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Chair

Mr. Robert Oliphant

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

This is the 133rd meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

We are continuing our study on challenges we are faced with in respect to migration, as well as opportunities for the 21st century. Within that larger study, we are focusing several meetings on the two global compacts that are currently under international discussion: the global compact on refugees, and migration. That's the focus of this meeting.

We have two panels today.

In the first panel, we have one witness who is in person. Thank you very much for coming.

We also have two witnesses by video conference.

I think we'll start with the furthest away and then move to the closer witness on video conference. Then we'll close this first panel with the witness from ACT Alliance.

Each witness has seven minutes.

We're going to begin with Ms. Michele Klein Solomon from the IOM, who is coming to us from Geneva, Switzerland.

[Translation]

Thank you, and welcome.

[English]

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon (Director, Global Compact for Migration, International Organization for Migration): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to be with you this afternoon, and thank you very much for the opportunity to present in front of the committee today.

I very much welcome your inquiry into these questions, and I am delighted on behalf of the International Organization for Migration to have an opportunity for both a presentation and a discussion with you.

As the chairman said, I will be introducing the subject of the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. That compact is the result of member state negotiations in the General Assembly of the United Nations that have taken place over the

course of the last year and a half. It will be presented for adoption by member states at the highest level of state and governments on the 10th of December in Marrakesh, Morocco.

The Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration is very much designed to enhance both the safety and security of migration and to reduce both the incidents and the impacts of irregular migration. It is the first intergovernmentally negotiated comprehensive agreement on migration.

Importantly, it is not legally binding. It is designed to be a co-operation framework between states to work together to more effectively manage what is one of the challenges of our time, not only in Canada and North America but in all other parts of the world, which is how to ensure that the movement of people today is safer, more orderly, and more predictable and that we work together to reduce both the abuses that take place and the risks, both to individuals and communities, associated with unsafe and irregular migration.

The key aspects of this co-operation framework are, first of all, again, that is not legally binding. It fully respects the sovereignty of national governments to make their own determinations about national migration policy, including with respect to the question of which non-nationals to admit into their territories.

At the same time, it recognizes that no state acting on its own can effectively address migration, and that by its very nature, migration is a transnational phenomenon. This compact is designed to set out a co-operation framework whereby states can work more effectively together.

It does so through the articulation of some common principles as well as articulating 23 broad objectives aimed at addressing all aspects of migration from the factors that drive migration to the conditions of migration and the need to put in place mechanisms for safe migration—for example, legal labour migration opportunities, opportunities for family migration, opportunities for student visas and things of that sort, while in no way dictating any quotas or any particular requirements on any government.

It also looks to address questions such as the phenomenon of smuggling and trafficking and better law enforcement co-operation as well as co-operation on return and reintegration of migrants who are no longer authorized to stay.

Those are just some examples of the types of objectives that are contained in the compact. As I indicated, there are 23 of them. They set out broad objectives and then under each is a set of best practices or examples of actions that could be taken to realize those objectives. It will be up to each government to decide which of the objectives to pursue, which actions to take to pursue them, and in what order. It is very much a discretionary framework, but it is intended to create a sense of shared solidarity and a commitment to make the migration process work more effectively.

My final point is that more effectively managing migration is not just about governments. While primarily member states have the responsibilities to manage migration not only within their territories but in terms of their co-operation, they will need to do so with a range of other stakeholders: employers, who have a very real role to play in the migration process; recruiters of migrants; migrant and diaspora communities themselves; international organizations to the extent that it is helpful; and, of course, local governments, because so much of migration is experienced and determined by policies and processes at the local level. Mayors and local government officials will be essential.

• (1535)

Let me conclude my opening remarks by saying that this framework that was very much called for and developed by governments—member states throughout the entire United Nations—is of course now very much in the media in some countries. There have been questions raised in some societies about whether this is a good idea and the extent to which it might infringe on the sovereignty of states.

Let me underscore for you that the compact makes absolutely explicit both that it is not legally binding and that it fully recognizes the sovereign jurisdiction and authority of governments to determine their own migration policies. What it intends to do is to actually create more effective policies through states working together, learning from one another, learning from each other's good practices and working together to manage migration to better effect.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to questions that you may wish to pose.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

We will now hear from Stéphane Vinhas, the Emergencies Coordinator of Development and Peace-Caritas Canada.

Mr. Stéphane Vinhas (Emergencies Coordinator, Development and Peace-Caritas Canada): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, and ladies and gentlemen of the committee.

My name is Stéphane Vinhas. I am the Emergencies Coordinator of Development and Peace-Caritas Canada. On behalf of the members of my organization, the local partners we support and the vulnerable populations we assist in more than 40 countries, I would like to thank you for this consultation.

For 50 years, Development and Peace-Caritas Canada has been the official international development organization of the Catholic Church in Canada. We draw our strength from the commitment of

13,000 members across Canada who are determined to help the poor in their struggle for justice in the countries of the South.

We are members of the international network called Caritas Internationalis. At the moment, we are conducting an education and advocacy campaign on forced migration called “Share the Journey”.

We draw inspiration from the words of Pope Francis; our members feel that it is very important to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees. They have actively participated in welcoming Syrian refugees here to Canada.

Beyond the two compacts, they are particularly concerned with working on the root causes of forced migration. As a witness today, I am bringing you that message, their message.

Every minute, 31 people are forced to flee their country. Today, almost double the population of Canada, about 68 million people, are in situations of forced migration. Most of those people come from five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Burma and Somalia. Development and Peace-Caritas Canada supports local partners in those countries.

Migrants and refugees are more than figures and abstract ideas. Above all, they are people like you and me, seeking peace, as Pope Francis has urged. They aspire to freedom and safety for themselves and for their families. They long to be the authors of their own lives once again.

Certainly, they made the decision to leave, but they really had no choice but to do so. No one chooses to flee and put their lives or the lives of their children in danger. They do so because they are forced to, by necessity, by despair and also by hope. Above all, migrants and refugees are human beings, with their rights and their dignity.

How can we help them? As the two pacts state, we help them by attacking the root causes that drive people to leave, so that we can simultaneously prevent forced departures and facilitate the return they desire. Most of them want to return when conditions permit. When they do not permit, it creates situations like the one in Bangladesh, where Rohingyas have been fleeing or committing suicide ever since they were asked to return to Burma. In Syria, the risks of forced recruitment, political repression, and uncertain security are still obstacles to returns.

If we want people to return in an informed, voluntary, dignified and sustainable manner, we must ensure that the reasons that drove them to leave no longer exist. To do so, we absolutely have to work to resolve the root causes of forced human migration. The global compact on migration and the global compact on refugees, which were actually put together following a consultation with the Catholic Church, stress that eliminating the root causes is the most effective way to bring about solutions.

More than anything, forced migration is a consequence of poor political, economic, and social development. Humanitarian work and migration management attempt to address those unfortunate consequences.

It is important to recognize the causes, the many complex and interrelated factors at the origin of these upheavals. There are armed conflicts, persecution, economic, political and environmental reasons. Other reasons are mentioned less often: megaprojects for so-called development, as well as mining, oil and gas, or large-scale agro-industrial operations.

In the light of this presentation, the members of Development and Peace-Caritas Canada offer you the following recommendations, which reflect the two global compacts.

As an artisan of peace, Canada can build on its leadership to ratify and implement the two compacts on refugees and on migration, consistent with the values that Canada espouses internationally. Canada can exercise its leadership by promoting diplomatic and peaceful solutions to armed conflicts, with inclusive peace processes, especially those involving women. Canada can also strengthen and protect civil society organizations working for peace, democracy, human rights, and the empowerment of leaders in the fragile states of the south. Without inclusive and participatory democracies that protect minorities, diversity and the rule of law, forced migration will only get worse.

As a recognized contributor, Canada can rely on its funding to give predictable, flexible and multi-year support with a view to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals, including the goal of reducing inequality, in order to make a contribution to reduce forced displacements. This can be done specifically by reaching the OECD's objective of a contribution of 0.7% of GDP for public developmental assistance.

- (1540)

Canada's funding must also be used for initiatives to reduce the dangers from disasters, to prevent conflicts and to promote peace.

As a responsible member of the international community, Canada can also rely on its values to make sure that local populations receive all the economic benefits that are due to them, in order to prevent economic migration. Those who benefit from international assistance must not be the same as those who are the victims of harmful international or regional policies, real or needed.

Through its values, Canada can also continue to work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to preserve our common home—the term that Pope Francis uses to describe Earth—thereby reducing the risk of environmental migration.

In conclusion, it is important to recall the vision expressed by Pope Francis on the occasion of the first World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul in May 2016. In his words:

...there must be no family without a home, no refugee without a welcome, no person without dignity, no wounded person without care, no child without a childhood, no young man or woman without a future, no elderly person without a dignified old age.

That, above all, is what we must ensure.

Thank you for your attention.

- (1545)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

Now we are going to hear from Ms. Kaastra-Mutoigo.

Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo (Board Member, World Renew, ACT Alliance): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you so much for this time that I can share with you.

My name, as you noted, is Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo. I work with World Renew as an executive director in Canada. For your interest, that is an agency that has been a sponsorship agreement holder for refugees for over 40 years.

I'm also a daughter of immigrant parents who left Holland after the Second World War, and I married somebody who is an immigrant from Uganda and have a daughter who is an immigrant from Uganda.

I'm very glad to speak on behalf of the Action by Churches Together, ACT Alliance, where I serve on the governing board and executive committee. ACT is an international alliance of about 150 churches and faith-based organizations, including World Renew, working together in over 125 countries.

Why did ACT Alliance get involved in the global compact initiative? Global alliance, like ACT, has a strategy that prioritizes using resources and sharing expertise to effectively address the issues of migration and displacement, especially as these impact human rights, poverty levels and resilience to disasters. That's why ACT Alliance's global secretariat office has been involved at every single stage of the process of developing the global compact. We have also consulted membership around the world working with migrants and host communities.

Why do we feel that the global compact is important? Creating this agreement, as was mentioned, among UN member states, enables migration to be more predictable and manageable, while also protecting the rights of vulnerable migrants from the point of their departure from one country to the arrival of another, including their resettlement.

It addresses the root causes or drivers of the unsustainable migration that can be experienced. It increases the availability of protection for people who are suffering rights violations. It ensures better access to basic services. It prevents human trafficking and smuggling. It fosters collaborative relationships in its implementation.

As was noted very well by Stéphane, as much as these global compacts address the flow of migrants and refugees, it is imperative that we also identify and address the current root causes of displacement, of conflict, ecological disasters, climate change and poverty. Sponsorship and resettlement are important things to do in this crisis, but the deeper justice work of addressing these root causes is critical.

Will the global compacts present a threat to the Government of Canada, especially in their ability to ensure rights and well-being of Canadians or to have sovereignty? No. The global compacts have been an entirely state-led process. Civil society and other stakeholders have had a seat at the table. They were not the drivers behind it, and neither was the UN. I think that's very important to note.

The global compact on migration also reaffirms the sovereign right of states in paragraph 15. You can read that for further study. It will not be an international agreement nor a treaty, and will have no legal effect on national legal systems, as was emphasized by Michele.

The global compact on migration reinforces and clarifies what states have already committed themselves to doing in other international treaties and laws, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the sustainable development goals.

The global compact on migration fosters more effective whole-of-government approaches to migration by encouraging states to model interdepartmental co-operation to achieve its objectives. This supports something that Canada is quite good at and has been at the forefront of, which is reinforcing a whole-of-society kind of approach.

Will the global compact on migration add a financial burden to the Government of Canada and its citizens? No. There are multiple stakeholders that are already well equipped, including civil society organizations like ours, which provide strong support services for new immigrants and refugees.

It does not present a financial burden either, since the Government of Canada continues to set its own requirements for approving and ensuring that immigrants follow its assessments for economic viability.

•(1550)

Canada has always been a country of migrants and multi-stakeholder support for refugees and has encouraged the achievement of several key outstanding objectives. For example, if you compare government-sponsored refugees to the general population of Canadians, you will find they receive roughly the same amount of welfare. Privately sponsored refugees do not receive any government support over the 12-month sponsorship period. Over time, refugees have had the same levels of economic success in household income and home ownership as other Canadians.

I want to share a great example of this. A decade after arriving in Canada, Vietnamese refugees had a lower unemployment rate and relied on less social assistance than the Canadian average. One in five had started their own business. They are paying taxes, creating jobs and making Canada better. I have some documentation that I could share with your staff later.

What are the potential costs for Canada not supporting the global compact on migration? It's worth noting that the isolated and vastly different approaches of governments to migrants can potentially cause harm to their neighbouring states, so while some states might opt out of the global compact for reasons they cite as threats to sovereignty, peace, order and good governance, their lack of coordinated efforts with neighbouring states around migration is likely to lead to increased incidence of disorder, protests and distressed migrants.

Another cost is a lost opportunity for Canada to do longer-term projections of labour needs and then have planned migrations for

meeting these needs. Canada's economic health depends on this predictability for permanent and temporary migration.

Another loss from not joining this global compact would be to Canada's international reputation in leading the dialogue around issues of shared concern, such as international migration and human rights, as well as addressing these concerns in a healthy balance with national interests.

Finally, it's worth mentioning here that our immigration points system provides important contributions to our social and economic fabric. However, in the crisis of displacement that we're experiencing in the world today, which is probably deepening, we have a commitment to humanitarian and compassionate settlement as a critical role for Canada. We love to be self-congratulatory about refugee resettlement and sponsorship, but if we look at the statistics, it gives us pause to check whether our collective self-image is really accurate. Our statistics of settlement for those forced to flee are markedly lower than our welcome of voluntary migrants, who are often highly skilled and wealthy.

Is there a better balance, particularly in the current displacement crisis of 68 million people around the world? That is our sincere hope as charities and faith communities like ACT Alliance. We work on the front lines and we hear people's pain-filled and traumatic experiences. I pray God may have mercy and inspire the generous spirit of Canadians.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you to all three of you for your time today and for your expertise and your passion.

I'm taken into many meetings I've had with the CRC and organizations like that in my previous life, and my shoulders drop and I relax; it's easier for me to do that.

We begin our round of questioning with Mrs. Zahid.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses for your important input today.

My first question is to all of you, and it's on the issue which has been touched on briefly in Ms. Klein's and Ms. Kaastra-Mutoigo's opening remarks.

All of you are very familiar with the global compact on migration, so could each of you comment on one of the common criticisms levelled by the critics? Is there any evidence whatsoever that this non-binding statement of principles would infringe on national sovereignty?

Maybe we can start with Ms. Klein.

•(1555)

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: The compact is explicit that it is not legally binding and that one of the guiding principles throughout its operation—as was said by my colleague, Ida, from ACT Alliance—is that it takes full account of the sovereignty of states to determine their own national migration policies.

That is recognized in paragraph 15 as one of the guiding principles. I will read it to you, because that statement is as clear as it can be.

The Global Compact reaffirms the sovereign right of States to determine their national migration policy and their prerogative to govern migration within their jurisdiction, in conformity with international law. Within their sovereign jurisdiction, States may distinguish between regular and irregular migration status, including as they determine their legislative and policy measures for the implementation of the Global Compact, taking into account different national realities, policies, priorities and requirements for entry, residence and work, in accordance with international law.

That, madam, is the clearest statement about the recognition of the role of national sovereignty in national decision-making, but that concept is also picked up explicitly in many other parts of the compact.

My last statement about that is that contrary to some press reports, there is absolutely no obligation in this agreement to take anyone into a country without the explicit authorization of national authorities.

Thank you, madam.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you.

Can we go to Mr. Vinhas?

The Chair: If the other two want to comment on it, they may.

Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo: I will pass. I'll defer.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Vinhas: Let me quote Pope Francis:

Before the challenges of contemporary movements of migration, the only reasonable response is one of solidarity and mercy ... A just policy is one at the service of the person, of every person involved; a policy that provides for solutions that can ensure security, respect for the rights and dignity of all; a policy concerned for the good of one's own country, while taking into account that of others in an ever more interconnected world.

I just wanted my answer to use the words of Pope Francis.

[English]

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you.

Can we proceed to the second question?

Ms. Ida, you can respond to it.

Germany has been a leader on the issue of migration. Just yesterday, speaking in the German parliament about the global compact for migration, German Chancellor Angela Merkel described some opponents of the compact as people who say they can solve everything themselves and don't have to think about anyone else. She said this attitude amounted to nationalism in its purest form.

Would you agree with Chancellor Merkel? Could you discuss why working together co-operatively is the only way we can hope to tackle the global migration challenge that we are facing right now?

Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo: Yes, I agree. I tried to highlight in my statements as well that the decisions some countries make that they think they can make in isolation actually affect others around them. This is the unfortunate result of highly nationalistic leaders, and this kind of compact is going to enable people to have discussions. If everybody signs on to it and commits to it, we can finally have conversations about promising practices that will ensure better

migration and safety between our borders, and probably reduce the number of distressed people as a result. Yes, I would agree with her.

• (1600)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Any one of you can answer my next question.

Would ratification by Canada of the two global compacts necessitate or require any change in Canada's current policies or practices in regard to immigration and refugees? Would that require any changes?

Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo: It will challenge us to review what we currently have in place and how helpful or harmful some of the policies are.

For example, we have advocated for the forgiveness of loans that refugees are asked to pay. You can imagine people coming into the country with hardly anything, having to take out a loan and then pay it back over the course of the first year or two. I can't imagine what that must be like. To me, that deserves a review.

There are things like that. When you look at strengthening the ability of people to settle or resettle into their new country, getting them the necessary support services is something we can examine. Can we do a better job? I think we can, yes. I think Canadians can re-examine what they're doing.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Ms. Klein, would you like to add to that?

The Chair: Please answer very briefly.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Yes. Thank you very much.

Technically, neither of the two global compacts would be ratified in the sense of requiring a legislative act, because they're not international treaties, but in terms of the degree to which Canada already lives up to the commitments, the aspirations and the goals of these compacts, Canada is very well situated to actually not only implement what is aspired to in these global compacts but also to learn from them.

I'll speak only with respect to the global compact for migration. As I said, there are 23 objectives, and under each of those there's a listing of 10 to 15 effective practices that have been gleaned from experience around the world, including Canada's experience. Those may provide a source of rich ideas that would warrant reflection but not require a change, so that as was said—

The Chair: I'm afraid I need to stop you there, but thank you very much.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: No problem.

The Chair: Ms. Rempel is next.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I'm a bit confused. I've heard from you that the agreement is not binding, but then I've heard that if it wasn't ratified by everyone, then activities couldn't be coordinated, and then I just heard that Canada would be required to reflect upon or implement principles where there aren't principles. There was one policy change suggested here with loan forgiveness.

If it's not binding but Canada would be required to make changes, does this mean that the UN would basically assign rapporteurs to kind of disparage Canada or question its sovereign policies if it wasn't in alignment with the global compact, if signed, in the future?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Would you like me to address that?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Yes.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: There is no requirement for Canada to make any changes as a result of the global compact on migration—none. There is no requirement.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Fair enough, but you just said there would be areas where you would like to see change, based on the agreement, and there are certain principles that Canada doesn't implement right now, so would the United Nations then perhaps...?

We often have rapporteurs write reports about Canadian policy. Would that be something that you would envision happening, UN pressure on Canada to change policy in the future if it wasn't in alignment with the definition of the UN on this issue?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: I'll speak only to the global compact for migration, not to the global compact for refugees. In the migration context, the expectation is that there will be a review forum once every four years, but that the kind of review will be determined by the member states, so it would be—

• (1605)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: In the review forum, Canada's policies would then be subject to review and scrutiny—

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: No, in fact—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: —in the typical UN rapporteur process that we all know and love.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: No, it's not a rapporteur process at all. There's no new special rapporteur that's foreseen with respect to this compact, and in fact right now there is not a rapporteur but a special representative for international migration appointed by the Secretary General and—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So it's not binding and there's no requirement to implement it by anybody at all, and there's really no process. You're saying the UN wouldn't push anyone to do it. Then why did we spend a lot of money doing it?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: I was going to say to you that the review process is meant to be completely voluntary by states deciding what they would like to share with each other in terms of practices and learn from one another, and identifying what works and what doesn't work, and it's—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I've sat here with the UNHCR and I've asked for reviews on selections of IDP and how Yazidis weren't referred to Canada as part of the Syrian refugee initiative, and I heard that, no, we don't need any change, it's fine, everything's great, but yet the UN has spent a lot of time, and ostensibly money, putting together an agreement that you say doesn't really require anyone to do anything.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: The decision that these compacts are non-binding were decisions taken by member states. In September 2016, in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which was taken by the General Assembly, all member

states of the UN said that they wanted to create non-legally binding compacts. That was a member state decision.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I'll ask you one question. In the compact it says member states should educate media professionals on migration-related issues and terminology and invest in reporting standards. What would those standards be?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: That will be up to each country and the news media.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: What would you say?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Do you mean about reporting standards, media standards? It's fair and accurate reporting.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: But what does that mean? In the UN's bailiwick, what would that look like? If we were reviewing it, what would be a big check box on that?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: It would be actual statistics, data, tracking of trends, tracking of labour market—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: It's the terminology. I'm just wondering if it would be like checking an X in a box.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: No, every context is different. Each state has a different definition. Each state has a different set of reporting and statistical databases. There is an international definition of a refugee—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Some countries would be able to report on some stuff and other countries would not be able to report on stuff.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: It will be up to each country to decide how it reports. That provision you were talking about is designed to encourage more evidence-based discourse and evidence-based policy.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: What's the lack in discourse right now?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Oftentimes there are assumptions or myths about migration or about refugees.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Like what?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Typical ones are that—

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): On a point of order, can we have the witness have at least a minute or more to answer questions? She only has maybe 10 seconds, 11 seconds at max, to answer something. You cannot give a clear and concise answer in 11 seconds.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: It is my time, Mr. Chair, and I only have a minute left, I believe.

The Chair: It is your time, but I would just remind the member that if the witness has answered a question, she has a right to not answer it again if she's being asked the same question several times. She has the right to answer a question—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I am asking a question. Just on this point of order, the compact and a lot of the criticism of it is suggesting that there would be some sort of reporting standard or terminology. I and my colleague, who's the immigration minister in Ontario, have been called many names by the Prime Minister and our immigration minister for raising the fact that we don't believe that people are fleeing persecution from upstate New York, for example.

Maybe I'll be more direct. Under the global compact for migration, would you suggest that my coming out and calling somebody who is illegally crossing the border from the United States into Canada an illegal border crosser would be incorrect terminology that the global compact would seek to correct?

• (1610)

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: No, somebody who crosses without authorization crosses without authorization.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So is “illegal border crosser” correct terminology under the global compact for migration?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: There's nothing that prohibits that terminology. Normally, what the UN would say—but it's not a requirement and it's not censorship—is that it's someone who crosses irregularly. It is possible to use “illegal” as well. We prefer the term “irregular”, but we're not going to sanction anybody for using the term “illegal”.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Under the global compact, if Canada were reviewed for this, how would that be treated? Would journalists be—

The Chair: I'm sorry, your time is over.

Ms. Kwan, it's your time.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I thank all the witnesses for their presentations.

It's interesting that as we embark on this discussion, some people insist on saying that asylum seekers are crossing over illegally, when here in Canada, our law, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, explicitly states that those who are crossing over irregularly are not committing a criminal offence.

With that said, my question is this, and I'll be very blunt. The Conservatives in the House of Commons, I think it was just this week, asked the Prime Minister to step away from the global compact. I would really like to hear from our witnesses what the implications are for Canada if we do that.

We will start with the folks on screen, if you don't mind. Ms. Kaastra-Mutoigo has offered some of those thoughts already. If we could start with the folks on screen, I would appreciate that.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Perhaps Stéphane could comment.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Vinhas: I do not think that policies or laws, or even seeing sovereignty as a wall, will prevent migration. That is why I insist once again that work must be done on the root causes of migration. In addition, as you so rightly said, people arriving in Canada must be given every possible protection to ensure their dignity as human beings.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

I'll go to our second witness and then I'll ask my follow-up question.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Thank you very much.

You asked specifically what the implication for Canada would be of stepping away. I think there are three main implications.

First, there would be a loss of co-operation, which is desperately needed, and trust to be able to address what is fundamentally a cross-national transborder phenomenon. I don't mean just with your southern neighbour but across the world. The real risk is a loss of co-operation.

Second would be a loss of Canada's international standing, and, as was said so well in previous statements, Canada's historical commitment to fair and just immigration and refugee policies as well as leadership internationally.

Third would be the very specific needs that Canada will have in terms of addressing what is a reality of migration, which will not go away whether or not Canada becomes a part of this framework. You will lose the ability to have tools that can help in working together to make your response more effective.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much.

Do you have anything else to add, Ms. Kaastra-Mutoigo?

Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo: For me the biggest loss is our care and our generosity for people who suffer. For me that is the most depressing thing to think about.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

We and our guests have noted the situation globally and the need for co-operation—hence the compact. In terms of direct action from Canada, aside from being part of the compact, what do you think Canada can offer at the table? Is it leveraging more aid, for example? Some have said to us in our travels to Uganda that we need to make sure that we continue to accept resettlement numbers even though we can't resettle everyone. It is also a signal to everyone that we are part of the solution and that resettlement is a component of it. It is not all of it, but it is a component of it.

To that end, I wonder if you have any specific recommendations in terms of direct action for Canada to undertake beyond the compact.

Again, I'll go through all of the speakers in the same order that they answered the previous question.

• (1615)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Vinhas: Despite its enviable situation, Canada welcomes the equivalent of 1.7% of all displaced persons, according to 2016 figures. Given Canada's economic situation, progress is still to be made in that welcome.

The most important thing is for Canada to increase the funding it provides to host countries, generally countries of the south, those that receive most migrants and refugees. This is so that they can face up to emergency situations and increase their developmental capacity. In that way, those host countries of the south will be better able to welcome migrants and to provide them with protection and dignity. If migrants are not helped in transit countries, they will possibly end up in Canada.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Do you have a suggestion by way of a percentage or a specific number?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Vinhas: I am sorry, but what percentage are you referring to?

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I mean resettlement numbers.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Vinhas: I do not have those figures. It is up to Canada to do its own financial analysis and determine its ability to provide a welcome. However, if we compare ourselves to countries like Jordan and Lebanon, which are receiving millions of people without the financial ability to do so, it is certain that Canada can do a lot more.

That said, once more, welcoming migrants and refugees to Canada is not necessarily the preferred solution. The best solution would be to make sure that people do not leave their homes. That is the most important.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: That was very well said by Stéphane. In many respects, the longer-term picture about migration patterns—and I'm not talking about refugees here—is that we need to look at what leads people to move. Oftentimes, it's a lack of opportunity at home.

The commitment of Canada and other governments around the world to the longer-term sustainable development agenda of reducing insecurity and conflict ends up fostering development and improving conditions for people to live safe and dignified lives at home and to not be in a context that forces them to move, including from the results of increasing environmental degradation exacerbated by climate change. Many things that affect both migratory and refugee policies and practices can be done to improve conditions and to limit the risks to individuals. Canada is in a position to help lead the way on that.

The Chair: I'm afraid I need to end it there.

Monsieur Ayoub is next.

[Translation]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for joining us.

Global migrations are very interesting as a topic and people all around the world put a lot of effort into having a platform from which they can express their views. This allows global migrations to be discussed, their causes to be understood and acted upon.

It seems to me that there are two conflicting realities in the way this is looked at. You can ignore it and not be part of it, but we know that you do not get a say if you do not show up. The best way to encourage refugees to reintegrate, either in their home countries or in the countries that welcome them, is to take part in developing a plan. That's what the global compacts seem to be doing. People who are resistant to those plans will find all kinds of reasons to not be part of them. They are afraid and they turn inwards on themselves. There are two conflicting realities.

The United States will not be part of developing a plan. Canada is an important neighbour of the United States. Without necessarily wanting to become a world leader in immigration, we want to have a policy that encourages acceptance and champions compassion and fairness. How can we make all the details of our policy on migrants known to Canadians so that they become convinced of the validity of the policy? What do we do to make the Trudeau government a leader and to continue to show compassion? Canada has a great history of compassion, but there is a kind of conservative current in the way we act. How can we convince our conservative friends that this is the right thing to do?

The witnesses can answer in any order that suits them. Mr. Vinhas, do you want to start?

• (1620)

Mr. Stéphane Vinhas: If we go back to what is happening at the moment, I can tell you that all the migration policies, all that the United States is putting into place, and all the threats their president is making is not stopping people from organizing migrant caravans. This is not even about individual considerations anymore; these are definitely migrant communities deciding to form caravans to get to the United States. We make a mistake by thinking that we are an island in the centre of the world. Even if we were that island, people would still get on a boat to get here. We have seen that once again in the case of the Rohingyas.

I repeat that all the walls we may build will be of no use. Instead, we have to ensure that people can keep their dignity. As you say, Canada is a welcoming country. If Canadians found themselves having to flee their country one day, they would be very happy to find other countries open and generous towards them.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Ms. Kaastra-Mutoigo, do you have anything to add?

[English]

Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo: I always look at this from the perspective of what Canada's gifts are, and for those who are probably more conservative, I would say to look at our civil society and the enormous wealth it has in welcoming people and how we can generate that spirit among Canadians.

If I look at our own faith-based community of 200-plus churches, 75% of them want to support refugees. We don't even have enough spaces. By September they are completely filled up. They support people to get on their feet, to get jobs, to start businesses. Look at the economic development that is going to contribute. To put barriers that limit the growth of Canada, this place where we have a huge amount of space.... All you have to do is fly from one part of the country to another and, compared to the U.S., look at the resources we have. It's just enormous.

To look at it from an asset-based point of view and to generate how we can multiply those assets, to me, is the key. That is what this whole compact will do. Think about how we settle refugees really well.

[Translation]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Thank you.

[English]

Madam Solomon, do you have something to say about that?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Yes, just very briefly, and thank you very much, sir, for your statement. It's quite compassionate and compelling.

One of the main aspirations of the global compact for migration is to enhance the rule of law and to ensure due process of law in migration policies around the world. Canada obviously is committed to that and has a real interest in ensuring that other countries do as well. That will be important for addressing the labour market needs in Canada.

Some of the western provinces, of course, have skills gaps in particular sectors that need to be filled, including by migrant workers. Canada also has an interest in terms of ensuring the reduction in irregular migration, so you have a lot to give to the world.

•(1625)

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Thank you for the answer.

I don't have much time left.

[Translation]

We make trade agreements all around the world and pat ourselves on the back about them. We want to have influence, we want to be part of it all, and to encourage a certain fairness. Mr. Vinhas talked about eliminating the root causes of forced migrations and the return of refugees.

How can we assign some responsibility to the peoples or the countries that end up being the cause of an involuntary migration, by virtue of a war or—

[English]

The Chair: It's a good question, but I'm afraid I'm not going to be able to let them answer.

[Translation]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Perhaps you will have the opportunity to answer that later.

The Chair: I am sorry.

[English]

Go ahead, Ms. Rempel.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: For Michele, the 22nd objective of the compact on migration is to “Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits”.

What does that mean?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: I'll give you an example in the Caribbean. If someone has worked in one country in the Caribbean for many years and contributed to its social security and health care systems, when they return to their home country, they will be able to take the value of that back through a state-to-state co-operation agreement.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Okay, can you explain how you envision that working?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: There are examples where that works already in some cases, largely negotiated as a matter of bilateral agreements between countries. In some regions of the world, it's undertaken on a regional basis.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: If somebody earned the right to health care in one country and moved to a different country, they would have the same entitlement there. Is that what you are saying?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: No, they would take whatever the value is of their accumulated rights—for example, a pension. If you earned a pension, if you worked in a country for 10 years and contributed to the pension system, you would be able to take with you when you return, if there's an agreement between the countries, the value of your pension back to your country of origin. It's only what you have earned based on your own contributions.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: In terms of the management of that agreement, would that be...? I'm just trying to understand how this works. I know there are a lot of questions about state contributions.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Yes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Have you any other information on that, so I am clear?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: It's challenging. It's a complicated area, because every country's national system is different. Finding ways to work portability between systems requires mechanisms to translate from one to the other.

As I mentioned, the Caribbean, for example, where people tend to move around and work in different countries at various points in their career, has worked out a system for actually allocating time earned in various systems and working to—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: The end goal would be a global system for that.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: I don't think a global system is realistic anytime in the near future.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: But that's what the agreement aspires to.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Not necessarily. It talks about bilateral as well as regional agreements. Personally, and this is my own opinion, having seen it, I think it's not realistic to imagine a massive global system on this aspect anytime soon.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Is there any content in the agreement around reforming how the UN selects refugees for referrals to host countries like Canada?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: That's specifically within the competence of the High Commissioner for Refugees. I would ask you to pose that question to them.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Are you saying it's not in that agreement at all? Are there no reform mechanisms for the UN built into this agreement?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Do you mean the global compact for refugees or the global compact for migration?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I mean the migration one. There's no discussion about reform of UN process in there.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: There's quite a bit of discussion.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: But it's more focused on member states.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: Yes, but in the global compact for migration there is also recognition of the UN Secretary-General's decision to create a new coordination mechanism in the UN system on migration.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Oh, how would that work?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: The Secretary-General has decided to create what is called a network on migration, which will have the International Organization for Migration, as the coordinator in the secretariat, bring the different parts of the UN system together to work in a more effective way to support member states.

• (1630)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Could you table with the committee some information on that particular requirement? That's news to me, though. It would be interesting to get more information on it.

I have just a few seconds left, so I'll ask one last question. Do you know how much money Canada has dedicated to the development of the global compact on migration?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: I am not aware, because it's your diplomatic mission in New York that negotiates that, and it is the people who are posted at your mission there who will undertake those negotiations.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: In terms of additional staff or hosting meetings or that sort of stuff, is there any sort of outline of budget on how much we've spent?

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: I am not aware of that. So far it's been undertaken within existing resources. There have been no extra budgetary consequences of the process leading to the global compact.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Thank you.

The Chair: You need to end there.

Mr. Whalen, I see someone's trying to get your chair, so I'll give you two minutes and then we're going to end this hour.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Thank you all for coming.

My question relates to root causes of migration. I looked at the document that was prepared by the Vatican, which we had a chance to take a look at, from January, with about 20 principles to follow in

developing the compacts. When I look at the compact on migration itself...maybe I'll focus on objective 2.

You talk about minimizing adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin, and yet there's no discussion here of impunity, and it seems that state impunity is one of the leading drivers for mass exodus from various countries, whether we're talking about the collapse of human rights in countries or just kleptocracies in developing countries. I'm wondering how we see reinvigorating state institutions within source countries for migrants as a goal, because I don't see that either explicitly in the document prepared by the Vatican or in the compact, but that must be considered to be the primary root cause.

Ms. Michele Klein Solomon: If I might, sir, you're absolutely right, and I'd like to call your attention to objective 2, paragraph 18 (b), which actually in the final sentence does address questions of "rule of law and good governance, access to justice and protection of rights, as well as creating and maintaining peaceful and inclusive societies with effective, accountable and transparent institutions", which I believe goes directly to your point.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Wonderful. It's great to see it there.

With respect to the Vatican's documents, Stéphane—

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Vinhas: Just now, I talked about the Vatican document. The countries of the South have to assume their responsibilities. Those countries also have responsibilities and there must be support for civil societies working to reduce corruption and increase the respect for rights. In a country, there are also various currents and forces at play. Civil societies must be supported when they ask states to assume their responsibilities, because they are at the origin of what is going on. The responsibility does not lie only with the countries of the north. In an interconnected world, the problems and the solutions are in the north and south at the same time.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thank you all for demonstrating the importance of the global compact.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much to all our witnesses. That was very helpful.

I'm always impressed when you ask a question and someone says, "Go to number 2 at paragraph 18(b)." It's as though they know what they're talking about. It's really very helpful to our committee to have such expertise from all three of you.

We're going to suspend for just a moment as we bring in our next panel.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1635)

The Chair: I'm going to call the meeting back to order. Thank you very much.

We're going to welcome our witnesses who are coming to us by video conference.

Monsieur Elie, from Switzerland again, I recognize that it's very late for you. Thank you for joining us.

Mr. Axworthy from Manitoba, thank you for joining us.

Thank you to Mr. McArthur and Ms. Singh from CARE Canada, who are present.

I think we're going to begin with Mr. Elie, who is coming to us from the International Council of Voluntary Agencies in Geneva.

Each of the witnesses has seven minutes, and then we'll have some questions for them.

Please begin, Mr. Elie.

[*Translation*]

You may speak in French and English.

Mr. Jerome Elie (Senior Policy Officer, Forced Displacement, International Council of Voluntary Agencies): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is a privilege for me to address the committee.

[*English*]

I will continue in English, but I will be happy to answer questions in French.

I work in Geneva in a global network of NGOs, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies. Therefore, I have followed the global compact process closely, sitting at meetings and exchanging with NGOs, the UNHCR and member states quite extensively. I will draw on this experience to present a few reflections on the refugee compact and how it might be implemented.

First of all, the origins of the refugee compact are found in the 2015 crisis, which highlighted major weaknesses of the refugee regime, and two in particular: the lack of clear guidelines to promote international co-operation in this field and the disproportionate responsibility borne by a few states, either as financial contributors or as hosting countries.

All of this demonstrated our collective inability to provide predictable, equitable and sustainable responses to refugee situations.

In reaction, UN member states called for the development of a refugee compact, and also asked the UNHCR to implement the comprehensive refugee response framework, the CRRF, which is now an integral part of the compact.

The compact was developed in 2017 and 2018 through an inclusive process gathering together member states, the UNHCR and other stakeholders, including NGOs. There is, therefore, collective ownership of this document.

The heart of the process was a series of six formal consultations this year on the basis of draft texts. Each member state had opportunities to comment, flag red lines and suggest changes to the draft during the process.

I believe Canadian NGOs provided input, and Canada was very much involved in the process from the start—for example, when Ambassador McCarney was chairing the UNHCR governing body, and later on as well, through various initiatives.

The compact, as you may know, is now scheduled for adoption at the General Assembly next month. Already last week, UN member states showed quite strong support for its objectives.

What is the compact? It can be seen as a blueprint to reinvigorate the refugee regime and implement, more efficiently and predictably, commitments already made through the 1951 convention and other legal instruments.

As such, the compact is a practical rather than normative document. It reaffirms existing obligations such as the core principle of *non-refoulement* and details arrangements that states and other actors can activate to enhance their responses.

Among the main features of the compact, I highlight the following three.

First are arrangements to broaden the base of support and extend responsibility-sharing, mainly through a global refugee forum, conceptualized as a new form of regular pledging event. This will be multi-stakeholder—meaning that this is not just about state contributions—and it will try to go beyond financial contributions, calling also for the pledging of, for example, resettlement places, technical assistance and policy changes. It will bring accountability through a follow-up process on commitments made and will also be an occasion to showcase good practices.

Second, the compact further advances the global shift away from the camp approach to promote refugees' self-reliance and their inclusion in the communities that host them, in national systems, and in development plans. It also calls for establishing constructive co-operation between humanitarian and development actors.

Finally, the third main feature is that the compact places considerable emphasis on national ownership and leadership in planning and implementing refugee responses.

• (1640)

I think the adoption of the compact will not mark the end of the process, but rather the beginning of collective efforts to realize its potential. I say that first of all because elements in the text will require further elaboration. How to organize the global refugee forum is one example, but there are others, like defining ways to strengthen national systems such as health and education systems to include refugees.

Let's also remember that the compact is already being implemented through the CRRF. Over the past two years, new political will and partnerships have been mobilized in many countries geared toward improving refugees' lives. Of course many challenges remain, but we can build on positive momentum.

From this perspective, I think that partnerships will be at the centre of the compact's implementation, bringing the multiplier effect required to expand our collective capacity to respond. The compact is truly meant to develop multi-stakeholder approaches, with the participation of refugees themselves, and that is very important.

Finally, in evaluating the impact the compact can have on Canada and on us all, I think it is important to analyze the risks associated with the current deficiencies of the refugee regime. Failing refugees can only lead to radicalization and lost generations. This is in nobody's interest.

We can also say there are high expectations from host states, and so we need the compact and other efforts to rebuild trust and credibility of the refugee regime.

From this perspective, we know that globally Canada is regarded as a leader in refugee policy. Canada is recognized for its major contributions in resettlement and complementary pathways. It is also a champion of refugee education and the protection and empowerment of women and girls. We are all grateful for this and would be delighted to see more.

Given the dire needs, we hope that Canada will be a strong contributor to the global refugee forum through commitments, but also through showcasing good practices. Contributions will not necessarily mean higher funding levels or more resettlement places, although that would be great, of course; it will also mean continuing to lead by example, sharing your experience and expertise and using your good offices and convening power.

To take a concrete example, your global refugee sponsorship initiative aims to help other countries open new pathways for refugee protection. This is exactly the spirit of the compact.

• (1645)

The Chair: I need you to wind up fairly quickly, please.

Mr. Jerome Elie: Okay.

In conclusion, NGOs have occasionally questioned some elements of the compact—for example, the lack of consideration for internally displaced persons—but overall we see this as a major achievement that can help reshape refugee responses. This will not happen overnight. It will require political will and engagement from all stakeholders.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Axworthy now.

You might want to enrol in our frequent witness loyalty program. We give points. It's very good to have you back again.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Chair, World Refugee Council): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here on behalf of the World Refugee Council, and to begin by simply saying I think we as a council strongly endorse the importance of the compact. We underline that it is a very critical piece of architecture to be able to begin mobilizing support, accountability, direct participation and certainly financing, all of which are really crucial elements of a functioning refugee system.

Even in the broadest sense, the compact does represent a continued commitment to find international, multilateral, collaborative, co-operative solutions, as opposed to the kind of distemper

that's affecting so much of our world during these times, which is to go it alone, to simply to revert back to a form of 19th century nationalism in which everybody can solve their own problems. That's simply, as we know, impossible when we're dealing with a global-wide phenomenon.

Now, at the latest count, it's 26 to 27 million refugees, with almost an equal number of internally displaced persons—which, by the way, is something that it is essential to incorporate into any reform process. There are millions of stateless people who have been denied any kind of anchorage, credibility or legitimacy.

What we're saying is that we support the compact. As a previous speaker said, it's a beginning. It's a framework that now has to be developed in terms of the working tools that go into place. I guess it's the transition from the architects to the plumbers and the carpenters, who now have to start building, or rebuilding, a refugee system that is in really quite serious straits.

Let's begin with one very clear example, which is the financing system. It is a totally voluntary donation system. The compact negotiations were not allowed to include that as part of their negotiations; that was not their mandate. As a result, the very important proposals around a comprehensive refugee framework are going to be dependent on, still, the good will and charity of other countries and donors. As we know, that's a shrinking constituency.

One of the things that I think we want to emphasize as a council is that we now have to begin looking at a much more specific set of tool kits. In the financial area, we've really been looking at how to apply some of the best practices of trade preferences to provide economic development jointly for people in the host countries and the refugees who join them. We will begin looking at capitalization through a form of refugee bond, a sort of social impact bond. I will give full disclosure on that, and we'll have it in our report.

Certainly there's the whole question of holding accountable the thugs and the dictators and all the people who are causing the conflicts that create the refugees. They become the victims of this kind of wanton period when money and greed are so much driving where we want to go.

That's one reason that we're very strong in bringing in and having countries endorse the idea of setting up a reallocation of frozen assets so that there is no impunity in terms of being able to protect your ill-gotten treasures, when in fact they can be attached through a proper legal process and be returned to help support the serious gaps in funding that refugee groups now have. We're now reaching a stage where the pledging conferences may be only getting pledges up to 30%, 40%, 50%, and even those are not being delivered.

It's not only about holding countries accountable that are the cause of the conflicts, that create the refugees. It's also about holding accountable the people who make pledges and don't live up to them at the other end of the pipeline. There has to be an accountability system. That's one thing that was very difficult to negotiate through the compact process.

•(1650)

Another clear example of that is a leadership system. There is a serious void of women involved in refugee activity leadership, both at the local community levels as well as through the organizations. There's also, I think, this dichotomy that was established between the international role and the national role. I think there's also a very significant role for regional organizations to have more involvement and more authority to begin taking on issues.

I'll use an example. Our council was in Colombia just two months ago, looking at the surge coming out of Venezuela. Right now there isn't a regional answer, even though the impact is 5,000 people a day who are crossing from Venezuela and going to Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Brazil. Right now, one of the efforts we have been making is on how to reformulate a regional answer to that.

Similar to the kind of migrant issues we're seeing in central America is the return of the Rohingya in Asia. As a council, we actually went to the front lines. We were right where the refugee problems were most apparent and met with the people who were able to discuss that situation. I think what we're talking about is a next step, a second round of action organized through networks of like-minded committed governments, the private sector, NGOs and universities.

This is the kind of reform initiative that some of you in the Canadian Parliament will know we did in the past, things like the R2P issue and the land mines. You can pull together active networks that can consolidate and combine around very specific targets and accomplish those. I think our view at the council was that once you begin getting some direct solutions that make a real difference to individual refugee communities or people, then you're going to start rebuilding trust and confidence.

You can talk about it and you can ask for it, but you have to win it and you have to earn it. You earn it by showing that governments can collaborate and work together to actually find solutions, as we did back in the 1980s on the boat people when I was the immigration minister in Canada. It's that lack of performance and that lack of being able to manage the system, both at the border level and then the larger level, that I think is really creating a problem.

I would say that I hope the committee will strongly support the compacts themselves, but also indicate that there are a lot of very specific commitments that will have to be made by governments like our own, by private sector and non-governmental sources, to start actually developing very specific initiatives around which we can begin making a real change in the protection and the promotion of refugees.

•(1655)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

We're going to go to Mr. McArthur and Ms. Singh. Ms. Singh will speak.

Ms. Simran Singh (Senior Humanitarian and Gender Advisor, CARE Canada): CARE Canada is honoured to contribute to the committee's deliberations today.

CARE is a rights-based international NGO. We support life-saving humanitarian assistance and peace-building, as well as

longer-term development work with a specific focus on women and girls. Last year, our work reached nearly 60 million people in 95 countries, including in refugee-hosting countries such as Jordan, Bangladesh and Kenya.

I will begin by sharing an example of the way we work with refugees and host communities in such contexts. My colleague will then provide our perspectives on the global compact on refugees.

CARE has been in Jordan since 1949. In recent years, Jordan has absorbed almost 700,000 Syrian refugees, over 85% of whom live below the poverty line. This has placed significant strain on government services and on the communities where the refugees are trying to eke out a new living. We have set up four urban refugee hubs across Jordan. These are essentially community centres, like you would find in any city in Canada, with children singing off-key and a flurry of activity. The urban refugee hubs are innovative in that they provide services and assistance to refugees and vulnerable Jordanians alike through immediate cash assistance, psychosocial support and skills training.

This accomplishes a number of things. First, it helps supplement services provided by the Jordanian government. Second, the hubs relieve pressure on the current humanitarian system by building women and men's capacities to generate income and become self-reliant. Third, the hubs foster social cohesion, providing services that otherwise would not be available to the local Jordanian population. Finally, urban refugee hubs provide a safe space for refugees to speak to other refugees, to share their experiences and to recover a sense of normalcy and dignity.

As you will have seen in Uganda, amazing things happen when we help refugees help themselves. Our most recent annual assessment noted that refugees in Jordan are becoming more self-sufficient and less reliant on aid. In an era of unprecedented humanitarian need, more protracted conflicts, and increasingly scarce resources, solutions like these help us stretch our aid dollars and foster longer-term, more sustainable impacts.

Mr. Shaughn McArthur (Policy and Influence Lead, CARE Canada): This is why states, NGOs and multilateral agencies came together in 2016 to ensure that the complementary implementation of best practices would no longer be left to chance but rather woven into the fabric of the global refugee system. At the end of the day, the global refugee challenge is entirely manageable.

Consider that refugees make up just 0.3% of the global population. The problem, as I think you've heard previously, is rather that 88% of the world's refugees are concentrated in a handful of front-line states. These are largely low- and middle-income countries already grappling with poverty, poor infrastructure, food insecurity and political instability. These are countries that have, to a great extent, been left to shoulder the responsibility of hosting refugees alone, oftentimes over decades.

That is why, in the New York declaration, world leaders expressed their determination to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility for the highest number of refugees since World War II. CARE was actively involved in the articulation of the New York declaration, and we have remained engaged through the two years of intensive consultations towards the strongest possible global compact on refugees. I am confident that this is what we have achieved.

By no means is the global compact on refugees perfect, but it is a document that recognizes that the global forced displacement challenge is inherently political, that countries of first asylum provide a vast public good, that women and girls experience particular gender-related barriers and bring unique capacities and contributions, that labour policies that support refugees' self-sufficiency help them become a net benefit to host communities, and that more must be done to tackle root causes such as conflict, abuse of human rights and international humanitarian law, exploitation, discrimination, and poverty.

I'm here to tell you today that CARE supports the global compact on refugees, which we believe can help bring about a more predictable, consistent, coherent and efficient international response to large flows of refugees.

What the global compact on refugees lacks is legal teeth or a clear way of holding states and other stakeholders accountable for its implementation. Paragraph 4 of the compact states that it will be "operationalized through voluntary contributions to achieve collective outcomes and progress towards its objectives". This is where the world needs more Canada.

CARE recommends two key ways in which Canada can help the global compact for refugees set a new standard in the way the world responds to refugee crises.

First, Canada should offer to co-host the first global refugee forum. The global refugee forum, as established under the GCR, represents a critical opportunity to calibrate progress, share best practices and pledge contributions towards the objectives of the global compact on refugees. Canada is regarded as an honest broker and is uniquely positioned among countries to help co-host the first global refugee forum.

Second, Canada should support a comprehensive, gender-responsive response to a specific large-scale or protracted refugee situation. This would be done in partnership with a refugee-hosting country and in collaboration with UNHCR and local civil society organizations. It should involve the activation of the support platform conceived in the global compact for refugees, including efforts to galvanize political commitment; mobilize financial, material and technical assistance; facilitate coherence between humanitarian and development responses; and support policy initiatives that can help ease pressure on host countries, build resilience and self-reliance and find solutions.

The global compact on refugees offers a blueprint for a more consistent, predictable and efficient global refugee response system, a system capable of restoring trust and co-operation among countries. CARE firmly believes that the compact's operationalization and our ability as an international community to report on its

progress in the coming years is a key migration opportunity for Canada in the 21st century.

With that, we look forward to your questions.

● (1700)

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

Mr. Sarai, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): I want to thank you all for your great insight.

I'll start with Mr. Axworthy, if you can begin.

You've been in government and with NGOs for several decades, particularly with respect to foreign affairs, and you've seen immigration and refugee challenges.

What are the primary reasons for the increase in IDPs and large-scale refugees? Is this a pattern that's always been there, or is this worse in the last decade than it was before?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: I think there have always been displaced persons. We've made, however, some legal distinctions, so a refugee has to be somebody who crosses a border in search of protection against persecution.

Internally displaced people are affected by exactly the same conditions—conflicts, starvation, extermination, police brutality, whatever the case may be—but they don't get as far as the border. That's why we think it's really important that the reform process, for which the compact will hopefully be a catalyst, will begin to incorporate these questions of internally displaced persons.

You would be interested to know that the first time I heard the notion of responsibility to protect was when Francis Deng was the UN special representative for displaced persons back in the mid-1990s. He put forward the idea that if countries are not able or willing to protect citizens with their proper rights, then there is an international community responsibility that goes with it.

Interestingly enough, we were able to take that concept and sort of fast-forward it into something that now is entrenched in the UN system, if not always applied, and it simply shows that the problem of displaced people goes back until certainly the thing that Envoy Deng identified for me when I was in foreign affairs as something that really had to be done.

Unfortunately, with the way the negotiating process goes around the compact, that wasn't really allowed to come in as one of the central agenda points. That's why we're saying, now that we've got a platform, which the compact can provide, that we have to build on it and build the more tailored responses to the very specific and concrete issues that are found throughout the world but that are also very different in their impacts.

● (1705)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Is there a place in the compact for political will to prevent events that cause the large-scale movement of people when a dispute or famine or issues erupt, perhaps where the world intervenes earlier to prevent forced migration in situations?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: Unfortunately, the Security Council, which under the charter had the prime responsibility for maintaining peace and security, is becoming very dysfunctional because of the great power disputes and the exercise of the veto. As a result, a lot of conflict situations are simply bypassed or subject to kind of a rhetorical flourish of another resolution or a statement of goodwill, but not a concrete action.

Let me give you an indication of a news report that came out this week about the Central African Republic. Who reads reports on Central African Republic? Well, some of us do.

It was a story about how one of the armed groups... There's a civil war going on, and there's a UN presence, but the UN security presence is limited, so as a result one of the warring groups went into the capital city and attacked people in a displaced persons camp. Some 20,000 people were under attack, with hundreds of fatalities and injuries.

Now, why aren't we geared up to respond to that? It goes back to, I think, what one of the previous interlocutors said: Dealing with refugees is more than a humanitarian issue and is very much a political issue. It's very much a security issue. That's where I think we have to broaden the discussion and the examination of what needs to be done to bring the objectives—the goals of the compact—forward for implementation.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: How would you take the fact that some countries have not opted to be in it, particularly one of the larger refugee intake countries in past history, the United States? Without them, do you think it's quite weakened, or do you think there's room to have them added in in the future, if they so wish?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: It would always be great to have full unity around these issues, but to get unity of 193 governments is not so easy. As a result, I think what we've learned in the last decade or two is that we can mobilize reform and international action without having a full court press.

We've had initiatives in which maybe eight or nine countries have participated. They bring in partners from the NGO community and partners from the private sector and from the international institutions. They tackle an Ebola problem through the WHO. In our case we did the land mines treaty, which was done outside the circumstance of the UN but brought back into the UN, because there was no way that the negotiating mandates of the UN were going to allow a real solution to that problem.

I think we have to begin to learn how to think away from the hierarchies and the top-down kinds of systems and begin looking at how you develop a network system for active implementation of very specific solutions.

I guess if I were making the case to you as a committee, I would provide a ringing endorsement for the compact and then suggest getting on with looking at the more specific solutions, of which Canada can be a major promoter or interpreter.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: My next question would be for Jerome Elie from Switzerland.

You mentioned something that I didn't quite get the full gist of, and maybe you can elaborate.

You said there would be “increased radicalization” if refugee regimes are not modernized. Am I correct? Can you explain what would cause increased radicalization in this refugee process? I want to hear that from you.

•(1710)

Mr. Jerome Elie: Well, that's getting to the—

The Chair: I'm afraid I'm not going to be able to have you answer the question. I'm sorry about that.

Go ahead, Ms. Rempel.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Thank you.

Mr. Axworthy, could you tell us if the World Refugee Council provides any programming services for refugees?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: We provide a number of interesting sorts of things that have grown out of our existence. One example is that Eduardo Stein, the former vice president of Guatemala, was just appointed as the UN envoy for Venezuela. That was based upon an inquiry that we did into Venezuela and Colombia just two months ago.

At the same time, we're working very actively now with refugee organizations to determine how they become involved in actually making the decisions—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: You know how this works. You've been in these chairs and you know I don't have a lot of time. I mean, does the World Refugee Council actually provide any services for refugees?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: No.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: No practical reintegration services or language training or—

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: No, we're not a service organization. I think there are a lot of those.

What we are trying to do, however, is to take a step behind that, which is to begin looking at a way that we can develop the serious financing for those programs.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Can I ask how much the Government of Canada provides in annual funding to your organization?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: I don't think it's an annual thing. It was a one-time funding of I think about \$800,000. That was accompanied by about three or four times that from American foundations as well as from our own think tanks.

It's been a composite contribution that comes from a number of sources.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Is that ongoing, or are you self-sufficient?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: I don't think the council sees itself as a permanent organization. We were brought together for the specific purpose of trying to provide an independent source of ideas and proposals and recommendations around the compact process so that we can get down to serious work.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Okay.

I think you have said that the safe third country agreement with the United States should be abolished. Is that correct?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: The third party agreement? Yes, I think right now that it's getting in the way of our being able to solve some of the problems at the borders.

I'm going down on Monday—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I'm just going to ask another question on that.

Do you think that the UNHCR should continue to refer refugees to the United States?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: Oh, sure. I mean, I think—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Okay, I have a question. How do you square that circle?

If the United States is no longer a safe third country and we should suspend the agreement, then why should the UNHCR refer refugees to it?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: The United States is still accepting applications. It's much reduced. I think they've reduced by almost 80%—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I guess what I'm trying to say is that it's kind of either a safe third country or it's not.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: No, I—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: If it's not a safe third country in relation to people coming from upstate New York into Canada, then why should the United States be asked to accept refugees from the UNHCR anymore?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: I think you have to go to its origins. It came out as part of the follow-up package to the 9/11 border arrangements. We wanted to provide a kind of co-operative management of the system.

It's changed. I think the present administration has a very different view of what a refugee is, or what the responsibility of the United States is—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So refugees aren't safe under—

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: As a result, it makes it more difficult.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I just want to know, are refugees safe under Donald Trump?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: It depends: safe from what?

They are being incarcerated. Their kids are being taken away. I mean, there are a number of very serious default lines in the U.S. policy at the present that—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Is the World Refugee Council, which doesn't provide services to refugees, also going to ask the UNHCR to stop referring refugees to the United States?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: No, I think what we're suggesting is that we—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I just don't get that, Mr. Axworthy. How can you say that the United States is not a safe third country for people who are in upstate New York already and they should come to Canada, and yet the UNHCR should refer them to the United States? I mean, they're either safe under Trump or they're not.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: The UNHCR is simply implementing the 1951 refugee convention. If there are refugees applying for asylum or sanctuary, it's the responsibility—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So they are safe under Trump.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: The UNHCR—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: UNHCR refugees are safe under Trump, but people in upstate New York are not safe under Trump.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: I would say, again, it's not one of those black and white, either-or situations. It's increasingly—

• (1715)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I would argue it is. I would say either the U.S. asylum system is working and it's safe for refugees—

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: No, it's not. It has been substantially reduced.

One of the things that bothers—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Then who would be safe under Trump? UNHCR refugees are safe, but not upstate New York refugees.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: You'd better check with them. I'm not in any way providing the guidance on that policy—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: But you are very respected, sir, and you've made this big pronouncement on Canadian policy, and your organization is not funded to provide refugee services but to provide think-tank support. Now you're saying you're not sure who is safe in the U.S. and who isn't. Isn't that a little weird? Don't you think that's strange?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: What I'm saying is that we're going through a real time of distemper, when not just the United States but other countries are substantially shrinking—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: But don't you think it's irresponsible to say that the United States is no longer a safe third country if you can't—

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: I didn't say it was.... I said that I think it doesn't share the same definition—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: But you did. You said we should suspend the agreement. It's—

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: —or acceptance of refugees.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: —kind of weird.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: Well, that's part of the problem—that there's now such a wide variance. You can go into European countries where the definition of refugees is much broader than you will find in Canada—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: To be clear—

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: —and you'll find that certainly the United States has taken it down to a very narrow window by which they will accept asylum applications.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So refugees from upstate New York—

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: No, they're not from there.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: —but not from the UN.... It's cool to refer UNHCR camp refugees to the United States under Trump, but not upstate New York. For Canada's purposes, upstate New York is a refugee, but a Yazidi genocide survivor....

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: Let's go back to the way the system should work.

One of the problems with the third party system is that you can't make application through the official residences or embassies of Canada. You have to cross the border, because under the third party system you're prevented from going to a Canadian consulate to make that—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Do you really think that somebody should be claiming asylum in Canada after reaching the United States?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: Why not?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: That's really at the core of it. I don't accept the academic argument that you're making it.

The Chair: I'm afraid I need you to end there.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd actually like to pick up on that, Mr. Axworthy. I particularly appreciate the work that you do, especially in this capacity, even though you were the former minister for the Liberal Party and I'm NDP. That said, I appreciate the work that you do, because it is not a partisan issue when we're talking about a humanitarian crisis, when we're talking about lives. It's not a show, either. It's not about tricking people into a perspective.

I do want to touch on the safe third country agreement, because it's so easy to simply say, "Oh, gee, the United States is a safe country, because the UN refers people to that country at the moment", but we are trying to neglect and ignore the fact that the United States currently, as you were mentioning, Mr. Axworthy, rips children away from parents. We are currently ignoring the fact that the United States is declaring transgender people, people from the LGBTQ community, to be stripped of their identity, as though somehow it is a safe thing for people to be there seeking asylum. It's so easy to be clear-cut and black and white on that. In reality, though, when it impacts people's lives, it's maybe not so much black and white.

On that question, I appreciate the comments that you made, Mr. Axworthy, that Canada needs to suspend the safe third country agreement because of those actions of the United States.

With that said, on the global compact issue, you mentioned a variety of things on which Canada can take action. Although you're from a think tank, I am particularly interested in getting your thoughts with your experience as a former cabinet minister on the actions that you think Canada should take that would contribute to dealing with this global crisis that we're all faced with as human beings on this globe.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: Thank you very much. I appreciate your words.

Can I make one comment? I think one of the important outcomes of this discussion is that parliamentarians will take a much more active role. This is something that shouldn't be subject to partisan divisions. This is something that really affects people's lives in the most severe and direct way, so there is a degree to which the

committee and others can promote the ability of Canada to offer those kinds of broader-based initiatives where they happen.

We really start with this fundamental question of accountability. International organizations, people who work in the community, have to be held to some form of judgment or assessment of their actions. That's one reason we have been working with a number of governments around the idea of being able to attach frozen assets that have come out because of sanctions of the Magnitsky act and reallocate them back to help people who were the victims who suffered from the actions of these bad guys.

The Swiss have already passed legislation to that effect. There are other countries looking at it. We hope Canada will look at it, because that's not just a way of putting money back in the system: it also means that if you're one of the warlords or despots, you're not going to be so anxious to provide money in your piggy bank somewhere in the world if you know that it's going to be attached by good forensic work by our courts and our banks.

I think this is a very specific thing, and it has a double whammy: it's more money for the system, and it's also a way of putting a real deterrent to the actions of people right now who are so much the cause of the refugee movements.

• (1720)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Then your recommendation is for Canada to put in a bill, legislation, similar to that of Switzerland with regard to the frozen assets.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: I think our team would be very glad to provide you with some models for that.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Is there something that you can send to the committee for our review?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: Yes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: That would be excellent, if you could.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: For sure. We'll do that for sure.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

I'm going to turn to our witnesses who are here at this table with regard to Canada's role.

The Conservatives suggested, for example, that Canada should not be part of the global compact. I wonder whether or not you can comment on that and what you think the fallout might be if we were to take that perspective.

Mr. Shaughn McArthur: Thanks for the question. I think it's a good one.

I think that what it comes down to is that Canada wields some moral authority. I think we said in our remarks that Canada is regarded as an honest broker. Canada and Canadian civil society, along with groups and private sponsors resettling refugees, have been engaging very heavily through this process. I think we've arrived at something that we now need to take forward.

It takes good political will. This is an encapsulation and a codification of political will and good practice. Now we need to see it implemented. We don't want it to become a paper tiger.

The good news there is that Canada has already put in place a lot of systems and mechanisms that lend themselves towards the type of comprehensive refugee response envisioned in the global compact on refugees; hence my point that the world needs more Canada. Were Canada to step back at this point, I think that it would turn a lot of heads. It would be a severe disappointment for a lot of Canadians and for a lot of refugees, as well as for that fundamental trust that this whole effort seeks to build between refugee-hosting states and countries like Canada.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I don't have very much time, so I'm going to ask very quickly—one minute—on this question.

There are folks who like to spread misinformation. For example, they call asylum seekers “illegals” and therefore denigrate them and create the impression somehow in the hearts and minds of Canadians that they're violating the law, when in fact they're not, under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

In the face of that, what is your advice to us in trying to cope with that situation and to correct the record?

Mr. Shaughn McArthur: I think that the deliberations that the committee is having here today are important. I think that we need community leaders and parliamentarians to speak up.

Next week we'll see a further resettlement from private sponsors. There are thousands of Canadians who are working hard to contribute their best to the reform of the global refugee system. It's my daily bread and butter as a policy and advocacy guy trying to tell those good stories. I think the global compact on refugees provides a hook for that. We talked about the global forum. This is an opportunity for the international community, countries like Canada whose values are aligned with these types of responses, to celebrate progress in a couple of years. I certainly hope that Canada would be part of that.

Yes, we have myth-busting to do. As a civil society, we're doing our darndest and look forward to talking with any of you who want to work with us on that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Tabbara, go ahead for just a couple of minutes.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be very quick.

Mr. Axworthy, my question will be to you. The World Bank estimates the pool of cash to be \$10 billion to \$20 billion per year in frozen assets. I know you're working closely with CIGI in my region, in K-W, Kitchener-Waterloo. How would that be implemented? Can you give us a short example of how that would be implemented?

• (1725)

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: I think there are different models, but the short form would be that we would use our domestic court system, the Federal Court system, to be the adjudicator. The claims could be made against a frozen asset when the donor of that is a crook, is corrupt, is a warlord, has been responsible for massacres or genocides, and we simply make application.

In discussions we've had with financial institutions, they would be happy for that, because they live in fear that some cousin of some dictator or some warlord is going to come along and ask for the money.

I think this is a way of providing innovation. I would hope that the NGO community, in their focus moving forward, would begin looking at some of the innovative ideas—not just what is, but what could be—to provide a different tool box or a different set of levers that we can use to bring about real change that will have a direct impact on refugees themselves.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Thank you, Mr. Axworthy, and thank you for your years of service.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy: Thank you. I appreciate that.

The Chair: I think we're going to bring this panel to an end. We have a brief business meeting we want to accomplish.

Thank you again, especially to Mr. Elie for being up so late. Thank you for that.

We're going to suspend for one minute and then come back for our brief business meeting.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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