappear from the scene and the people who are active will take the prize. I don't have to name who they are. I see that on a daily basis.

Other countries that are active in Africa have a better entry on the trade side than those who are not present enough. I'll be very careful about my words. If you want diplomacy to be there, if you want trade offices or companies to be there, you will have to involve yourself in that conflict one way or another. If you do not, then we will be forgotten. They will say, "Canada was not there so we'll go to a country that was really there."

[Translation]

I went off on a bit of a tangent.

[English]

but that's the way I look at it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll start our second round.

Ms. Brown, for five minutes, please.

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

Gentlemen, thank you for being here. It's delightful to have the opportunity, Mr. Badet, to speak with you again. Mr. Siebert, I have followed the work that Project Ploughshares has done and I'm hoping to give you the opportunity to speak.

The first thing I want to do is dispel this myth that the opposition wants to perpetuate about how Canada is not active in Africa. That is the farthest from the truth. The fact is we have doubled our aid to Africa. Most importantly, we have untied our aid to Africa, first by untying our food aid, and now by the end of 2013, we will have untied all of our aid. We are giving Africans the opportunity to get the best bang for the buck, as it were, with the development dollars that we are investing there.

I want to talk about the presence in Africa, just purely on the presence of Canadian parliamentarians in Africa. We've seen Minister Fast there in the last two weeks. Minister Fantino has been twice in the last four months. The Prime Minister was in the DRC for the Francophonie summit. The Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association has had three parliamentary trips. Last year we were in Ethiopia and Senegal, Kenya and South Sudan, and most recently in Kenya and Malawi. So the presence of parliamentarians has been enormous.

Mr. Lucien Bradet: Many trips—

Ms. Lois Brown: We have made contributions to the Global Fund, to the World Food Programme, to the GAVI Alliance. Our contributions to maternal, newborn, and child health are unmatched by anybody. We have put money into the drought relief in east Africa. This year we stepped up to the plate with the Sahel crisis matching fund with a contribution of close to \$56 million. Canadians have to know that Canada is intimately involved with Africa, that we care deeply.

I know, Mr. Siebert, that your organization has received funding from CIDA. You've been active in the Sahel region. I wonder if you could tell the committee about some of the projects that you have undertaken, what successes you have had, and how you see Mali and the Sahel area in general moving forward.

Mr. John Siebert: Thanks very much.

We've actually not had projects funded by CIDA and by Foreign Affairs since about 2009.

Ms. Lois Brown: You have had money in the past—

Mr. John Siebert: Yes, we have—

Ms. Lois Brown: —and many of those projects are multi-year projects, so you can talk about some of the things that you have done there, if you would, please.

• (1145)

Mr. John Siebert: Yes.

We've been active in Sudan and primarily east Africa. You have this band across the north where the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa overlap. You have the dynamics of ethnic and other tensions, religious differences and those sorts of things, demonstrated in Sudan and other countries.

It's important work not only to engage in the humanitarian and development assistance, but to twin that with peace-building efforts, utilizing the resources of civil society, although it may be weak at times, partnering with folks to do that work, and also working on the small arms and light weapons control and reduction agenda that plagues most of Africa, but particularly this part of Africa.

At one point, in about 2009 or 2010, one of your colleagues in the House—they'll remain nameless, just to stay on the non-partisan side of things—said that the pivot from Africa towards Latin America by the federal government, which is basically a reality, can't be maintained, and for two reasons. One is that there is this arc of instability that attaches to the Islamist security aspirations, but also, Canadian mining and other interests are increasing in Africa. Canada can't stay away.

I think some of the things you mentioned just a minute ago are evidence of that reality.

Ms. Lois Brown: We have been putting \$110 million a year into Mali for the last three years as a country of focus, and that money has gone in great part to help build governance. We firmly believe... and we just did a study in this committee, and heard from many of the intervenors, that until we see institution building going on in these countries, the private sector is not going to have the opportunity to grow.

We've put \$110 million a year into Mali. That's over \$300 million. So when we hear other countries coming to a forum, saying, "Yes, we're going to come with all this money", they haven't been present there in the past. Canada has a history; Canada has a long history in Mali, and we want to ensure that the country is safe and secure for economic growth to happen.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Brown.

We'll move to Madame Pécelet, please, for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for you, Mr. Siebert.

As you know, on Tuesday, the committee heard from the Minister of Foreign Affairs so he could tell us a bit about what was going on. He said that Canada had received a number of specific requests, particularly in terms of logistics. He was unable, however, to tell us what the needs on the ground were and what requests Canada had received in that regard.

I think you're in an excellent position to tell the committee what Malians and organizations on the ground need urgently.

[English]

Mr. John Siebert: Certainly the humanitarian and development assistance for those Malians who are in most need is crucial and will contribute over time to the stability.

On the exact requests in terms of military engagement, I have no more awareness of those than what I read in the media or that you read in the media, but apparently there are discussions going on in the UN, at the AU and other places, in the EU. There are options. There could be a UN mission that directs all of this activity at both the political and military sides. It could be a combination of African Union and UN. Those things are to be determined.

I hope our contribution to the thinking about how Canada responds to this would be to say that there are certain types of activity we should engage in. That's why I described the policing-like action of the military forces and not engaging in this offensive military action against insurgents as a primary focus, etc.

In a fluid situation, with many people negotiating, clearly the French are going to be in the forefront; whether it's a UN or an AU mission, they're going to be participating. They apparently have 6,000 citizens in Bamako, which goes a long way to explaining why they would move so quickly in January.

So it's fluid. There will be choices to make.

•(1150)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for you, Mr. Siebert.

[English]

A few years ago, you used to send people through the young professionals international program to work in peace building in that region. Given the current situation in this overall region, do you think it would be useful to have such a program again?

Mr. John Siebert: Yes, certainly.

Over the 10 years the YPI program was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs, we found that the 100-plus people we sent out actually did what the program was designed to do, which was to become engaged in international careers throughout the UN system in different parts of the world. Many I now bump into at CIDA and at Foreign Affairs.

This kind of strategy is longer term, obviously, not only for Canadians engaged in international peace building but also for the institutions that receive Canadians and benefit from their work when they're in situ. That's obviously not an immediate response to what's going on in Mali.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Are you afraid that we're moving away from those long-term approaches, which are very fruitful, and from people-to-people links in Africa and elsewhere?

Mr. John Siebert: We're certainly an advocate for strengthening civil society participation in peace processes, in disarmament processes, and in other sources of activities, obviously on the development side. Our development colleagues in the NGO community are very interested, very concerned, and are working on these issues.

You can't create government institutions without the consent and the legitimacy of the people. Civil society needs to be engaged. Women need to be engaged because there are gender dimensions to conflict that people like me still need to learn a lot about. Those sorts of supports are definitely needed.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: What should the Canadian contribution be to the work plan to return to full democracy, the road map?

Mr. Lucien Bradet: As I said to your colleague on the other side, it all depends on how the conflict evolves. Canada can play a role because it has played a role in peacekeeping in the past. The principles enunciated by the minister are very clear. We do not want to have another Afghanistan if we can avoid it. I was listening to the exchange in the House a few minutes ago. Can we terminate that combat and *bataille*? I don't think so. We've done that. We've tried elsewhere and it doesn't work. We've tried in Afghanistan, in one country. Now we're talking about a whole region with fewer people, but I'm still very concerned by that.

Is there a road map at this point in time? I'm not a miracle person. I don't know the road map.

[Translation]

There are too many pitfalls, too much uncertainty.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to finish up with Mr. Van Kesteren. You have five minutes, please.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here. It's a very interesting discussion.

Mr. Siebert, like Mr. McKay, I long for the day, too, when we'll beat our swords into ploughshares. For example, in not too recent history, think of the Russians and the Bolsheviks, where 5% of the population was able to keep those people in a horrible state for 70 years.

We talked at the last meeting about military engagement. We talked about the survey that had come forth. Most Canadians are tired of these battles that never seem to come to any fruition. Should we just draw a line in the sand, as we did with the Soviet Union, and tell them to try their luck with their type of system and that we'll see them in 50 years, rather than try to correct them? Look at what we've done in Egypt and the hopes that we had for the Arab Spring. We look at the turmoil going on there. Every time we go in there, it seems to get worse.

• (1155)

Mr. Lucien Bradet: I don't know if you asked the question to both of us, but I'm willing to give my opinion.

I don't think we can do that, sir. I think that Canada is a rich country, one of the best in the world. We have responsibilities and we have no choice. We have to involve ourselves where human beings are *menacés*, where peace is not there. When we can do something, we have to do something.

I'm talking as a Canadian here and also for CCAfrica. But I'm talking as a Canadian. We have no choice. I don't think we can pack our bags and say, "Let them solve their problems." We are not in that human environment anymore. We are in a global village and we have no choice but to help human beings where they are.

I agree with you that Canadians do not have the stomach at this point in time to start over in Afghanistan, in terms of the number of people and all of that. I agree with that. The minister is right in saying that, too, but there are different degrees.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: What about the involvement of other countries? As a Canadian, I think we do have some vested interest there, if we look at it from an economics standpoint. From a humanitarian standpoint, Mr. Siebert, I agree with you. We need to have that concern and love for our fellow man, too.

What about other countries? While France has 2,500 troops, it's nothing in comparison to what we committed to in Afghanistan. What about the other European countries? Don't they have more of a responsibility to play that role? We can play the role that we're doing now, and possibly do the things Mr. Siebert also—

Mr. Lucien Bradet: I think they do, but not all of them will play. The U.S. is already there helping. Canada is helping. Not all UN, EU countries will.

Mr. John Siebert: Here's the great news, and thank you for asking a question that allows me to say this. We've been tracking armed conflicts, wars, since 1987. In the last 15 years there's been a 40% decrease in the number of wars. Why did that happen? Here's the short story. The cold war ended, obviously, so that east-west confrontation wasn't being played out in proxy wars, but also there was a substantial increase in UN missions throughout the world, a substantial increase in UN diplomacy through special representatives of the Secretary-General, and development and humanitarian assistance investments, particularly in Africa.

The number of wars has decreased dramatically in Africa. Each one, if you're in it or your family's there, is a tragedy of untold proportions.

I'd also like to go back to the Soviet Union and the cold war. How did it end? It ended by people rising up. I know that internationally the churches, and other religious organizations were involved through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in the Helsinki process to keep pressing on the human rights, the human basket dimension, to look at economic incentives for ending those sorts of oppressive regimes.

My parents were refugees as four-year-olds in the 1920s from the former Soviet Union. I grew up with those stories. I'm privileged. I didn't live in a war zone when I grew up. But I think we shouldn't give up hope.

We have as a motto, part of our mission is to end war. You can chuckle a bit at the naïveté, but here's my Doctor Phil moment: how are these options working for ya?

Afghanistan has not responded to the types of initiatives that Mr. Fowler suggested here. Neither did Libya. We have a very unstable situation and we're not sure if a long-term sustainable peace in those places would happen. There are actually implications where the approach I'm advocating, which is a longer term peace-building approach, is much more dangerous for intervening troops. It's more likely that casualties will be taken, but you have to be there, you have to stay there, and you have to spread the security.

Sorry to take your time.

The Chair: No, thank you very much.

That's all the time we have. Mr. Siebert and Mr. Bradet, thank you very much for your testimony today.

We're going to suspend for a second to get set up for a teleconference to deal with the United Nations, and then we'll come right back.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1200)

The Chair: Okay, if we could have the members back to the table, we'll get started.

Welcome back, everyone. Joining us from New York, we've got Quentin Levet, the team leader for the coordination and response division with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Mr. Levet, thank you very much for joining us today.

Just before we start with your opening testimony, I know that Mr. Dewar from the opposition had a quick comment and then we will get started right away with your testimony.

• (1205)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you, Chair.

This will be quick. I just wanted to raise a point of clarification or point of order.

At the December 4 committee meeting, I asked Minister Fantino about the number of projects he had approved under the partnerships with Canadians programs, and actually the same question had been raised by my colleague Madame Laverdière. The minister didn't know the answer at the time of the meeting but committed to provide us with the exact number of projects that had been approved to that date.

We received the minister's response and I have it here in writing. It was provided to the committee on February 7, 2013. In it he says that as of January 23, 2013, he had approved 35 projects.

I obviously appreciate the response, but the minister's letter is not clear as to whether all 35 projects were under the partnerships with Canadians programs or if they include the total number of projects he has approved since his assignment as minister in July 2012.

Furthermore, the question I raised on December 4, 2012, was to ask how many projects had been approved by the partnerships with Canadians programs as of December 4, not January 23.

Mr. Chair, in order that the committee members have the clear information on which to base our mandated oversight of departmental spending, I ask that you request the minister provide a response to the question at hand, which is, as of December 4, 2012—which is when I posed the question—how many projects under partnerships with Canadians programs had been approved for funding by the minister.

The Chair: We can send something off.

Thank you.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Levet, thank you very much. We look forward to your opening statement. You have 10 minutes so we'll just turn the floor over to you and then we'll go back and forth with the members of the committee to ask questions for follow-up. Once again, thank you for taking time. We're looking forward to your testimony.

Mr. Quentin Levet (Team Leader, Coordination and Response Division, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs): Thank you very much, sir. I thank, as well, the panel for giving me this opportunity today.

The current escalation of the conflict in Mali comes at a time when Mali remains in the grip of a serious multidimensional crisis that affects the entire western Sahel region, where in a good year more than 230,000 children die of the consequences of malnutrition.

In 2012 there were more acute food and security crises spanning nine countries of the Sahara. It affected close to 19 million people and pushed 4.6 million Malians to the edge of survival with malnutrition rates beyond the emergency threshold.

In addition to a long-standing lack of democratic governance, rampant organized crime, and rising poverty in the region, the Libya crisis generated a large influx of weapons in the Sahel and the return of migrants that quickly fuelled insecurity in the north of Mali and forced more than 400,000 people to flee their homes. Massive displacements within and out of the country—Mauritania, Burkino Faso, Niger—exerted additional pressure on areas already severely affected by the food and nutrition crisis.

This year, humanitarian actors estimate that 4.3 million people are in need of assistance and protection, including 700,000 people in need of immediate food assistance in the north. There are 200,000 children under age five who remain at risk of severe acute malnutrition.

With renewed fighting on the 10th of January, Mali entered a new phase that saw growing humanitarian needs against a backdrop of increased isolation of its northern regions and limited access by humanitarian workers, including in areas previously considered secure.

More than 36,000 people have fled their homes in northern and central Mali as a result of armed confrontation, bringing the overall number of displaced Malians to 408,500. This figure includes 241,500 IDPs and 167,000 refugees.

The continued lack of access in some parts and the volatility of the security context have resulted in a growing isolation of the northern provinces, and therefore the situation of people remaining in the north is worrisome. There are reports of imminent food shortages, spikes in the price of available food commodities, and limited access to health care, education, and water.

With the closure of the Algerian border, the amount of food coming into the northern areas has halved. On the Mopti markets, which also supplied the northern regions, the availability of imported rice and millet dropped by 30%, while costing 120% more than the last five-year average.

If commercial and humanitarian traffic continue to be disrupted, the levels of food insecurity could increase in the next few weeks. The confirmed contamination of landmines and unexploded ordnance in areas around major towns in the north, such as Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, as well as in the central part of the country, Diabaly, Konna, Douentza, also poses a major threat to civilians. It prevents IDPs and refugees from returning home and humanitarian workers from helping those in need.

Insecurity related to the last round of fighting has similarly limited the scope of the humanitarian response in the north for the past weeks. Today, while the main corridor to the north, Mopti-Douentza-Gao, remains closed above Douentza, due to the presence of mines and terrorist threats, humanitarian access is now gradually improving in the central part of the country and humanitarian partners are now better able to scale up their response.

Food delivery by the World Food Programme, WFP, resumed on the 2nd and 3rd of February, using barges on the Niger River. Seven boats loaded with about 600 tonnes of commodities, targeting some 147,500 people, departed from Mopti to Niafunké district in the Timbuktu region. Basic emergency health kits, enough to treat 5,000 people per month, malnutrition treatment kits, and other emergency inputs were also sent by UNICEF to the Gao and Kidal regions.

• (1210)

Emergency response continues and is progressively scanning it. It is expected that humane trained agencies will gradually re-deploy in the conflict-affected areas in order to obtain a more tangible picture of the needs, better understanding of the local dynamics among communities, and deliver much needed emergency assistance.

The initial results of needs assessments show that people affected by the crisis identify food, shelter, lack of essential items, and access to clean water and sanitation as the top needs in addition to infrastructure repair.

Lack of access to health care and exposure to unsanitary conditions also pose a risk of increased epidemics, including cholera. It is imperative that food and nutrition assistance programs increase soon to address the needs of hundreds of thousands of people who were also already very vulnerable prior to the current crisis.

The response toward Malian refugees was also scaled up. The situation in the refugee camps is worrying, especially in Mauritania. Recent reports have shown critical gaps, and urgent funding is needed to address them. It is imperative that a distinction between the humanitarian and security political agenda be maintained. A failure to maintain this distinction could endanger the perceived neutrality and security of humanitarians and thus their ability to reach those in need.

An increased presence of humanitarian actors in the north would have a positive impact on the protection of civilians, but this requires rapid and unimpeded access. To do so, OCHA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and its partners are developing and maintaining sound civilian military coordination with Malian, French and AFISMA military forces.

The humanitarian partners also need security arrangements in terms of security management, information analysis, that will enable them to provide the much needed assistance. For such a security capacity to be deployed to Mali in a timely fashion, the UN system, through the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, UNDSS, urgently requires financial support to support the humanitarian response.

Cases of recruitment and use of children by armed groups and of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls continue to be reported. It is a priority for the humanitarian community in Mali to scale up assistance for the protection of civilians, in particular women and children, and roll out effective human rights monitoring. There are also grave concerns about the repercussions of military operations on the safety of civilians, notably in light of alleged executions committed by elements of armed forces. It is imperative that all parties operate in adherence with international humanitarian law and take all appropriate measures to protect

civilians from the effect of hostilities. In this regard, we consider that the training of the Malian forces and AFISMA forces on the international human rights humanitarian and legal frameworks is a necessity especially in practical methods for the implementation.

The United Nations is also committed to implement its human rights due diligence policy, while providing support to the Malian authorities and AFISMA. Humanitarian partners will need to maintain a sustained dialogue with the minorities and communities at the national and local levels and be accountable to those they come to help.

It is also important that development projects continue where possible and that coordination mechanisms between humanitarian and development actors are announced to implement programs that would further build the resilience of the Malian people.

For all this to happen, it is crucial that funding be sustained for humanitarian activities in 2013. As of January 30, the Mali 2013 CAP has received only \$10 million, less than 3% of its total \$370 million requirement. Without adequate resources, humanitarian partners will not have the tools they require to meet the country's most urgent needs. The regional humanitarian coordinator estimates the most urgent requirements by United Nations agencies for Mali and neighbouring countries in the next three months at \$148 million.

• (1215)

Much more is needed to keep providing help to the displaced and the families who host them, to maintain our response to the continuing impact of the 2012 food and nutrition crisis, and to address the underlying chronic nature of food insecurity. It is vital that necessary funds be made available immediately to enable us to address these priority needs.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Levet.

We're going to start right now with the opposition and Madame Laverdière, for seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Levet, thank you for your presentation. It was very informative.

My first question is more general.

What could Canada do to help the tragic situation you described? What could Canada contribute?

[*English*]

Mr. Quentin Levet: May I continue in French?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Yes.

Mr. Quentin Levet: Thank you very much.

I have been in the humanitarian field for more than 10 years. I have always considered Canada a leading player, constantly mobilizing resources to respond to humanitarian crises all over the world. I believe Canada was Mali's fourth largest donor before the crisis.

The current situation requires emergency support in the short term. As I explained earlier, that would help address not just the current needs flowing from the crisis, but also the longer term needs, particularly in terms of resilience. We want to put an end to the chronic cycle of urgent need we see every year. In a normal year, 230,000 children under the age of 5 die of malnutrition in the Sahel region.

I think Canada could play a prominent role, along with other donors. That involvement would make good on the support pledged by the international community and help tackle the humanitarian challenges, which could grow in complexity, especially from a security perspective.

• (1220)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much.

I would just like to make a small clarification. Of the bilateral donors, Canada was second, but fourth out of the multilateral donors. I wholeheartedly agree with your analysis, in that it would be important to maintain that approach.

You also mentioned an issue of the utmost importance, the safety of the humanitarian workers on the ground, saying that money was desperately needed to ensure their safety.

Have you made any specific requests in that respect? How much money would you need?

Mr. Quentin Levet: Thank you very much.

It goes without saying that access is crucial to humanitarian workers. And right now, that access relies heavily on the security conditions. Unfortunately the highly volatile situation in northern Mali has made it rather difficult to safely establish a presence with confidence. That is why support for the security structure is so vital. It will make it possible to provide a humanitarian response in the short and medium terms.

As you can imagine, we work very closely with UNDSS. And it turns out, unfortunately, that UNDSS requires significant funds to be able to do a timely analysis of the security situation. OCHA manages the secretariat of the UNDSS and has facilitated the current talks between UNDSS and CERF to discuss the needed funding.

So that piece still needs to be worked out. I know that the European Union is also very aware of the issue. So we will keep pushing in that direction. Of course, security needs are very much dependent on the deployment capacity of the agencies on the ground. And we are still working on that. A deployment plan is in place, but it's too early to say what the total cost will be.

I encourage Canada to monitor the situation closely. I would be delighted to provide you with more information in two or three days' time, via the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations. I could give you a clearer idea of the amounts needed, as well as information on how you could help us maintain our presence in those conflict zones and carry out emergency humanitarian projects.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: As we don't have a lot of time left, I will ask you a very quick question.

I would like to give you an opportunity to expand a bit more on the idea of resilience and things that can be done to build the resilience of a population.

Mr. Quentin Levet: Thank you very much for that question.

The resilience of a population refers to its ability to withstand shock. So that entails ensuring some continuity between emergency response projects and development projects. That means everyone has to agree on how to tie humanitarian projects to development. It is paramount that cooperation on the development front resume in Mali, so that those on the ground can make the connections needed between emergency response projects and development projects.

Resilience also entails—and Canada may be able to help with this—providing support to re-establish basic public services in northern Mali. As you know, the conflict has had a serious impact on public servants, and thus basic services. Today, the process would mean helping public services resume in that part of the country. Resilience would also involve support for operations, which not only address urgent needs, but also help strengthen communities' capacity to look after themselves so they are more resistant to shocks affecting their environment. I am referring to their control over farming, water, community resources and so forth.

There again, some very specific programs have been established, and some of them have already been included in the CAP 2013 for Mali. There, as well, some key initiatives have been put in place, such as the European Union's AGIR. I urge Canada to join that platform, and work with other partners to agree on shared objectives and provide the support needed so that all of our efforts flow from an integrated and well-coordinated approach.

• (1225)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Laverdière.

We're going to move over to the government side, to Ms. Brown. You have seven minutes, please.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Mr. Levet, for joining us here this morning.

It's been an interesting investigation over the last several weeks about what's going on in Mali. Canada is very concerned about the humanitarian situation that is taking place there. Our foreign affairs minister has called many times for a safe passage for humanitarian assistance to get through. Perhaps you can speak to some of the issues.

Before doing that, I want to reinforce the fact that Canada has been present in Mali. It's been a country of focus for us. We've been putting \$110 million a year in for the last three years to ensure that we develop that resilience, to build on governance issues, to help them build capacity in many areas. We've been involved in security building as well. Canada has had quite a presence there.

You talk specifically about the funding conference that took place in Addis Ababa and the money hasn't come in. Could you speak to the issue of how important it is that countries pay what they pledge? Obviously, you have to make your plans based on that. Canada has affirmed that we will put in \$13 million. Canada has a history under this government of paying what we pledge. Could you speak to that? How do you go about making your plans when the money isn't always forthcoming? What do you do if you don't get that money?

The other thing I'd like you to speak to is the effectiveness of our contribution to the Sahel region resilience program. Canada stepped up to the plate a year ago when we saw the Sahel starting this cyclical drought problem, which has happened there for decades, probably millennia. Canada came forward with \$56 million last year to help build that resilience. Can you tell the committee what kinds of programs have been initiated that are going to help the Sahel region for the long run, not just for this problem specifically, but for the long run in helping to build irrigation and develop a food program that they are going to have in perpetuity?

The floor is yours.

Mr. Quentin Levet: Thank you very much for these questions. I'll try to answer the best I can.

I thank Canada for its support following the Addis Ababa conference, but I do think we need to clarify a few things here.

The Addis Ababa conference, as you know, was meant to gather support from the international community mainly for the support package to the deployment of AFISMA forces and also to support the Malian defence and civilian forces. There have been two trust funds created by the UN as per Resolution 2085. There is one trust fund for the Malian forces, and one trust fund for the AFISMA forces. It is true that there are some budget lines that are more dedicated to humanitarian activities.

Again, I would stress the importance of not looking at this conference as a conference that will help us respond to the humanitarian needs in Mali as a whole. This conference was meant to get support for these two forces. OCHA has helped. In collaboration with different organizations, NGOs, and UN agencies, we have issued an appeal for 2013, which amounts to \$370 million. This is basically to be sure this appeal is dedicated to civilian type of humanitarian activities, not activities that will help support the deployment of these forces. Of course security is an important issue. As I told you earlier, without security we cannot expect to access the people who are in need. But again, the main appeal here is the humanitarian 2013 CAP that was launched a few weeks ago.

On the second question in terms of—

• (1230)

Ms. Lois Brown: If I may just ask, does that take into consideration at all Canada's long-term investment and the fact that to date we're looking at \$70 million from Canada over the last year in humanitarian relief? Does that play into your thinking anywhere when you look at what countries are contributing?

Mr. Quentin Levet: Very honestly, I am more aware of the pledges from countries through the CAP, through what we have been working on. I'm less aware where the other pledges—

Ms. Lois Brown: So you're not looking at the historical commitments that have been made.

Mr. Quentin Levet: Yes, of course we are very grateful for the continuous support of Canada. Again, I've met with Canada in different parts of the world. When I was working in all these different countries, Canada has always been there as a major donor.

Right now, regarding Mali, I would urge you to look at the humanitarian needs that came up and were represented and for which we are now asking support in the context of the CAP 2013, which is the main planning tool we have to respond to the acute humanitarian crisis in Mali right now. I understand that Canada is an actor, and you have pledged and you will give supports through the Addis Ababa conference, and it's very nice. But I would urge you to also look at the main humanitarian appeal, which is again the 2013 CAP.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That's all the time we have.

We're going to move over to Mr. Eyking, for seven minutes, please.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Thank you for coming today and speaking from the UN headquarters, is it?

Mr. Quentin Levet: Yes.

Hon. Mark Eyking: I really don't expect you to give much opinion of what the UN thinks of our present government. I think it's been fairly clearly stated when we were not admitted to the Security Council. I would just like to reassure you that most Canadians are fully supportive of what the UN does around the world.

The reality is that you've mentioned there are 230,000 children dying of malnutrition. I think you mentioned some numbers. You need almost \$150 million over the next few months.

There's no doubt that Canada has historically been a big supporter of Mali. I think the biggest concern of many of us, and I think you people also, is where we go in the future, that the money is just not sporadically coming and there's some long-term commitment.

I'd like you to give a little more detail on the two parts of where that money will be going. One of course is your military action with AFISMA and how we can help, besides with money, with your forces. But also, we hope the dust will settle on this conflict and, assuming that we will step up to the plate and have the money for you, how are you going to deal with that, with the transition?

• (1235)

Mr. Quentin Levet: Thank you very much. I hope I have understood your question.

I think that right now what I also want to clarify is that I represent OCHA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The United Nations are much bigger and the political affairs.... The DPKO, their peace-keeping operations department, will also have their say, but as far as humanitarian affairs are concerned, I do believe that right now we are facing acute needs, and these needs must be addressed.

So I'm sure that we can rely on Canada's support through the CAP 2013 to enable us to respond to these needs. But we all understand here that basically responding to the emergency needs as such will not solve the deeper development issues within the country, and we also understand the necessity to invest in resilience. I would say that investing in resilience today will be more cost-effective if we do it right and in a well-coordinated manner. It means that in the future we will be spending less on humanitarian-type activities, because, again, the idea is that through resilience the capacity of communities to face shocks is strengthened.

If we manage to build this well-coordinated continuum between emergency and development aid, if we are adequately and strategically supporting the restoration of state services in the poorest and most isolated areas—and basically we have the communities that create value thanks to your funding—in that case these values and this money will be reinvested indefinitely. It will be trickling down to other sectors, such as education.

Hon. Mark Eyking: That's fine, but my question is how much and when will you need this money?

Mr. Quentin Levet: To face the emergency needs, it's right now that we need the money, and then, keep in mind, that your support in terms of responding to humanitarian needs must be part of a wider strategy aimed at building resilience. The United Nations will be happy to work with you to define this longer term strategy.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Can you tell me a little bit about what's happening on the ground? My understanding is that donor countries have been supporting the Mali government, helping it deal with education and health on a daily basis, before the conflict, in rule of law, and right now, I guess, many cannot put the money there. How much disarray...? We've talked about starvation. We've talked about many of the medical issues. What's happening on the ground as far as kids not going to school and teachers not getting paid are concerned? What's your sense on the ground?

Mr. Quentin Levet: My sense on the ground is that the situation today, the conflict, has disrupted most of the social services in the northern part of the country. This is one fact.

Also, we must not only look at the north because 80% of the needs today are in the south. Most of the IDPs have fled the north for the south. In the south the problems that we have now are much more related to capacity building. Of course, we must help the IDPs and respond to the crisis with the IDPs, but we also have to reorientate the programming towards more capacity-building activities at the grassroots level.

I think that the situation in Mali and the outcome of the political crisis, etc., have raised the fragility of the state institutions. There has also been some corruption, and we need to face all of those as factors that we need to consider today. If we have to continue our cooperation and strengthen the government capacities, we should also look at how we can encourage communities to develop capacities themselves and basically their access to social services in the proximity. In my view, this is what was lacking a bit in the past. We should have a more decentralized kind of vision for addressing both short-term and longer term needs in terms of resilience building.

• (1240)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to start our second five-minute round with Mrs. Grewal.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

And thank you, Mr. Levet, for your time and your presentation.

My question follows up on the question from the parliamentary secretary, Mrs. Brown.

In general, how important is it for countries to pay what they pledge in response to humanitarian appeals? When this does not happen, how does it affect your work?

Mr. Quentin Levet: First, it affects our work. If you mention these pledges that still have to be translated into actual money to fund the supports, the logistical aspects of the deployment of AFISMA and Malian forces is one. It has to be addressed to ensure the security of the country and the Malian army to recover and maintain its territorial integrity.

But to the more humanitarian aspects of our work, getting money is not like a bottomless well. If we don't have a donor, if we lack funding, we will also try to get some other donors to become interested. We are all straining to be continuously in the mindset whereby we try to optimize our efficiency.

As I said earlier, if adequately coordinated and supported, our resilience can be cost-effective in the end. In Haiti and in other countries facing a recurring crisis, you have a choice between intervening from one crisis to another, or supporting many more resident-based activities. In that case you will reduce the impact of future emergencies in this country, if the assistance is well coordinated.

Today, if I have a message to convey to you, it would be to look at these aspects and continue to support them.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Our government has been outspoken about Mali adopting its road map. Do you think Mali will accomplish the goals laid out in this document?

Can you also please outline some of the specific recent success stories in Mali and the greater Sahel region?

Mr. Quentin Levet: I assume you are speaking about the political road map.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Quentin Levet: Okay.

We all know by now that the situation in the Malian conflict is not only military, but it's much more a political, long-term process that needs to bring different actors to dialogue, to find a consensus, and to build the states' capacities in these isolated areas that have been forgotten over the past years.

There are some success stories, for example, the fact that the governments have shown signs of willingness to negotiate with one of the Tuareg rebel groups, which is the MNLA. There are also some other signs that they want to have elections by the end of July. There could be some other examples that show the political process could be perceived as moving forward. But I think we need to maintain pressure on the authorities, because we also see some antagonism within the political elites. Not all political forces agree with the recent statement from the presidents and the prime minister. It doesn't mean that everybody agrees on the potential of negotiations with the MNLA.

So I would say if we have to go in that direction, because there is no other way to get out of this crisis right now, pressure must be maintained to make sure they are participating as authorities in this planning process, and that they are also incited to move forward, so we not only have a political process on paper, but also something concrete on the ground.

• (1245)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move over to Madame Pécelet for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question has to do with the needs on the ground. I'd like to know what kind of assistance and expertise you need now to help women and children.

Could you also describe the situation in the refugee camps?

Mr. Quentin Levet: Thank you for your question.

The problem in Mali today is that some areas are underfunded, making any integrated response impossible. Certain areas have been allocated resources, especially support that allowed us to cope with and ease the 2012 nutrition crisis. And Canada falls into that category. So in that respect, Canada's involvement, along with the support of other donors, has had a significant impact. Unfortunately, what we're dealing with today are problems related to underfunded areas, such as access to drinking water, health care and education. It's impossible, then, to operate within an integrated approach and to sustain the progress we made in 2012.

I'm not saying it's a problem and there's been no improvement. In 2012, we were able to do a lot of things that helped. But if we want to sustain that momentum and build on the progress made, it is imperative to operate under an integrated vision that is adequately funded.

Similar to the refugee situation, these areas have to be taken into account. As for women and children, access to health care and education is vital. Pressure must be brought to bear if an integrated humanitarian response to the current situation in Mali is going to be achieved.

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Would you say the education programs address specific needs? Are nutrition programs for children underfunded at the moment?

Could you prioritize the needs in some sort of list that Canada could use, especially in terms of providing support for the agencies? What are your needs and priorities right now?

Mr. Quentin Levet: Let's look at it by area.

In terms of food security, things have improved in the past few months. It's very positive. But that doesn't mean we'll see an impact on nutrition in the short term. As I mentioned, there are still 660,000 children under the age of 5 who are at risk of malnutrition in 2013. So, in the area of nutrition, the most important thing is staying on that same path. As for those children, we're not out of the woods. We have to keep applying pressure there.

When you look at areas such as health, education and access to clean drinking water, getting programs off the ground is what's needed. Thus far, those programs have been lacking. A bigger focus on those programs is necessary to prevent a humanitarian assistance deficit in those areas.

Protection is also a huge issue with respect to women and children. That is particularly true in northern Mali right now. We are beginning to anticipate possible guerrilla fighting between armed groups. So protection is indeed a major concern.

• (1250)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Pécelet.

Oui, you've got 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: We, on the opposition side, are very clear on the fact that, when you ask for donations for a specific year, you consider the donations received during that year and, in no way, does it decrease a country's previous contributions.

At the very beginning of your presentation, you said that 700,000 people were in need of immediate assistance. I would imagine that includes the 400,000 Malians who have been displaced, both inside and outside the country. I'd like to know where those 700,000 people are.

Mr. Quentin Levet: Thank you very much for that question.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Levet, just a quick response if you could for this answer.

Mr. Quentin Levet: Yes, I will.

[*Translation*]

Most of those 700,000 people live around urban centres, primarily Gao and Kidal. Those are the most affected regions today, together with Ménaka, along the border.

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci beaucoup.

Go ahead, Monsieur Levet. Did you have one final thought?

Mr. Quentin Levet: It's just to say that part of the IDPs still remain in the north. But again please have a look and consider that 80% of the needs remain in the south of the country.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

[English]

Mr. Dechert, five minutes, please.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you, Mr. Levet, for your comments and important information today.

I just wanted to follow up for a moment on a question that my colleague Madame Laverdière mentioned about the refugees who have been displaced by the current violence in Mali. Are these displaced persons? We've been hearing that the French forces have been making very good gains in retaking control of some of the major towns and villages in northern Mali. Are the refugees starting to return home yet?

Mr. Quentin Levet: Not exactly, sir. I can tell you frankly we had thought at some point there were some positive signs when we interviewed some of these refugees in the neighbouring countries that they would likely return once security is established. What we can assess right now is that given the risk of retaliation from the Malian army, these people are more willing to stay and to wait. That's basically the situation to clarify in this respect.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Don't they trust the Malian army?

Mr. Quentin Levet: Right now the influx of refugees who we assess are mostly Tuareg and Arab people. These people are fearing the army, but they are also fearing the civilians in some cities, because they fear it being said that they collaborated with the rebel groups. We've seen already a lot of shops looted, etc. Today these people are fearing reprisals, which is why they continue to seek refuge in the neighbouring countries.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Do they trust the French army?

Mr. Quentin Levet: Yes, sir. They trust the French army.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you.

You mentioned earlier the crisis that hit the Sahel region, including Mali, and you talked about the almost 20 million people, I think, who were affected by that, the million children or more who may be at risk of dying from severe, acute malnutrition.

As you know, through our Canadian International Development Agency, Canada helped to meet vital humanitarian needs in the Sahel as part of its efforts, and we created the Sahel crisis matching fund. Under that program, for every Canadian dollar or any eligible dollar that was donated by individual Canadians to the Canadian charities, Canada set aside one additional dollar for the Sahel crisis matching fund. CIDA will allocate these funds to established Canadian international humanitarian organizations and humanitarian assistance efforts that benefit the people most affected by the crisis.

Were you aware of this fund? Can you speak about what kinds of projects those funds would have supported in the Sahel region?

● (1255)

Mr. Quentin Levet: Frankly, I would not be able to tell you precisely what was the direct impact of the Canadian funding in terms of projects, as such. I have a broad overview. What I can tell you is that I'm sure you contributed to the fact. For example, I would say that food assistance was able to reach between two million to six million people each month. Some 850,000 children suffering from severe malnutrition were also admitted into temporary feeding centres. I'm convinced you have contributed to these results that today enable us to avoid a major humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region. You were there for that.

What I stress today is that it doesn't mean it is finished. We need to ensure the continuity with that, to look at the gaps and also to invest in resilience.

Mr. Bob Dechert: I understand that Canada's contribution last year was \$56 million, including the matching funds. You got into, in that last answer, some of the success stories in the Sahel region. Can you give us some more examples of the success stories that Canada and the other international contributors were able to make in the Sahel region in response to the drought?

Mr. Quentin Levet: Funding is one thing, but outside of funding, I would say that the early action has been very much praised by main donors, including Canada. Early action has helped us to prepare for the worst and has made us able to respond in a timely way to the crisis. It means that if the necessary funding to respond to the crisis hadn't come on time, we would not have been able to reach the same results. It is funding on the one hand, but also our ability to react in a timely way, thanks to early action. Together with the funding, it ensured that we reached this impact.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dechert.

And to Mr. Levet, thank you very much for taking time today to speak to our committee. That's all the time we have, so I want to thank you again for your testimony, and questions and answers.

Mr. Quentin Levet: Thank you very much.

The Chair: To the committee, I just want to let everyone know, after we come back from break week, we'll be spending two weeks before the next constituency week working on the Arctic. That's what we've—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Do we still have vacancies? Because we had discussions on—

The Chair: We're going to bring back some of the people we cancelled. We did have a couple of vacancies.

Mr. Paul Dewar: There are one or two more. We can put them in to you as a request. We'll do that as soon as possible.

The Chair: All right.

Thank you.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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