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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying the situation in Ukraine. I would like to introduce our witnesses quickly.

From the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, we have Matthew Levin, director general, Europe-Eurasia bureau. We have Tamara Guttman, director general of the stabilization and reconstruction task force, and Dave Metcalfe, director general of Europe-Middle East programming. All three will be delivering opening remarks.

In case there are additional questions, we also have, from the Department of National Defence, Brigadier-General Todd Balfé, director general, plans, and Strategic Joint Staff.

From the Department of Natural Resources, we have Drew Leyburne, director general, energy policy branch.

We have, from the Department of Finance, Steven Kuhn, chief of the international finance section, international trade and finance branch.

Welcome, everyone.

I'm going to turn it over for opening remarks. We're going to have Matthew Levin start and then we'll move right down the line. As we normally do, we'll then commence some question and answer rounds that will precede all of your presentations.

I'll turn it over to you, sir.

Mr. Matthew Levin (Director General, Europe and Eurasia Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and honourable members of the committee.

As you said, Mr. Chairman, we'd agreed with colleagues that I would begin and then pass the floor to Ms. Guttman and Mr. Metcalfe, and then other colleagues can take questions in areas of their expertise and departmental lead.

[Translation]

The Russian aggression, which started with the illegal annexation of Crimea and then drew eastern Ukraine into a bloody conflict, has now entered its second year. The economic and human toll is mounting.

Over 6,000 people have been killed, according to United Nations estimates, 5.2 million live in conflict-affected areas, and close to 1 million people are reported to be internally displaced.

The productive capital and infrastructure in eastern Ukraine has been largely destroyed and will take years, billions of dollars, and immense human effort to rebuild.

[English]

Russia's aggression has taken a form of hybrid warfare, which relies heavily on relentless propaganda and a constant stream of disinformation. It has even manifested itself through the instrumentalization of religion as a means to divide Ukrainians and undermine their unity, particularly those in east Ukraine. It remains unclear whether, let alone when, Russia will relent and allow Ukraine to exercise its sovereign right to pursue its independent path of political and economic development.

The diplomatic efforts toward a political solution led by Germany and France, which resulted in the second Minsk agreement, signed on February 12, have yielded some positive results. There has been an overall reduction in violence, and a partial exchange of prisoners has taken place. However, withdrawal of heavy weaponry by separatists is incomplete and uncertain. Localized fighting is ongoing and occasionally flares up. Mariupol, the largest government-controlled city in the conflict zone, remains under threat, and many prisoners of war remain captive. It is imperative that Canada and the international community continue to maintain pressure on Russia to respect its commitments and ensure that the Minsk agreement is fully implemented.

In the face of the ongoing aggression from its neighbour, Ukraine continues to need significant diplomatic, financial, technical, military, and humanitarian support from its friends and partners around the world. As you are aware, Canada has been one of Ukraine's most active and strongest supporters on the international stage. Canada has consistently condemned in the strongest possible terms Russia's actions in Ukraine. The government has used every opportunity in multilateral and bilateral fora to condemn the Kremlin's illegal, unacceptable, and provocative actions. Canada has made it clear that there would be consequences if Russia did not reverse its course.

We have worked closely with our U.S. and EU counterparts to find the most effective means to counter Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Through close coordination among Canada, the U.S., and the European Union, we have succeeded in imposing significant costs on Russia for its actions. These measures are having significant impact on Russia diplomatically and economically.

Canada has been a leading voice with our partners to isolate Russia diplomatically, notably, but not only, by suspending the G-8, from which Russia has disqualified itself. As a result, Russia's influence and prestige within the global community have diminished significantly.

Canada and our partners have implemented extensive economic sanctions, frozen assets, and imposed travel bans on hundreds of individuals. The restrictive measures target key sectors and individuals within the Russian economy. They were designed to have an impact on the core of the system that supports the Putin government.

Canadian sanctions, which are among the toughest in the world, have been developed in close coordination with U.S. and EU partners to ensure that the international community is united in its response to the aggression. We have imposed sanctions against more than 270 Russian and Ukrainian individuals and entities and a number of key sectors of the Russian economy. Collaboration with international partners ensures that there is a real cost to Russia for its actions.

Russia's economy is now experiencing a steep decline. According to the IMF, GDP is expected to contract by close to 4% in 2015. The currency, the Russian ruble, has lost approximately half its value since the crisis began. Capital flight totalled more than \$150 billion in 2014 and is expected to remain high this year, and the nation's reserve funds have declined by close to \$100 billion since the conflict in Ukraine began.

While the recent drop in oil prices and Russia's weak economic fundamentals following years of mismanagement are of course important factors, the sanctions that Canada and our partners have put in place and the uncertainty created by the threat of their expansion have played a significant role in Russian economic decline. The impact of these measures on the Russian economy will increase over time.

• (1105)

[Translation]

As for Canada's relationship with Ukraine, it is closer and stronger than ever before. Since the beginning of the crisis, Canada and Ukraine have maintained constant, high-level political dialogue. Prime Minister Harper attended President Poroshenko's inauguration last June and was the first foreign leader to meet with the new president.

President Poroshenko in turn visited Ottawa last September and was, as you know, warmly received as he delivered a powerful speech to Parliament. Contact at the ministerial level, between both foreign ministers and other ministers, has been regular and fruitful, with multiple ministerial visits and conversations.

Russia has also used energy as a means of political pressure. In response, Canada has worked on a number of short- and medium-term initiatives to support Ukraine in meeting its energy needs and bolstering its energy security. Mr. Leyburne, from Natural Resources Canada, will be able to respond to any questions you may have on this issue.

In addition to our political and diplomatic support, Canada has provided extensive support to Ukraine in the form of financial assistance, development assistance aimed at economic and democratic progress, election monitoring, security monitoring through the OSCE, and non-lethal military assistance.

Since January 2014, Canada has announced more than \$578 million in funding. Thanks in part to Canada's support, Ukraine has made important progress with the implementation of complex and essential reforms.

[English]

In response to a request from the Ukrainian Government, Canada has provided non-lethal military equipment to Ukraine's armed forces, including winter clothing, a mobile field hospital, explosive ordnance disposal equipment, and other material.

Prime Minister Harper also recently announced that Canada will be deploying approximately 200 Canadian armed forces personnel to Ukraine until March 31, 2017, to develop and deliver military training and capability building programs for Ukrainian forces personnel. Brigadier-General Balfe from the Department of National Defence will be able to answer any questions you may have on this subject.

The range of assistance Canada has provided is very broad and has involved many departments and agencies of the Government of Canada, including all those represented here today, as well as many sectors of Canadian society.

Officials in attendance from other parts of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, from the Departments of Finance and National Defence, and from Natural Resources Canada will be able to speak in detail about the support their departments are providing.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for inviting us to this hearing. Once my colleagues finish their presentations, we will of course be happy to take any questions from you and the committee.

• (1110)

The Chair: I will now turn it over to Ms. Guttman.

Ms. Tamara Guttman (Director General, Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Mr. Chairman and honourable members, as my colleague Matthew Levin has mentioned, Russia of course continues to violate Ukraine's sovereignty and to undermine its security and stability, a source of great concern for Canada and the international community as a whole.

In this context, we are working closely with Ukraine and with our international partners to support Ukrainian security in the face of these challenges.

Since January 2014 the Government of Canada has scaled up its assistance to Ukraine through a whole-of-government effort that includes multiple departments and agencies.

Within the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, we have the global peace and security fund or GPSF, the religious freedom fund, the global partnership program, as well as, of course, bilateral development assistance and international humanitarian assistance, which have all made important contributions.

[Translation]

My colleague Dave Metcalfe will be speaking about the development programs shortly.

In the area of security and stabilization, Canada has been actively supporting Ukraine's security sector and institutions.

[English]

For example, we have provided ongoing support to the OSCE's special monitoring mission, the SMM, an unarmed civilian mission that aims to reduce tension and foster stability and security. This has included the deployment of 22 Canadians who are experts in security, human rights, and the rule of law, as well as media.

Further, Canada continued its contributions to free and fair elections in Ukraine over the past year by sending some 300 observers to both presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014, including, of course, various Canadian members of Parliament.

[Translation]

Through the religious freedom fund, we are also supporting the OSCE's efforts to enhance the ability of Ukrainian security forces to monitor and react to religious persecution.

We are thereby complementing the assistance to local Ukrainian organizations helping to improve religious awareness and tolerance. In response to a request from the Ukrainian government and in collaboration with international partners, the global peace and security fund has provided non-lethal military equipment that addresses the critical needs of Ukraine's forces.

[English]

Specifically, Canadian programming has enhanced secure communications to counter Russian interference, has improved the health and safety of armed forces, has provided equipment and kit to support operational effectiveness, and has given support to the Department of National Defence for the training of Ukrainian armed forces.

The GPSF is also being used to build capacity in Ukraine's security institutional reform. Canadian contributions to the NATO-Ukraine trust funds are assisting Ukraine in developing its command, control, communications, and computer capabilities and reforming logistic systems and implementing NATO standards within the armed forces. We have also deployed a Canadian security expert to the NATO liaison office in Ukraine.

Russia's actions have a destabilizing impact across the region as well. For this reason, the global peace and security fund programming is contributing to the establishment of NATO centres of excellence in cyber defence, energy security, and strategic communications to help strengthen the regional framework in these areas.

Finally, further programming is being considered in various areas, including, for example, enhancing border security, reforming police, building military capacity, and assisting countries in the region to counter Russian aggression.

Similarly, the global partnership program is exploring opportunities to help strengthen Ukrainian capacities to secure chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear materials and to prevent their acquisition by non-state actors for use as weapons of mass destruction.

Now I will turn the floor over to Dave Metcalfe. Of course, we'll be happy to answer questions afterwards.

Merci.

The Chair: Mr. Metcalfe.

Mr. Dave Metcalfe (Director General, Europe-Middle East Programming, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair and honourable members.

I'm pleased to provide you with an overview of Canada's development response to Ukraine. Last year's revolution was about Ukrainians' desire to live in a prosperous, democratic, independent European country. While there is a long way to go, a new generation of young reformers in government, parliament, and a re-energized civil society are making real progress.

As announced by Prime Minister Harper, Canada has expedited and prioritized new development assistance programming to support Ukraine, more than doubling the development assistance budget over traditional levels. As my colleagues have indicated, since January 2014 Canada has announced more than \$578 million in funding. Of this, \$139 million is for increased bilateral development assistance.

Development assistance is focused in two areas: democracy and rule of law, and sustainable economic growth. To support democracy, since January 2014 Canada has announced over \$43 million to advance democracy and rule-of-law projects delivered through trusted partners. Canada sent observers to ensure free and fair elections. Canadian technical assistance improves elections regulations, trains elections officials, and raises awareness of voters' rights. The year 2014 saw two national elections, and Canada played a leadership role in coordinating international assistance and election monitoring. In 2015 our partners will continue to work for longer-term change to Ukraine's democratic culture through training political parties to better respond to citizens' issues and developing mechanisms for public engagement.

As Ukraine begins to decentralize, the upcoming local elections in October 2015 will be another important step forward in its democratic transition. We also continue to support efforts for an independent free media and a strong civil society. Effective decentralization of resources and authority will place greater demands on Ukraine's local governments. Canada has shared its strong municipal management expertise with Ukrainian cities for several years. We have supported Ukrainian cities and regional administrations in economic planning and in actively and effectively engaging with citizens.

Ukraine's 2015 budget has increased funding for local governments and includes plans for constitutional reform to entrench decentralization. Ukraine can draw on the experiences of neighbouring countries that have undergone decentralization. Canada is bringing both Canadian and regional experiences, including Polish experience, to assist local governments in managing new functions and to ensure oversight and accountability.

A key demand of the Maidan protestors was an end to impunity and injustice. Canada has committed to assisting Ukraine to strengthen rule of law, and we are a lead partner in judicial reform. Canadian assistance is promoting judicial independence, increasing access to quality legal assistance for democracy activists and citizens, and training judges in European human rights law.

With respect to economic stabilization and growth, as you know, the Ukrainian economy has been destabilized. Canada has helped with \$400 million in low-interest loans. Since 2014 Canada has also announced over \$97 million to support sustainable economic growth. This includes \$20.9 million in IMF technical assistance to implement modern, sustainable financial management practices and to get the economy back on the right footing.

Canadian advisers have been deployed to assist the Ministry of Finance, the presidential administration, the national bank, the national anti-corruption bureau, and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade in matters such as internal restructuring, economic policies, fighting corruption, and results-based management.

In addition to institutional reform, modernization of Ukrainian businesses is also needed for Ukraine to become competitive. Canada continues to work to support SME growth in Ukraine, particularly in the agricultural sector where there's strong potential for business growth to benefit millions of poor Ukrainians in rural areas, including southern and eastern regions. Since the beginning of 2014, Canada has announced over \$55 million in new projects to support small and medium-sized farms, particularly in the grain, dairy, and market vegetable sectors.

Participating in the promotion of energy independence continues to be a Ukrainian priority. DFATD and Natural Resources Canada are actively exploring opportunities for Canada to share its expertise in natural resources governance and development. Canadian technical assistance has helped Ukraine develop an energy contingency plan and is helping the Ministry of Finance to develop a new gas royalties regime. In order to respond to the most immediate needs of people directly affected by the conflict, Canada has also provided \$3 million in humanitarian assistance.

In summary, Canada remains supportive of Ukraine's reform efforts and is responsive to Ukraine's immediate needs caused by the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

● (1115)

We continue to work with experienced partners to produce development results across all regions of the country. Looking forward, on April 28 in Kiev Canada will participate in an international donor conference on Ukraine, hosted by the Ukrainian government. This is an opportunity for Canada and international donors to hear how Ukraine has progressed on reforms and on its forward priorities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the significant support Canada is providing to Ukraine as it advances its reform and economic-growth agendas. I would be pleased to take any questions.

● (1120)

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

We're going to start with questions.

Mr. Dewar, you have the floor for seven minutes.

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

Thank you to our witnesses for their overviews. I want to start with just a thought-based question on our assets in Kiev. In particular, I know about the commitment that was recently announced on the military side, but I need to understand the diplomatic side a little bit better. How many people do we have presently on the ground in the embassy?

Mr. Matthew Levin: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure I have the exact figures. The total staff at the embassy, I believe, is in the neighbourhood of 50 people, but we'll have to subsequently provide, with the committee's permission, the exact figures. That includes, as in every mission, a combination of what we call Canada-based staff, that is, Canadians who are on assignment there as well as locally engaged staff, the Ukrainian colleagues at the embassy. I think there are between 15 and 20 Canada-based staff at the moment and some 40 local staff. We'll find that out and verify those figures.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I appreciate that, and we'd like a breakdown, as you said, of those who are locals and nationals as well as what their jobs are. You've laid out a fairly substantive agenda here, and I'm just curious about the capacity we have on the ground to carry those mandates and goals out.

On sanctions—and I appreciate the fact that the idea was to coordinate with our friends from the EU and the U.S.—I'm interested in how the department makes recommendations to government in terms of who we put on the list.

Mr. Matthew Levin: Mr. Chairman, regarding the development of Canada's sanctions regime, I would start by saying that Canada has an extremely strong sanctions regime, and as you've said, Mr. Dewar, we've developed our approach in very close consultation and coordination with key partners. Above all in the case of the sanctions regime against Russia in response to aggression in Ukraine, with the United States and the European Union, these discussions take place very frequently in different formats, such as phone conferences and in-person meetings, and have done so regularly since March of 2014.

Because the view has been that those partners who are applying sanctions should have a consistent approach in terms of scope and size, the approach of each partner is informed by, while not necessarily identical to, those of the other partners. So as we make recommendations, we take into account above all the objective of the sanctions, which is to apply economic pressure on Russia and the Putin government. We believe the sanctions in place are in fact having this effect, so that's one primary consideration, and we make recommendations on that basis. That has been our approach in essence.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's helpful. Thank you.

So the department does assessments, makes recommendations to your political masters, to government, and then they decide. I'm just curious as to what the thinking was when we decided in one case not to align our sanctions with our those of our friends. I'm talking about sanctions against Igor Sechin. I've brought this up numerous times. I was told by one of the government members that we have to think of our national interests, and, frankly, I was surprised when I heard that at committee. I have that on the record to share with people if need be. Igor Sechin is, as we know, very close to Mr. Putin. He is involved in the gas and oil business, as we know. He was a former vice-prime minister; he has a very high profile, and it's curious to many of us that Mr. Sechin is on the sanctions list for the EU and the U.S., but not for Canada.

I'm trying to figure out if the department recommended that Mr. Sechin be on the list?

• (1125)

Mr. Matthew Levin: I would just say in response to that question that Canada's sanction regime is probably the strongest of all the partners' in terms of the number of individuals and entities we have sanctioned.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Respectfully, that wasn't the question.

Mr. Matthew Levin: There are differences among the sanction lists of individual members. We have sanctioned individuals and entities that our partners have not, but some—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Did the department recommend that Mr. Sechin be on the sanctions list?

Mr. Matthew Levin: Unfortunately, I really can't discuss this publicly. Because of the integrity of the sanctions regime, we don't discuss publicly the specific application process of the Special Economic Measures Act against particular individuals and entities.

Mr. Paul Dewar: The decision is made by cabinet—I'll grant you that—but in terms of the information and the assessment that is done, I am simply asking if an assessment was done to put Mr. Sechin on the list. You're saying you can't tell me that.

Mr. Matthew Levin: No, at this time I am not able to tell you that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's fair enough.

I do have a question just on follow-up. Maybe we can get into this in another round. In terms of the military complement that was announced, was the department consulted on that decision?

Mr. Matthew Levin: There has been very close consultation and cooperation across the range of departments and agencies of the government that have been involved in Canada's response to Russian actions in Ukraine, including between the Department of National Defence and our own department. With respect to all the dimensions of Canada's response, and specifically in terms of the assistance that Canada has provided to the Russian military, there has been close cooperation, consultation, and exchange of information.

General Balfe, you may want to add more, but that is my impression.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I appreciate that. Because we've heard about the complement, I was curious about whether the department was directly contacted by the Department of National Defence about the mission and was getting feedback from DFATD in terms of that mission.

The Chair: We will pick it up again, because that's all the time we have here.

Mr. Trottier, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you, guests, for being here today to talk about these important developments in Ukraine. Of course being involved in the Ukraine theatre, if you will, is one of the things that Canada needs to do. Even though it's across the ocean and across the planet, it affects Canada in so many ways because of the family ties and the people-to-people contact that we have with people in Ukraine. In my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore, in particular, there is a very large first-generation Ukrainian community that is actively concerned about what is going on in Ukraine.

In your presentations, you touched on three important axes of activity. You talked about the economic development, the sanctions regime, and the military assistance that we are providing to Ukraine right now. I'd like to expand on the military component, because so many stakeholders in my own community and stakeholders I meet around the country say that it is a top priority.

Mr. Levin and General Balfe, perhaps you can expand on the unique Canadian expertise that we bring to this training mission. Canada has 200 personnel deployed in western Ukraine. They are there or will be there with American personnel and U.K. personnel. I understand that Poland is going to be participating in this training mission also. What are some of the unique things that Canadian trainers bring to this engagement?

Brigadier-General Todd Balfe (Director General, Plans, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence): Responding on behalf of the department, and also to bring in my colleagues from Foreign Affairs, it's important to point out that this training mission in particular has been developed in very close collaboration with our friends at Foreign Affairs. Since last August we've been working together to build this mission collectively so that the equipment they would provide would come with Canadian military trainers. There has been very tight coordination throughout all of that.

In terms of your specific question on our expertise, Canada, and the Canadian armed forces in particular, has decades of experience providing training assistance. I must point to the military training and cooperation program, which is run under the Department of National Defence, which has been training thousands and thousands of members of various militaries closely allied, partnered, and associated with Canada over the past decades.

As one example, approximately 1,276 Ukrainian service members have received training under this program alone. Ukraine became a member of the MTCP, the military training and cooperation program, back in 1993 shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It has a very extensive 22-year history with Ukraine just as one example.

Another example I would point to is the two plus years' experience we had in Afghanistan under Operation Attention. Canada, the Canadian armed forces in particular, was in a very difficult position, training in a country still at war and training individuals who were largely illiterate and innumerate. We managed to do a unique job of training *kandak* after *kandak*, battalion after battalion, of Afghan security forces. We have a long and trusted history of that.

Next I would point out that Canada obviously has a long history with NATO. As a founding member of NATO, we clearly understand NATO principles, NATO procedures, and NATO's way of doing business. We are able to work with our allies very effectively. We are complementary to our allies and we easily liaise with our allies. We speak each other's language, in other words. That brings great benefits to our partners in this particular venture in Ukraine since the long-term goal is to help the Ukrainians transform their military from a Soviet-style military to a western-style military. I can think of no country better suited to do that than Canada.

Thank you.

• (1130)

Mr. Bernard Trotter: Can you expand also on the training mission itself? There is some concern that the Ukrainian army and the Ukrainian armed forces have been infiltrated by Russian-backed rebels.

How does the training mission work to make sure that some of the intelligence that is going to be transmitted in those training exercises doesn't get into the rebels' hands or into the Russian military's hands? What kind of security measures are being taken to make sure that's contained?

BGen Todd Balfe: The vetting of our training recipients is clearly very important. We've been doing that for many years in our other training ventures, pointing again to MTCP.

For this particular activity, it's important to note that the Canadian armed forces will be training only formed units of the Ukrainian armed forces. We will not be training militias. We will not be training ad hoc units, but only formed units of the Ukrainian armed forces for the Ministry of the Interior or eventually the Ministry of Defence.

In terms of the specific vetting, the Ministry of the Interior in Ukraine has a responsibility for vetting all of the individuals who will partake in this training. We have close association with the Ministry of the Interior. Going to one of the earlier questions on the composition of the embassy in Kiev, we have three Canadian armed forces personnel in that embassy: a very busy defence attaché supported by two talented individuals.

I was on the phone with him this morning to reconfirm our process. The MOI does two parts of the background checks. It checks for any association with criminality. It also does a loyalty check for every individual who's going to enter the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Interior. That's the first step of the vetting.

One of the many benefits of partnering with our American friends on this particular activity is the fact that the Americans also have a vetting process. We're doing this collectively with them. The Leahy Law mandates that the U.S. armed forces vet every individual who is going to receive their training. In this particular case the American training started yesterday, and we will soon join that training. They have vetted every individual in that initial training tranche that started yesterday. They go through to summarize the Ukrainian process and they are also put through a very rigid American process. Finally, I must emphasize that we will be training only formed units of the Ukrainian government.

Mr. Bernard Trotter: In the time I have, I want you to describe the importance of the satellite imagery that Canada has been providing.

I'm told that it is of higher quality and more timely than the American satellite imagery. It's truly appreciated that Canada has in fact the best imagery in the world. We have top-of-the-line capabilities and the Ukrainian army truly appreciates the information we're able to provide.

BGen Todd Balfe: I'm happy to entertain that question, Mr. Chair.

I'm not qualified, unfortunately, to make a comparative analysis of our imagery versus our colleagues' imagery, and they probably wouldn't want me to make that comparative analysis.

Nonetheless, Radarsat-2 is a very effective product and DND/CAF is very satisfied with that.

The information packages we're providing to the Ukrainian Government are very much for their situational awareness regarding specific sites they have asked for the data on. We provide those to them on a regular basis. They are extremely satisfied with them, and our intention is to continue to do that as long as the Government of Canada wishes us to do so.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Garneau, go ahead, sir, for seven minutes.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I can't help but say that Radarsat-2 is a fantastic satellite, and much of its development occurred during the time I was president of the Canadian Space Agency, so I'm doing a little bragging here.

What has been done by the Government of Canada in support of Ukraine, including the recent decision to involve ourselves with military training, is supported by the Liberal Party. I want to put that on the record and make that clear.

I do want to come back to Igor Sechin, because the Liberal Party, including my esteemed colleague Chrystia Freeland and me, have on numerous occasions raised the issue of Igor Sechin and Sergey Chemezov, who's the chairman of Rostec, and have asked whether or not they were on the list of people being sanctioned.

Let me get back to Igor Sechin. Many people consider him to be the second-most powerful person in Russia. He is that close to Vladimir Putin. I was told that sanctions had been applied against him, but I think it turned out they had, perhaps, been applied to Rosneft, the company of which he is chair.

Now, this is a comment, because, Mr. Levin, I don't think you're going to answer my question, but it is clear to me that Igor Sechin is not on the sanctions list. If he were, you would have told me. The point I want to make here is why isn't he? This is the second-most influential person in Russia. It seems to me that if we have principles, he should definitely be on that list, like Chemezov and many others. We say that we have some of the strongest sanctions, including those against 270 people, and I don't know whether some of those people are very minor figures. It is certainly not the numbers but the people themselves who make a difference.

I've had my little comment here.

On the diplomatic front, the last time I saw a diplomatic exchange between our Prime Minister and Mr. Putin, it was in Australia when Mr. Harper reportedly said "I'll shake your hand, but you need to get out of Ukraine."

Has there been any bilateral diplomatic effort between Canada and Russia since that moment?

• (1135)

Mr. Matthew Levin: Mr. Chair, in response to the events in Ukraine, and shortly after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the initiation of aggression in eastern Ukraine, the government put in place a practice of severely, drastically curtailing engagement between the Canadian government and all of its officials and Russian government officials.

There is really very limited bilateral contact of any sort taking place. As you noted, the interaction took place on the margins of the G-20 summit in Brisbane, but apart from very few circumstances in which we feel that for the purposes of advancement and promotion of Canadian interests some normally low level of contact is required, we're not engaging in bilateral contact with the Russian Federation at the senior level.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Metcalfe, you talked about something that's very important. Quite apart from us showing Ukraine that we are with them and we want to defend their sovereignty, which I think we've done through a number of different measures, you also talked about institution building, which is extremely important.

You mentioned the word "corruption". Corruption, from what we hear, is a particularly significant problem in Ukraine at the moment. You mentioned that they're working with anti-corruption groups.

I have two questions. First, how does one cure corruption? Second, are there any signs at this early stage that we're making any progress on that?

Mr. Dave Metcalfe: Thanks for the question.

I'll go to my notes, because I have some specific pieces to respond to that question.

In the general sense, all of our programming has a corruption component within it. The technical assistance Canada is providing and the IMF assistance that's being provided through international experts all has corruption components within it at the lowest levels as it is being implemented.

At the broader levels, working with the anti-corruption bureau to set up the systems and the audits, there are two pieces. There's developing the pieces to stop corruption from happening in the first place, and there are the audit practices that can detect when something has happened or see what controls are missing within the system. We also assist specific ministries themselves in developing the public service.

We have specific projects that are working on anti-corruption. If you ask your other question, I can look through my notes and then get back to this.

Mr. Marc Garneau: All right. I have a more general question. Sometimes one hears anecdotally about certain elements in Ukraine being either anti-Semitic or neo-Nazi. I really have no idea how big they are, but I suspect they're small.

I'd like to have a sense of the scope. Is this something that's hyped by those who are enemies of Ukraine? Is this a significant problem or a minor issue?

• (1140)

Mr. Matthew Levin: You're quite right, Mr. Garneau, on this point. Our view is that this has been a significant line of what I referred to as the hybrid aggression Russia is undertaking against Ukraine, one significant element or stream of which is disinformation.

Really from the very early days of the crisis in Ukraine and the popular overthrow of former President Yanukovich, as Russia began to perceive that their key allies in the Ukrainian government—people they were supporting, who were protecting their interests—were losing their hold, they began to develop a sort of leitmotif or thread of disinformation that characterized the entire Maidan resistance movement as being influenced and even dominated by individuals who they claimed were neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic, or affiliated with movements that went back to Ukraine's experience in the Second World War and collaborationism. Since then, this has remained a theme of the coverage of events by Russian media in Russia, but also of Russia's engagement on the issue in multilateral fora. Whether it's the OSCE, the United Nations, or other fora in which the Ukrainian issue is discussed, they insist constantly on that theme.

Our view is that this is a fundamental mischaracterization and misrepresentation of what occurs. That's not to say—

The Chair: We're almost out of time. I'm sorry to cut you off.

Mr. Metcalfe, give us just a quick response to the first question.

Mr. Dave Metcalfe: I'll be more coherent with my response this time.

In terms of supporting the national bank of Ukraine and the national anti-corruption bureau, we're working to improve transparency. I think transparency and accountability are the key pieces that are going to attack the issue of corruption. In other areas, we're working with the presidential administration to help the government develop their results-based framework so that people know what is expected and what they can see, and that will take away the power of the vested interests. That's basically our broad approach, but as I said, we also have corruption components within each individual project.

The Chair: We're going to start our second round. We'll have time for the full round. We're going to start with Mr. Goldring for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Going back to satellite imaging, I think the misinformation that everybody is told is very evident. Particularly when I speak to the Russian-speaking community and to members of the Russian Orthodox Church, they say to me that a picture of a tank could really be taken anywhere and at any time. I think it's fair to say that militarily, if it weren't for the fact that Russia is involved, the fighting would be over. There might have been a rebellion, but it would be long over. They would have run out of equipment and ammunition and run out of logistics a long time ago, because they would have had to rely on the existing military equipment that was in that territory, if Russia were not involved.

Given that, if we're doing this satellite imaging, is it not possible to produce some of these things for public consumption? In other words, can we not clearly indicate that these convoys are crossing the border? It seems to me that they pictured Osama bin Laden in his backyard from a satellite image. If they can do that, surely they can show a convoy of tanks crossing the border on a regular basis, in order to push back on Moscow's propaganda. Can we not do that?

First, would the problem be over if Russia were not involved, and therefore is not Russia clearly the problem? And second, can we not produce some of this to push back on Moscow's propaganda?

Mr. Matthew Levin: Mr. Chair, perhaps I'll start, and General Balfe may wish to add something.

With respect to the first part of your question, Mr. Goldring, our assessment is that absolutely the conflict is only and entirely being sustained by Russian support for the separatists. That is support as in materiel and training given to the separatists and the intervention of Russian units directly in the conflict. Absent that piece, it would have been possible to achieve a settlement to this issue a long time ago—well over a year ago, in fact.

With respect to the opportunities for sharing information that's gathered from satellite imagery, you mentioned the convoys. I would note that there's been a fair amount in the public domain, often gathered by media and other sources, that has documented visually and in other forms the entry of Russian convoys supplying various forms of—well, it's hard to determine what. Certainly the presence of convoys has been made clear and is well known.

It's also our impression, partly through information shared with partners in NATO, that the Russians are not actually trying very hard to disguise the volume and frequency of the support they're providing the separatists. Undisguised or barely disguised Russian units are present in Ukraine.

I'll turn it over to the general, if that's okay.

• (1145)

Mr. Peter Goldring: As I said, I'm told that the pictures could have been taken anywhere or anytime, whereas if you had satellite imagery from on high, that would clearly delineate borders and border areas, and you could substantiate those with topography. That would give very clear evidence and remove this comment, this propaganda, that says the pictures could be taken anywhere, anytime.

BGen Todd Balfe: I would add to Mr. Levin's comments that it's not DND/CAF's position to issue a policy on whether the imagery should be released or not; that's a Government of Canada decision. Clearly in this case with Radarsat-2, I think it's important to point out that Radarsat-2 is a commercially owned enterprise, as many folks know. Mr. Garneau, of course, knows the best. The imagery that is provided is provided by the Government of Canada. The Government of Ukraine clearly has a stake in whether that imagery should be released for any reason whatsoever. Our position is that it's released for their situational awareness primarily and is not to be used for any other avenue. I think the decision as to how any imagery like that, along with other types of imagery or intelligence, could be used to validate what we perceive and believe Russia is in fact doing to perpetuate this conflict really has to be taken at a much higher policy level.

Mr. Peter Goldring: With the religious freedom work, is there consideration being given? We're well aware of the interference by the Moscow patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. In fact, Moscow has even ordered no co-communion between the Orthodox churches. They are, in effect, building a wall between them as it is.

Is there any consideration being given to helping or assisting a Kiev-based church to be recognized by His Holiness in Constantinople to remove that foreign influence from the church in Ukraine?

Mr. Matthew Levin: On the issue of religious freedom and the Russian provocation seeking to create disunity via religious communities, there is work taking place through the Office of Religious Freedom and the religious freedom ambassador, Andrew Bennett. There is quite close interaction between his office and various partners in Ukraine, including, of course, the Kievian patriarchate. I'm not aware of a specific initiative along the lines of what you suggested, Mr. Goldring.

The Chair: We go back to Mr. Dewar for five minutes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I just wanted to touch on some of the other aspects that the government is involved in. One is the whole idea of energy. We had some hearings, and I was given some information about some of the focus at the natural resources committee. One of the issues that came forward was energy efficiency. I'm just wondering if anything is being done on energy efficiency.

Mr. Drew Leyburne (Director General, Energy Policy Branch, Department of Natural Resources): Energy efficiency is one of the areas in which we've been investigating further cooperation with Ukrainian officials. Last fall we sent the head of our office of energy efficiency to Kiev. Actually in Odessa she met with a number of mayors of municipalities and cities in Ukraine, and they identified some possible opportunities for work on energy efficiency. We have a number of programs that just off the shelf we've been able to share with those decision-makers. One thing we did discover through those discussions was that the decision-making around energy use was often happening in a very centralized way, perhaps not surprisingly, so we're doing our best to reach out to those decision-makers.

We don't have any active program right now on energy efficiency, but it is one area in which we're looking at doing more.

• (1150)

Mr. Paul Dewar: So you're at the assessment point in looking at that?

Mr. Drew Leyburne: That's correct.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I look forward to seeing more on that.

I want to go back to the whole area of democratic development. As was mentioned, there were two very substantial missions from Canada. I'm curious as to how the decision was made to go from what had been the institute we had been working with before CANADEM to another group, the Forum of Federations, and how that process worked. Was there a bidding process? How was the decision made?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: For all types of projects and all types of support, often a number of proposals are received that involve working with a variety of partners, whether in Ukraine or anywhere else. In the instance of Ukraine, a number of options were looked at. We have ongoing cooperation with CANADEM as well, which my colleague Dave Metcalfe can speak to.

In the case of last year's election, the proposal put forward by the Forum of Federations—actually, it was their subsidiary CANEOM—

was ultimately supported and it provided a very effective mission. It's looking at a variety of options in all cases.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Just to clarify then, you're saying a proposal was put forward by the subsidiary of Forum? Was there one by CANADEM?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: I'm trying to recall, and I apologize if I'm imprecise, because it was some time ago. There were discussions with both early on in the process, and then a number of options were examined. Ultimately the CANEOM one was the stronger option. I can defer to my colleague Dave Metcalfe to speak better on—

Mr. Paul Dewar: What I'm trying to get at, to be more precise, is that there had been a departure from a previous partnership. I'm wondering why we ended up going with one over the other.

Ms. Tamara Guttman: Again, Mr. Chair, it's a matter of evaluating each case, each proposal, and each project going forward, and trying to find the most effective means and the best value for Canada.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Right, so there was a decision made on that basis. I'm trying to understand why the decision was made to go with this group over the other. That's all. Maybe you could follow up on that.

Ms. Tamara Guttman: I could provide a follow-up. Genuinely, it's that a very complete proposal was put forward. It had a number of effective components, including long-term and short-term monitoring and political analysis. It was a very effective proposal, and ultimately that was the successful one in that instance.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm asking because we know the government proposed, in the Speech from the Throne a couple of years ago, the idea of an institute for democratic development. Sadly that didn't go forward. I'm concerned that when we're talking about democratic reform in a place like Ukraine, which is desperately needed, that we have the right capacities and also an understanding of how these decisions are being made.

I have done many missions abroad on election monitoring. I was a little concerned with some of the procedures and processes in Ukraine. I think election monitoring requires dedicated people and professionalism. If we're looking at political party development, that's a whole other area that requires a different kind of thinking and rigorous oversight. You have to be very careful when you're offering to help with political party development in a place where there is, to be fair, a fairly precarious political situation. That's something we need to look at.

Let me move on with one last question. It's about the consultations with the Department of Foreign Affairs with regard to the military complement. Maybe information on that could be provided later.

The Chair: We're going to finish up with Ms. Brown for five minutes.

• (1155)

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you so much for your presentation here this morning.

On a slightly lighter note just for one moment, Mr. Levin, only a person with an appreciation for classical music would be able to use the term leitmotif in a conversation. As a musician, I say thank you.

My question really is for Mr. Metcalfe. These days you must carry a very heavy weight on your shoulders, having responsibility for both the Middle East and Europe. I appreciate so much the work you are doing, because it is tremendous.

I was in Ukraine three years ago when the foreign affairs committee was there. I had the opportunity to meet with independent media in Kharkiv. I actually purchased \$200 worth of advertising on the radio station. It was an independent radio station. They were telling us how difficult it is to have independent media in Ukraine because there just isn't the kind of revenue available through small and medium-sized businesses to purchase advertising. I supported them and said, "I don't care if all you say is that Lois Brown supports free and fair elections. I am happy with that. Say it as many times as \$200 will buy." He was thrilled to pieces that someone purchased advertising space.

I wonder if you could speak a little about what Canada is doing to help strengthen civil society organizations, because the reality is that when civil society organizations take hold, they in themselves start to touch the pressure points that are going to enable countries to move forward.

Mr. Dave Metcalfe: I am busy with the two different portfolios.

I'll touch on the media piece that you mentioned, because that is a very important piece. I think the last time I was in front of the committee, I spoke about the support we were providing to the media. As you say, it is a very important piece that gets the message out.

As part of the \$139 million that was announced last year for programming in Ukraine, we are providing assistance to strengthen investigative reporting in Ukraine, including to regional media organizations such as the Crimean centre for investigative reporting and the Independent Association of Broadcasters.

There is support for the production of investigative TV programs on a wide range of issues of importance to Ukraine during the transition and the move toward more democratic rule. The programs produced are broadcast in different regions, including Zaporizhia and Kharkiv. In addition, we are providing workshops for skills training to journalists, including in Donetsk and Mykolaiv.

Another interesting piece is that we are working with a Polish partner to support the Crimean independent channel Chernomorka, which has relocated to mainland Ukraine since the Russian invasion of Crimea. It continues to broadcast through satellite as well as a number of media outlets in eastern Ukraine to continue covering events in the east of the country.

In terms of supporting civil society, a number of our programs are doing just that, because that, as you mentioned, is the base from which change will happen. We have a number of programs in place and a number of small projects as well, because it doesn't take a lot of dollars to get some of the results that we are trying to achieve through that. I think that's an important point to make.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Chair, I just want to assure the committee that it was a personal cheque I gave. It had nothing to do with my MOB.

Mr. Metcalfe, I wonder if you could speak to some of the work we are doing in judicial reform. Last summer I announced that Canada was making a contribution for Ukraine to use in training judges to deal with juveniles. So often those juveniles have been incarcerated for things we would call minor misdemeanours, but they really didn't know what to do with them or have the structures. Could you speak to that project specifically?

Mr. Dave Metcalfe: I can speak at a pretty high level. I know it. I visited that project and some of the work that they were doing.

It started out as a small Canadian-promoted project that used frameworks and systems and expertise from the Government of Alberta. That project dealing with, as you said, youth and how they are treated within the judicial system has now moved across the country. It started out in two specific cities in Ukraine and it is now being spread across the country. With a little bit of effort, we see these great results.

On top of the youth project you were speaking of, we are also training judges in human rights fundamentals and reducing red tape in commercial dispute resolution, which is also working toward helping us advance economic growth, setting the base for businesses to more efficiently and effectively grow and compete within the marketplace. We are rolling out legal aid to Ukrainians in need. Another important factor is the combatting of trafficking of children, which is very strong in Ukraine.

• (1200)

The Chair: To our witnesses, thank you for taking the time today for the update.

I'm going to suspend the meeting while we get our new set of witnesses in, and then we'll get back in about five minutes.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1205)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone.

I want to introduce our witnesses. I will just mention that there was one witness who confirmed that they'd be here, but they're not here. We will get started considering the time we have here.

I'm going to introduce you all.

From Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, we have Sandeep Prasad, the executive director.

From the Food For Famine Society, we have Maria Martini, the founder and executive director, and Mark Moore is with MANA Nutrition.

I believe you two are going to be sharing your time, so we'll start that with you, Maria.

Welcome, everyone. Why don't we get started with the presentations? We'll start with Sandeep Prasad.

The floor is yours.

Mr. Sandeep Prasad (Executive Director, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights): Honourable members, I want to begin by thanking you all for the invitation to present before you today. For those of you who are not familiar with it, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights is a Canadian organization working domestically and globally to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights. While the committee's study covers a number of specific topics relating to children and youth, I will focus my remarks on the issue of early and forced marriage and how Canada can strengthen its role to address this issue.

Early and forced marriage is a pervasive human rights violation, the causes of which are deeply rooted in gender-based inequalities, norms, and stereotypes, including traditional patriarchal perceptions of women's status and roles in society, as well as social control of women's bodies and sexual choices. Early and forced marriage constitutes one example of how these root causes are manifested in societies. Other examples include female genital mutilation and acid attacks, as well as keeping or pulling girls out of school, which of course is often a precursor to their being forced into early marriage.

Problems associated with early and forced marriage, while based in inequalities relating to gender and age, are also exacerbated by other factors of inequality such as poverty, lower education level, and rural location. After marriage in these circumstances, all of the same inequalities and forms of control continue to manifest themselves in the lives of these girls and young women as a plethora of continued human rights violations.

First of all, married girls are twice as likely to experience sexual violence, and often this violence is perfectly legal. According to UN Women, 127 countries do not explicitly criminalize marital rape and, in fact, 53 of these countries actually explicitly permit marital rape.

Second, adolescent girls and young women often lack access to sexual and reproductive health information commodities and services, including those for contraception. While part of this lack of access is certainly due to the lack of availability of these services, it is also partly based in legal requirements for spousal consent for these services, potential reproductive coercion by the spouse, and indications that services are not youth-friendly or are not geared to meeting specific health needs in a non-judgmental manner.

Currently, over 220 million women and adolescent girls who are married or in a union and would like access to a modern method of contraception do not have such access.

Third, if an adolescent girl experiences an unwanted pregnancy, she may lack access to safe abortion services and post-abortion care. Factors impacting on access to abortion services include its legality in the country in which she lives, the availability of the service, and, once again, spousal consent requirements.

Fourth, if giving birth, she might lack access to personnel and facilities that would ensure a safe delivery.

Primarily because of a lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services, including maternal health services, maternal mortality is the second-leading cause of death of adolescent girls in the developing world. This is just a small glimpse of the picture for adolescent girls forced into early marriage. Addressing early and

forced marriage requires addressing these interlinked human rights violations rooted in gender-based and other inequalities.

Given the committee's focus on what Canada's role should be, I would like to offer a few thoughts on this. First of all, in terms of Canada's work at the intergovernmental level, I want to begin by commending the government's leadership role in bringing this issue to the UN Human Rights Council and the General Assembly for action by these two bodies.

Within the intergovernmental sphere, we are currently in a place, similar to the case for FGM, in which governments are not particularly defending this practice, even where this practice is widespread. In this sort of situation, the intergovernmental system can be seized upon to make tremendous advances and in turn support and spur further action to address early and forced marriage at national levels.

Canada should work to ensure that resolutions are substantive and strong and are aimed at identifying what states need to do to eliminate these practices and to address the human rights of those subjected to the practice. Doing so necessarily entails comprehensive integrated approaches that include education, health, and justice components.

● (1210)

For the upcoming June Human Rights Council resolution, we would urge the government to work to ensure that the council commission technical guidance on using human rights-based approaches in addressing the issue. Such a policy tool can serve to assist governments in identifying key interventions needed in order to fully implement and give effect to the relevant human rights obligations and principles.

Adding to this effort, the government should also step up its engagement in policy dialogue with other countries, both bilaterally and in its participation in the universal periodic review process. The aim should be not only to advance approaches to preventing early and forced marriage but also to challenge the interlinked violations of the rights to education, health, and bodily autonomy. That includes working with countries to reform laws, including setting a minimum age of marriage, criminalizing marital rape, and removing legal or policy barriers to health services, including spousal consent requirements and the criminalization of abortion.

With the post-2015 agenda poised to be adopted soon, we have now agreed, as part of this framework, on a robust gender-equality goal. Addressing child marriage is a part of that goal, as are numerous interlinked issues. The implementation of this goal, along with other aspects of this ambitious post-2015 agenda, will need to be financed through a mix of domestic and international resources as well as new financing mechanisms. Now, even more than with the millennium development goals, donor countries must renew their commitment to ensuring that levels of overseas development assistance are at or above 0.7% of GNI.

As part of its efforts to address early and forced marriage comprehensively, the government further needs to prioritize investment in sexual and reproductive health, including family planning. While these investments support the fulfillment of these human rights, they are also smart investments. Currently, expenses related to unsafe abortion complications alone cost women, girls, and their families a further \$600 million U.S. per year in out-of-pocket expenses. Conversely, meeting the unmet need for modern contraception and achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health services by 2030 is estimated to yield impressive returns of U.S. \$120 for every dollar spent and over \$400 billion U.S. in annual benefits.

As a final recommendation, the government must also look to invest further in women's and youth-led organizations working toward gender equality. Despite greater attention to gender equality, women's organizations themselves are struggling globally. Greater investment in those voices who are challenging the very gender norms and inequalities that are at the root of these interlinked human rights violations, including early and forced marriage, is a major need at this point.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.

•(1215)

The Chair: We'll now go to Maria Martini to get started, then we'll come back to Mr. Moore as the last presenter.

Ms. Martini, go ahead. The floor is yours.

Ms. Maria Martini (Founder and Executive Director, Food For Famine Society): Mr. Chairman and members, thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

My journey began in June 2008 after watching an Anderson Cooper report from which I learned about a fortified peanut paste referred to as ready-to-use therapeutic food or RUTF.

It was being used to treat children under the age of five suffering from severe acute malnutrition. This knowledge was life-changing for me. The fact that something as simple as peanut butter could save a child's life was absolutely a miracle. My first thought was to build a factory in the country where it was needed. I spent the year researching and contacting organizations that could help me produce, package, and distribute the RUTF. I had zero success.

After getting nowhere, I looked into manufacturing this life-saving product in my own community of Langley, B.C. We soon produced 5,000 kilograms for North Korea and 15,000 kilograms for Haiti just after the 2010 earthquake. The next leg of my journey led me to Mark Moore of MANA Nutrition. Mark had just received his certification from UNICEF to produce RUTF in his brand new factory. After visiting the MANA facility in Georgia, U.S.A., we realized that they could provide us with a stable source of RUTF.

After securing our official RUTF supplier, our next challenge was to ensure an effective distribution channel for the product. We were soon introduced to World Vision Canada, which presently assists us with the distribution of RUTF through its community-based programs for the management of acute malnutrition.

To date, we have provided 17 shipping containers of RUTF to eight African countries, affecting the lives of over 17,000 children.

One hundred per cent of the donations we receive goes toward the purchase of RUTF, allowing the greatest possible impact.

I would like to congratulate the members of Parliament for the accomplishments of the maternal and infant health program. It is critical that this program continue to move forward and that we as Canadians look for more innovative and creative ways to ensure its success. Together we can work towards more solid food security and nutrition in developing countries and continue to affect the lives of millions of children.

My vision is simple: that no more children die of severe acute malnutrition.

Thank you.

•(1220)

The Chair: Mr. Moore.

Mr. Mark Moore (Chief Executive Officer, MANA Nutrition): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

I was honoured to sit in the public gallery in the previous meeting about Ukraine. I was impressed with the gravity of the situation and with the responsibility that is upon each of you as you fill notepads and as emails crowd your inboxes. You leave here with the weight of the world on your shoulders and more than you can possibly do to affect situations that seem out of control. Military officials testified about satellite imagery of Ukraine possibly helping. I appreciate very much the gravity of this committee and all you have to do.

To add world hunger to that, as you leave, seems a bit unfair. That's going to be a big agenda item for all of you. I want to focus specifically on the very narrow area that I have a bit of expertise in. Beyond that, colleagues from Nutriset are here. They are the world leaders in the production and distribution of RUTF and the championing of this cause. As great friends of the Canadian government, the French and the Americans sit here in unison saying this is a great thing that you can have a tremendous impact on.

My story goes back to 2007. I lived for 10 years in Africa, in Uganda. My wife is an RN, so we did a lot of health care work. Then I moved home to go to graduate school, which was in Washington, D.C. There I was fortunate enough to become a legislative fellow in the U.S. Senate. I worked in the Senate on food aid issues and sat in many meetings like this, generally in the back with a yellow pad trying to keep up and trying to support my boss.

At that time UNICEF came in. They were asking for more money. They were saying that if the Americans would get involved they could make a huge impact in global nutrition. I listened to the speech. In fact, I saw the same Anderson Cooper video that Maria saw. We didn't know each other at the time. As I watched it, I thought if this was really true and if this Nutriset product Plumpy'Nut—or RUTF as it's more generically referred to—was having this kind of impact, then the U.S. government should get involved. From the very small seat that I had as just a legislative fellow, I talked with my boss. That became a big part of my life. It wouldn't really leave me. I hope that's the case for many of you.

What's happened over the last probably six or seven years in the United States is that our food aid efforts have gotten involved in RUTF. Even though we don't provide the bulk of RUTF funding, and we provide a very small percentage compared with what UNICEF is doing, the U.S. government has now come alongside UNICEF. With UNICEF spending roughly \$150 million to \$160 million on the global procurement of RUTF, the U.S. government has come in with another \$20 million or \$30 million to augment that, which is still a short way along the path of a billion-dollar problem.

What I would like to impress upon the committee is that as you consider the Muskoka initiative, the great work that you've done, and the way forward on that in the 10 countries you are focusing on—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Haiti, Malawi, Tanzania, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Sudan—in nearly every one of these countries I have had the privilege of seeing children whose lives would have been lost had they not been treated with this very simple thing.

I would also be careful to say that obviously the Muskoka initiative is much broader. Mr. Prasad had a perspective on how important all these different aspects that you will focus on are. Of course nutrition is one very narrow thing, but it does have far-reaching impacts.

There was a study last summer by the World Food Programme on the GDP of Ethiopia and the surrounding countries. Since Ethiopia is on your list, I'll give you this statistic. It is widely reported that there is a \$3-billion dent in their GDP simply because of malnutrition. That's 16.5% of their GDP stunted, along with their children.

The impact you have is not just in the form of the dramatic story of saving lives. It's not just a reactionary thing. It's a very proactive thing. As the Copenhagen Consensus Center has said for years, it's the very best dollar you can spend. I know it's budget time. You're all worried about limited dollars making maximum impacts. These are some of the very best dollars you can spend.

I'll close by saying our partnership with our Canadian friends at Food For Famine has been fantastic. They are so impressive in that they have zero overhead. I've been in the field with them in Malawi, Ethiopia, and various countries, and they have zero overhead. That is unheard of.

• (1225)

They are simply looking for the very best and the most affordable supply of this, the biggest bang for their buck. They also want to support the sustainable and scalable production of this, whether it be in France, the United States, Canada, or any country around the world. Hopefully in the future the supply chain will be developed in developing nations and people will be able to produce their own RUTF. For those of you who are not familiar with it, it's a very simple thing. It's peanut butter, powdered milk, a little bit of sugar, and some vitamins. It's the equivalent of a glass of milk, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and a vitamin. It's very tough for aid workers to put those things in their pocket and have them available at the end of a long day, but this stuff has a two-year shelf life. It's flushed with nitrogen to be stored and can be shipped through various supply chains, through the UN and through the World Food Programme, and other entities, to get it to children who need it.

I'll stop there. There's much more we can say, but I would be very interested in fielding more questions and talking more about the impact of our partnership and the potential impact this committee could have on saving millions and millions of lives.

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

I'm going to turn it over to Adeline Lescanne-Gautier who is the chief executive officer of Nutriset. I know you have a bit of a PowerPoint presentation so we'll let you get set up and then we'll turn it over to you.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Adeline Lescanne-Gautier (Chief Executive Officer, Nutriset): Good afternoon.

I am going to speak in French because I am lucky enough to be able to do so. First, I would like to thank the committee for inviting us. We are flattered to be here with you today.

Nutriset is a company that was started in 1986 by Michel Lescanne, my dad. We are a family company that, for 30 years, has been working to solve problems associated with malnutrition.

We developed a product called Plumpy'Nut, now known generically as an RUTF. As a product, it is a little more complex than peanut paste. Its formula meets the specific needs of children suffering from severe malnutrition.

Here is how it all started. We began by developing what are known as therapeutic milk products with very specific formulas. Unfortunately, those formulas had to be prepared with water. That was very complicated for hospitals to do. So, in 1996, we developed a ready-to-use product. Today, 25 million children around the world use the product.

We also developed the PlumpyField network. We did not want to make all our products in France; we wanted to give the countries we were targeting the opportunity to have their own production so that they could meet their own needs.

Today, we have partners who are manufacturing the product using the same international quality standards as those in France or the United States. Those partners are audited by the same auditors and verified by the same people from the United Nations.

We have partner plants to which we transfer our expertise. The plants are in Haiti, Niger, Burkina Faso, Sudan, Ethiopia, Madagascar and India. We are very proud of the fact that, in 2012, all Niger's needs were met using local production. No product came from France or the United States. In 2012, the plant in Niger was able to meet 100% of the country's needs.

This local production has to reflect product processing in terms of the recurring demand. If those countries could respond in times of major crisis, they would be overproducing for the rest of the time. Instead, we need the ability to respond to recurring levels of malnutrition. Today, malnutrition must be seen as a childhood disease like any other, not as an emergency at any given time.

Every year, countries where we have partners, like Niger, Burkina Faso and Sudan, as well as other countries where we do not have partners, have major needs in the order of 2,000 to 3,000 tonnes of product. So there has to be a local production. This also provides the opportunity to develop a high-quality, local agriculture industry using local ingredients. With a lot of research, it is possible to use those local ingredients instead of simply using formulas that have been developed in the north.

What we have managed to do with Plumpy'Nut is fantastic; we are saving children. Unfortunately, when a child is diagnosed with acute malnutrition, it is too late. The symptoms are irreversible. I think that everyone agrees that the need is for prevention. We mainly talk in terms of the first 1,000 days, meaning from the time when a woman becomes pregnant until the child is two years old. We have been working with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for five years to develop preventative products. They have been tested in Malawi, Ghana and Burkina Faso. The results were published in Rome last week.

We now have products for pregnant and breastfeeding women and products that will prevent children older than six months from becoming malnourished. Nutrition alone is not enough. There must also be prevention. This must be done in association with WASH programs, the treatment of malaria, vaccination, breastfeeding, and so on.

We know today that those products, because of the omega-3 and other ingredients they contain in addition to the micronutrients, allow children's bodies to better absorb the micronutrients: this greatly improves their cognitive and motor development.

• (1230)

These products are not magic, as Plumpy'Nut is; with it, we have seen a child who was going to die instantaneously saved. Actually, you don't see anything. That is what prevention is all about. But that is where we have to start, because if we do not, it is already too late.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to start with Madame Laverdière for the first round of questions for seven minutes.

[Translation]

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

My thanks to all the witnesses who have taken the time to come and talk to us today and have made presentations that were all very interesting. I would like to put my first question to Mr. Prasad.

First, I would like to thank you for your presentation. I really appreciated your comments on the deep causes, patriarchy especially, and on the need to respond to that situation and to give women back the control over their own bodies. Control over our own bodies, of course, includes the ability to choose in matters of sexual and reproductive health.

I think your organization has conducted studies on the number of deaths linked to unsafe abortions that mothers and young women undergo.

Do you have specific figures on that?

[English]

Mr. Sandeep Prasad: Thank you very much for the question and for the comments as well.

The statistic that gives the most recent estimate of deaths related to unsafe abortion globally is 48,000 women and girls per year. Even more—probably about ten times as many—experience disabilities due to maternal causes, in addition to that number.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much.

That is a terrible number; you shudder just thinking about it. The response, of course—and I feel that we are in agreement on this—is access to safe abortion services and also to contraception. You talked about it a lot in your presentation, which I greatly appreciated. You also brought up the matter of the return that contraception provides by pointing out the extent to which it is an investment.

[English]

You were wondering about the payback. There's a big return on contraception. I remember the President of Tanzania at the MNCH summit in Toronto talking at length about how happy he was with the progress they've made in Tanzania with contraception.

Here is a simple question: do you think Canada should do more in terms of contraception, family planning, education, and so on?

Mr. Sandeep Prasad: Definitely I think that Canada merits some praise with respect to the Muskoka initiative, in terms of prioritizing maternal, newborn, and child health, though in terms of the specific funding for family planning, there is certainly scope for greater investment by Canada for those issues.

For family planning funding specifically, for the four fiscal years between 2010 and 2014, the government spent \$30.87 million on family planning overseas. Of the \$2.565 billion spent to that point overall through the Muskoka initiative, that was only 1.2% of the Muskoka initiative funds. One would expect, given how effective and smart an investment in family planning is, and for this signature maternal health initiative, that there would be greater spending on family planning for sure.

• (1235)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: I agree that it is a smart investment that should be seen as a forced investment.

I'm still on the same track.

[Translation]

I will go back to French now, if you don't mind.

You have also established a program of sexual education to prevent child marriage. Could you tell us more about that, please?

[English]

Mr. Sandeep Prasad: Specifically we look at comprehensive sexuality education as an important intervention in terms of the long-term prevention of early and forced marriage, but also in terms of ensuring that adolescent girls and young women have the information they need to carry out fertility decisions, to protect themselves from HIV, and so on.

The key in the global context is to ensure that we are moving from education around sexual and reproductive health to comprehensive sexuality education, and that this education be pursued comprehensively so that it deals not only with disease prevention and control but also with diverse sexuality, fundamental issues of gender equality, and human rights. These are interventions that seek to address pervasive gender norms within societies and to break them down. So as a long-term strategy to transform social and cultural norms relating to gender, it's an important investment.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Will we have a second turn?

Okay, good

I'll come to you later.

I'll stay with you, Mr. Prasad.

[Translation]

The post-2015 objectives are still up for discussion, to a degree. Do you think that, at this moment, the needs for gender equality, education for girls, and basic human rights are adequately reflected in the proposals that have been put forward? If not, what could Canada do in that regard?

[English]

Mr. Sandeep Prasad: That's a great question.

I think the package being proposed by the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals is very robust. Probably no stakeholder that has been participating in those negotiations, whether a government, a non-governmental agency, or a UN agency, is perfectly pleased with the final outcome. However, there is quite a robust gender-equality goal, and at this point, we need to make sure we keep that package intact.

The Chair: That's all the time we have in the first round.

Do we have the video ready? We want to show the shot. We could do that, and then we'll continue with our questions.

[Translation]

Mrs. Adeline Lescanne-Gautier: Thank you very much.

I will deal with the first part of your question briefly because I have already talked to you about it.

The therapeutic assistance that Plumpy'Nut provides allows mothers to stay at home and take care of other children.

I talked to you about treatment and prevention. Working with the WHO, we have developed a zinc tablet which, together with rehydration salts, is to be taken at the onset of diarrhea.

Let me show you this short film that explains what PlumpyField is.

Unfortunately, I see that the film is not working. It is one of those days. I will not be able to show it. I am sorry. It did not work.

• (1240)

[English]

The Chair: That's not a problem. We're going to continue with our questions.

Mr. Warawa, we're going to turn it over to you for seven minutes.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Thank you, witnesses, for being here today. Some of you have travelled very great distances.

Ms. Martini, you mentioned that you have zero administrative costs. That's not normal. I think almost every organization has some sort of administrative cost, and that varies from organization to organization, but you said that for the organization you represent it is at zero. Is that correct?

Ms. Maria Martini: That is correct. Our family looks after all of the overhead. Part of that is because they really believe in the work we're doing, and I'm very appreciative of that.

Mr. Mark Warawa: So every dollar that comes in goes right toward dealing with severe malnutrition?

Ms. Maria Martini: Absolutely, yes.

Every single penny that is donated goes to purchase the product. As Mark said, we purchase the product from MANA.

Mr. Mark Warawa: You referred to it as RUTF. What does that stand for?

Ms. Maria Martini: It's ready-to-use therapeutic food.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Okay.

I received a sample a while back, and it tastes like very sweet peanut butter. When this is distributed to children who are malnourished, how do you determine where it will go? Who determines which country it will go to?

Ms. Maria Martini: Our partner, World Vision, determines where the need is greatest. As I mentioned earlier, eight countries have received shipments, a total of 17 containers, from Food for Famine Society.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Each container, then, would hopefully save the lives of how many children?

Ms. Maria Martini: Each container usually consists of 900 boxes, which essentially would be for 900 children.

Mr. Mark Warawa: So you're saying nine hundred times seventeen?

Ms. Maria Martini: Yes.

Mr. Mark Warawa: There was a comment made by Nutriset that this should be made locally using the local resources.

Mr. Moore, I think you talked about making it in North America and then having it shipped out.

Maybe we could hear from both of you. What is the advantage of making it in the west and then shipping it over to the countries through a partnership to meet that need? What would be the advantage of having it done locally?

Mr. Moore.

Mr. Mark Moore: I'll go first, and I'll let Adeline comment as well.

Obviously, there's a big disadvantage to having it shipped across the ocean to get it to where it needs to be. There's also a big positive. If you can create a supply chain within a country, it's a fairly simple product: about a third of it is peanuts, and a third of it is milk, and a third of it is sugar to add calories. That's what it is for RUTF. There are several different products out there, but they all have a similar sort of makeup. The vitamin and mineral makeup will be different.

My wife and I lived for 10 years in Uganda and East Africa. I have great sympathy for African farmers. I spent my youth basically walking around on African farms that were trying to grow peanuts.

I was on the phone yesterday with a big supplier in Kenya who's become a very good friend of ours and who is part of the Nutriset network. They cannot source peanuts in Kenya. They buy them, unfortunately, from the United States right now. Peanuts would be the simplest part of this. Powdered milk is produced in New Zealand for the most part, and maybe in the States or Europe. I've been in warehouses all over Africa in which I've seen it brought in from New Zealand. In the United States, the metalized polyester packaging that gives you the shelf life is from China. The fact that we source it from China doesn't win us any friends, but that's where the metalized polyester or the foil, depending on what you're packaging it in, has to come from. Sometimes you can obtain sugar locally. You're talking about an intervention for a compromised infant. Sadly, all of those barriers make it tough to make locally, but there are some real success stories out there of people who have invested heavily and who are trying to make it locally and affordably.

You're right that in the long term, and maybe even in the short term, in some countries where the investment is ready and there, it makes sense to make it locally. But there are a lot of hurdles. This is, as I said, a pretty simple product.

The big thing about peanuts is the aflatoxins that are present. We're working with the University of Georgia in the United States and with the American Peanut Council, the biggest producers of peanuts in the world, to try to work with local farmers to get a higher-quality post-harvest process with peanuts so that local peanuts could be used. I know in the Haitian programs right now they're having a really tough time just sourcing the peanuts. Milk, as a commodity, is tough anywhere in Africa because there are no drying facilities on the African continent, outside of South Africa, where there are some drying facilities. You have a long shipping process for the individual components of this product.

If you can do it and create a supply chain and create jobs, it's a great thing to be able to do locally, and I think it's something we should all be absolutely working for. MANA is a non-profit. Everything about us is transparent. You can read everything about us online. Every salary that's paid is way below industry averages.

We're trying our hardest to go out of business. We're hoping that we eventually will.

• (1245)

[Translation]

Mrs. Adeline Lescanne-Gautier: I don't entirely agree with you.

Today, the network we have established has eight partners. They produce and use peanuts, of which 90% are locally produced. Of course, before the harvest, when the storage bins are empty, there is a shortage of peanuts. We bring them in from Argentina mainly, and from some other countries. However, 90% of the peanuts are produced locally. On average, 85% of the basic ingredients are produced locally.

We use the oil and sugar that we can find. We cannot find milk powder, of course, so until such time as we can develop that industry, we will continue to send products from the north to help malnourished children.

So today, that means creating skills, jobs, developing an economy and not just providing aid as we have always done by sending products from the north to the south. We can do it. It is complicated, of course; they would not be called developing countries if industrial production in Niger, for example, was simple.

Look, I run a company in France. We produce 40,000 tonnes a year. I do not know whether I would be able to make the 2,000 tonnes they make in Niger every year because the economic environment is more complicated. They are not protected as we tend to be in Europe. The United States helps its industries too. They impose import tariffs.

So life is a lot more complicated, but it can be done and we have to push for it to be done. That is where assistance has to be provided. We have to buy locally, at least when there are local products to buy. That is still not possible everywhere, but those economies have to be assisted if, one day, we want to stop sending products to malnourished children.

[English]

The Chair: We're now going to turn it over to Mr. Garneau for seven minutes.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Prasad, you mentioned that about \$37 million, or 1.2%, of the Muskoka initiative budget went towards family planning. Could you give details of how that money is spent?

Mr. Sandeep Prasad: I have no specifics, but those are figures that have been collected by DFATD.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Would it be primarily for education, such as informing people about reproduction and things like that?

Mr. Sandeep Prasad: Likely it's a mix of interventions relating to commodities and the actual provision of information and services, as you say.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Okay.

We have heard from many people who work very hard, NGOs for instance. They have talked to us about early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation, and the cultural and societal challenges in the countries where these things are widespread. I've often asked them how they can change those attitudes. They've answered that it's primarily through education, persuasion, and what have you.

Those are NGOs. Does the Government of Canada make a government-to-government effort to try to get that message across when it deals with a country where this kind of thing is widespread, or is it just the NGOs that try to change the attitudes?

Mr. Sandeep Prasad: I can't necessarily speak to specifics around how the Government of Canada handles that.

Certainly it's clear that a variety of development partners, donor country partners, will work through their presence, their embassies in countries, to hold dialogues with host governments on particular issues. That's also a role that UN agencies can play. UN agencies such as the United Nations Population Fund can play a very strong convening role between civil society and government within countries. I think the convening role that UN agencies can play is actually quite strong, because that dialogue has to happen domestically between civil society and government.

• (1250)

Mr. Marc Garneau: I understand that.

You mentioned embassies. Do our embassies actually have a dialogue with government people in those countries to try to bring about change in terms of what we consider to be human rights violations?

Mr. Sandeep Prasad: There's certainly scope for more of that to happen. I don't know of any particular efforts that have been made. Certainly, in our view, that is a role of government as a development partner. Government, along with providing development cooperation, needs to be engaged as a key partner in those policy dialogues at the country level.

Mr. Marc Garneau: In your involvement, in the work you do, are you getting a sense of any progress being made in reducing the number of early and forced marriages and the practice of female genital mutilation? Are we making progress?

Mr. Sandeep Prasad: We're making progress in terms of changing governments' attitudes. There have been definite steps to eradicate FGM and to eliminate early and forced marriages through legislative efforts. However, those efforts are not sufficient to curb this immense problem. In the next decade alone, 142 million girls will be forced into early marriages, so at the present time whatever efforts are happening are not sufficient to curb those numbers.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Speaking of nutrition, peanuts are an important element in RUTF.

Mr. Moore, you talked briefly about toxins. Certainly here in North America as parents we're all terrified that our children might have allergies, until we find out whether or not they do, and there are all sorts of rules in schools.

Is this an issue in countries in which you're dealing with famine? Is it just a North American thing, or is it a danger wherever you provide these products?

Mr. Mark Moore: We don't see peanut allergies in children in developing countries. I was just at the University of North Carolina. I live in Charlotte, North Carolina. Just down the road is a UNC nutrition team, and they have a focus on peanut allergies. There's a lot of new research and maybe some theories as to why we have our problems in the west. One of them is that we think children aren't

introduced early enough to peanuts so they present as having an allergy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mrs. Lescanne-Garnier or Ms. Martini, I first became aware of the nature of famine during the Biafra crisis. That was a long time ago, but it was the first time that I had heard about famine as a major crisis. Now we see it on television all the time.

Is famine a regular occurrence? Is it cyclical? Are some times worse than others? Can we say that famine is everywhere, all the time?

Mrs. Adeline Lescanne-Gautier: At any given time, 45 million children are suffering from acute malnutrition. From time to time, there is going to be a crisis in the Sahel. Unfortunately, they are cyclical and they occur every two years. That essentially means that a child is going to be malnourished some time in his or her first thousand days. They can also be linked to events such as those going on in Yemen or Syria at the moment. War makes them worse, but the rate of acute malnutrition remains quite stable in those countries.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Garneau: Ms. Martini, did you want to add anything to that?

Ms. Maria Martini: I think she has summarized that very well, and she has way more experience than I have. I'm still in the learning stages.

Mr. Marc Garneau: So at any time in the world today, 45 million children are pretty well constantly undernourished or malnourished. That's quite a staggering figure.

• (1255)

Ms. Maria Martini: It certainly is, and I really believe that together Canadians can make a difference in the lives of millions and millions of these children. We hope one day malnutrition will be eradicated.

The Chair: I'd like to do one more round each to finish up for time. We're going to go with Ms. Brown and then Madame Laverdière to finish off.

Ms. Lois Brown: To our witnesses, thank you so much for being here.

Mr. Prasad, I thank you for recognizing Canada's leadership on the issue of early and forced marriage. It was our former Foreign Affairs minister, John Baird, who brought this subject to the table at the United Nations General Assembly a year and a half ago. It's an uncomfortable topic, I think, for a lot of people in that assembly, but very proactively and courageously the decision was made that Canada would champion this issue, and we have done that.

I thank you too for recognizing the fact that we have spent \$30.8 million on issues related to family planning. In the same way, the Muskoka initiative was announced in 2010 and Canada put \$2.85 billion on the table. We have seen that money leveraged to some \$7.3 billion with the contributions that have come from other donor countries, from many of our private sector partners, and from foundations. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is one of the largest ones we work with. The issues of family planning are very dear to the heart of Melinda Gates. She spoke at the summit last year in May in Toronto and reaffirmed their commitment to that very issue. With Canada putting another contribution on the table for the years following 2015-2020 in the amount of some \$3.5 billion, I'm sure we are going to see that leveraging happen again and we are going to continue to see these kinds of contributions.

I've now been to 22 countries in Africa, and I recognize that there are policy issues within those countries and they need to make their own decisions. I happened to be in Malawi in January and I read the policy document that was put forward for their health department on building a sustainable health system in Malawi, and we are working very closely with them.

I'm pleased to say that over the past five years we have saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of moms, and millions of children are now reaching their fifth birthday. It's a great record and a great legacy that Canada carries.

I have a question for you. I happened to be an attendee at David Cameron's summit in England last summer, which was called the Girl Summit. The issue of early and forced marriage was very clearly on the table, and every one of the country actors who was there and every one of the civil society participants also said that their country was going to champion this. We saw at the Francophonie meetings in November a whole display of young girls who had been taken into early and forced marriage. But the person who really caught my attention at that summit in England was the father of Malala. He said we should work on tomorrow's fathers, and he asked why he should be a different father to his daughter than to his son.

Do you have any thoughts on how we can work to strengthen countries and to strengthen legislation and policy development to take direct education to the young men of these countries who are the perpetrators of early and forced marriage?

• (1300)

Mr. Sandeep Prasad: Thank you very much for those reflections and those thoughts.

You've hit a number of important points. I'll just make one point regarding country leadership, which is one thing you observed as being absolutely necessary for successful interventions.

The Government of Canada actually participates in the universal periodic review of many countries. It does a good job at that, and it focuses a number of its recommendations on this issue. One thing the government could do would be to follow up when a country accepts a recommendation or indicates that it intends to implement a recommendation that the Government of Canada has issued, and to look at supporting that country in implementing that recommendation. That could be an area to consider for Muskoka part two, support for the on-the-ground implementation of recommendations

that have come through that UPR process. I think that's a very important thing to look at.

The Chair: We'll move over to Madam Laverdière for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Mrs. Gautier, you mentioned that you transfer expertise to your partner plants right inside those countries. So with the transfer of expertise, I imagine that the staff, even the management, of those plants has to be trained.

Mrs. Adeline Lescanne-Gautier: Yes.

In fact, we identify the skills needed, whether they be in quality, in production or in purchasing. The skills are those of the agri-food industry. We provide training both in France and in the plants themselves. Then we identify the partners' deficiencies in terms of skills. So we tailor the training to each country and provide the skills those countries need.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Okay. As I understand it, you work together with already existing plants that then become your partners as you transfer the expertise you mentioned.

Mrs. Adeline Lescanne-Gautier: That may be the case, but it can also involve young entrepreneurs who want to do something in their countries.

For example, a student from Burkina Faso, who was doing a placement with us, said that he wanted to start up a plant. We helped him start that plant from scratch. He became a shareholder in the plant and now he manages it. In that case, it was a coaching program. Someone from Nutriset even spent a year on site there. A month ago, that young man took over the management of the plant.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Very interesting. I imagine that the plant employs local people too.

Mrs. Adeline Lescanne-Gautier: Yes. The important thing for me is to be able to develop the expertise and create salaried positions. A salary benefits an entire family there. We create work based on the peanut business. We have to improve the supply and the quality and establish laboratories in which the products can be tested. The laboratories then make it possible for some products to be exported. In Ethiopia today, for example, a laboratory established there makes it possible to test millet so that it can be exported to Europe. Previously, they were not able to get the documents that allowed it to be exported.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: You said that, in your work, you use local products. I am wondering what a local product is. I have lived in Senegal. The country produces an astonishing quantity of peanuts. It is not really that far from Niger. I don't know whether Niger has sufficient peanuts, but the continent does. It is better than bringing them from very far away.

I would like to ask you a follow-up question. Do you sometimes adjust your recipe so that you can use products that are locally available?

Mrs. Adeline Lescanne-Gautier: In terms of Niger, 90% of the peanuts we use come from that country. If Niger and the surrounding region no longer have any, it means that there was a poor harvest the previous year. Then they have to be imported. However, that situation is extremely rare. It is a resource that you can find everywhere. That is why we developed Plumpy'Nut with peanuts in 1996. Given that we were looking at local production, we knew that we would be able to find the product.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Very good.

Briefly, do you ever adjust your recipe?

• (1305)

Mrs. Adeline Lescanne-Gautier: We are working on that at the moment. We do not have buyers for the new formulas because the

buyer is the United Nations. The formula is the one we developed in 1996 and it has not changed since. We are developing products containing local crops like millet, black-eyed peas, sorghum and teff. The goal is always to improve the overall business and develop local ones. Now, we need people to buy the product.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: I wish we had more time. I'd certainly love to hear from all the organizations. That was a great job today.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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