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# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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Chair: Mr. Sven Spengemann





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• (1535)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome to the 11th meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Pursuant to the motion adopted on February 5, the committee is meeting on its study of the mandate letters of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[English]

To ensure an orderly meeting, I will outline briefly, as is customary, a few rules to follow.

[Translation]

As always, interpretation is available for this meeting. You can access it by clicking on the globe icon at the bottom of your screen.

Members participating in person, keep in mind the Board of Internal Economy's guidelines for mask use and health protocols.

Please also note that screenshots and taking photos of your screen are not allowed.

[English]

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you're not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

[Translation]

I would also like to remind everyone that all comments and questions by members and witnesses must be addressed to the chair.

[English]

Colleagues, as usual, I will do my best to signal you with this yellow piece of paper when there are 30 seconds in your questioning or testimony time. I'll do it both virtually and in person. It's worked quite well. I encourage you to keep an eye on this card.

[Translation]

Now, I would like to welcome the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Joly, and the team of senior officials who are with us today.

[English]

From the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, we have Marta Morgan, deputy minister of foreign affairs. Welcome.

[Translation]

We also have Antoine Chevrier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Sub-Saharan Africa.

[English]

Michael Grant, assistant deputy minister, Americas;

[Translation]

Alexandre Lévêque, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy;

[English]

Paul Thoppil, assistant deputy minister, Asia Pacific; Kevin Hamilton, director general, international security policy bureau; and Heidi Kutz, senior Arctic official and director general, Arctic, Eurasian and European affairs. Welcome to the committee.

[Translation]

Thank you for everything you are doing during these difficult times, Minister, for your service and your leadership and for appearing today.

It is a pleasure to give you the floor for your opening address. You have five minutes.

Mr. Bergeron is signalling me that he has something to say.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** I would like put the following to you, Mr. Chair.

As the French maxim says, time flies when you are in good company. Because we have asked the Minister to be with us for two hours, and she could unfortunately only give us one hour, time is going to fly very fast. Since the main discussion with her will take place during that hour and we will then hold our discussions with the senior officials, I am wondering whether we can consider the hours of this meeting as forming two meetings that are separate from each other. That would mean that we could do the speaking rounds in more of the spirit of collaboration that prevailed in the previous Parliament, which allows more room for the smaller parties, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

You are essentially proposing to start a new session for the second hour of the meeting with the group of witnesses made up of senior officials. Is that right?

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Absolutely, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Colleagues, you've heard the proposal by Monsieur Bergeron.

Are there comments or interventions on this point? Essentially, it is to restart after the minister's time with us with a new panel and a speaking order of six-minute allocations at the beginning of that.

Let me make sure I have an integrated list of people who wish to intervene. I think all the members are in person.

Mr. Chong, please go ahead.

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Chair, thank you for the suggestion, but I don't support that.

We're 11 members on this committee. Each of us is *primus inter pares*. We all have the right to be on this committee and to have equal time.

It is being suggested that two of the 11 members of this committee get half of the time. That's not fair, because each member on this committee should be given equal time, to the greatest extent possible. That doesn't happen under the routine motions we adopted, but we strive for that to the greatest extent possible.

We are moving much further away from that principle if we go to four six-minute rounds and then another four six-minute rounds in the second hour. It means two members of this committee would get disproportionately more time to the detriment of the other nine members of the committee. I don't think that's fair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Chong, thank you very much.

It's certainly within the committee's hands to change the routine motions as originally adopted through proposals like Monsieur Bergeron's, but I'd like to hear other views from members, hopefully fairly quickly, in the interest of time.

Mr. Chong spoke out against the proposal. Are there any other interventions, please, colleagues?

Madame Bendayan.

[Translation]

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I understand the suggestion made by my colleague, Mr. Bergeron. As he said so well, we have limited time with the Minister. May I propose that we have this discussion after the Minister leaves?

I am proposing that because I see there is the potential for debate here. Could we come back to this after the Minister leaves?

• (1540)

**The Chair:** Mr. Bergeron, are you happy for us to resume this discussion after the Minister's appearance?

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** I am perfectly happy with that, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Minister, thank you again for being here and welcome to the committee. You have the floor.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to be with you today.

I also want to thank the entire team from Global Affairs Canada. I would like to thank Ms. Morgan, who is accompanying me, and everyone who is online.

[English]

I'm glad to have this opportunity to appear before you to discuss my mandate letter and my priorities as Minister of Foreign Affairs. I would be remiss if I did not start with the impacts of Russia's illegal and unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine.

It's not hyperbole to say that in the past month the world has fundamentally changed. When Vladimir Putin launched his unjustifiable further invasion of Ukraine, he launched the greatest challenge to global security since World War II.

[Translation]

The last few weeks have been a somewhat brutal reminder that democracy is not guaranteed and can never be taken for granted.

Today, the battlefield is in Ukraine, but the threat hangs over the entire world. As President Zelenskyy said last week in his moving address to Parliament, Ukraine, a sovereign country, is fighting for its life. Ukrainians are defending their freedom and their right to choose a better future for their children.

The Government of Canada has done everything in its power since the start of the crisis to contribute to a diplomatic solution and supply vital support to Ukraine. We do this in the memory of those who have perished since the conflict began and to honour the courage of the Ukrainians who continue to fight fiercely day after day.

[English]

We're in constant communications with Ukraine and our allies. I just had a conversation this morning with Dmytro Kuleba, the foreign affairs minister from Ukraine, and we're holding a common diplomatic front. Canada and the international community must hold those responsible to account.

[Translation]

During this crisis, we have seen an unprecedented mobilization of the global economies to impose severe sanctions on the Russian regime. The economic sanctions we have put in place have a clear, precise goal: to suffocate the Russian regime and the individuals who have financed and allowed this invasion. That includes the people who are fuelling this war with propaganda and disinformation by the bucketload.

To date, Canada has imposed sanctions on over 1,000 Russian and Belarusian individuals and entities for their role in the Ukrainian crisis. We have excluded the Russian banks from the international SWIFT system; we have prohibited imports of crude oil and cancelled all Russian export permits; we are preventing Russian and Belarusian aircraft from entering our airspace; and we are denying access to Russian vessels in our ports.

[English]

We're delivering lethal and non-lethal aid to Ukraine. We have donated nearly \$200 million to humanitarian efforts, and we are ready to welcome into Canada Ukrainians fleeing the war.

As you have heard me say many times, all options remain on the table, and we will continue to put maximum pressure on the Russian regime while supporting the people of Ukraine.

[Translation]

We have at all times urged Russia to change course, using all diplomatic means at our disposal. Canada has played a leadership role by putting maximum pressure on the Russians in multilateral forums, including the United Nations, the G7, NATO, the Arctic Council, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Commonwealth, and the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.

This is also why Canada was one of the first countries to take the issue before the International Criminal Court. It is also why we are supporting Ukraine in the proceedings it has instituted before the International Court of Justice. Canada will continue to do everything in its power to keep the Russian regime's back to the wall.

[English]

We will seek accountability for this atrocity. I want to thank my opposition critics for the unanimity we have been able to show on this critical file. I believe the message that Canadians and our Parliament stand united with the people of Ukraine is a strong one. I also want to thank you for the constructive ideas you have offered.

Before we turn to your questions, I would like to speak to two files that I am working on alongside our government's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The current crisis has underscored the need for a new approach to working with our democratic partners in the Arctic and Indo-Pacific regions. Upholding and strengthening the rules-based international order are core Canadian principles that have also been under long-term strategic pressure in both the Arctic and the Indo-Pacific, so I look forward to pursuing my engagement in both of these regions and to working collaboratively with you and all members of the committee and of this House.

[Translation]

Thank you.

• (1545)

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

[English]

We will now go to round one of questions by members. These are six-minute allocations.

Leading us off will be Mr. Chong.

The floor is yours for six minutes. Please go ahead.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Thank you for your testimony, Minister.

[English]

I am going to ask first about the Indo-Pacific, and then I'd like to ask about Canada's NATO commitments, and then third I'd like to ask about energy.

On the issue of the Indo-Pacific strategy, France published its strategy in 2019. The United Kingdom published its strategy in March 2021, a year ago. The U.S. published its strategy shortly thereafter, mid-year last year. Germany came forward with its guidelines, as it calls them, in 2020.

The U.S. ambassador has said the U.S. administration is waiting on Canada's new Indo-Pacific strategy.

My first question is, will the government make its Indo-Pacific strategy publicly available when it's complete, and if not, why not, seeing that these other countries have made theirs public? I've actually been able to download these documents online; they're available so we can understand their approach to the Indo-Pacific region. Will the strategy be made public?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you, Michael.

Of course, the government will make public its Indo-Pacific strategy.

I had conversations definitely with Tony Blinken about it as he was drafting his own Indo-Pacific strategy, which was released recently, I think in January or February. We have looked into it and we're taking good note of it.

I was supposed to go to the EU Indo-Pacific summit a month ago, but because of the war in Ukraine, I came back earlier. I had conversations with Jean-Yves Le Drian from France about France's position on the Indo-Pacific, as well as with Annalena Baerbock, our colleague from Germany.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Do we have any sense of a time frame on when it might be completed and made public?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** This is definitely a priority. As you well know, since you were there, earlier this week we had a first event at GAC to make sure that ambassadors from the Indo-Pacific region would be there, that opposition critics and members of this committee could be there. This is definitely something I think is crucial for Canada and therefore a priority.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** My next question is on NATO. As you know, we have a long-standing commitment to spend 2% of our GDP on Canada's military.

NATO members agreed today to submit plans for additional military spending in June, at the NATO summit in Madrid.

My question is, do you support increasing Canada's military spending to meet our 2% commitment?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** We both know, and all of us know, that I am not a minister of defence, but what I can tell you is that definitely, on February 24, the world changed.

We need to make sure we adapt to these challenging times, therefore I personally think that it is important to do more on the military side, on the defence side in general.

Meanwhile, to just add to that, I think it is also important for Canada to be ready on the diplomatic front because it is important, particularly in the region of eastern Europe, that we be there to offer the services that are required.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I agree.

Maybe I could ask you the question a little differently. Obviously your mandate letter mentions that you should be working with the Minister of National Defence to expand Canada's engagement to promote peace and security. Obviously you would not be leading the memorandum to cabinet, but the Minister of Defence has indicated she is preparing options for cabinet. Will you support an option to increase Canada's military defence spending to 2% when it's presented to cabinet?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Obviously we all know that the conversations happening in cabinet are secret. You've been in cabinet, so you know how important this principle is.

That being said, I will definitely support my colleague, particularly while she is working on NORAD modernization. I think this is important for all in the great North and the Arctic.

I think also that Germany has decided to increase its defence budget in light of what is happening in Ukraine and also in light of the decision of Vladimir Putin, which is completely egregious, not only to further invade Ukraine, but also to become a very important threat to Europe's security and to transatlantic security. In that mind I think it is important for Canada to be ready.

• (1550)

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Today or yesterday, French President Macron indicated that the European Union would rely on Canada and the United States to supply fossil fuels to replace Russian natural gas in western Europe. I noted in reports that I read today that leaders discussed energy security at NATO. The Government of Canada is also discussing energy security at the International Energy Agency summit, which I assume is in Paris. U.S. National Security

Advisor Jake Sullivan said there's been an intense back-and-forth on this issue.

It was also indicated yesterday in a joint statement by the Prime Minister and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen that officials will meet this week to discuss energy co-operation and reducing Europe's dependence on Russian energy.

What is Canada bringing to the table in this regard?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** The question of the energy security of Europe is fundamental. The Prime Minister, as you mentioned, met with Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Union, regarding this very issue. We also had conversations with Chancellor Scholz when we were in Germany about the importance of Germany, in particular, being well supported.

My colleague Jonathan Wilkinson made an announcement earlier today while he was in Europe, because it is important that we continue to support Europe's energy security while continuing to fight climate change. That is why we will increase our production. That was the announcement that my colleague Jonathan Wilkinson made just before this meeting.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Thank you, Minister.

We now have Mr. Ehsassi for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Minister. It's great to have you before this committee.

Over the course of the past several months, you have been absolutely steadfast and relentless in championing Ukraine's cause and ensuring that the western alliance acts in concert and is coordinating its response. We've seen a whirlwind of activity from you, both in the context of international fora, as well as in visits you have made to Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

I think we can all agree that Vladimir Putin thought there were cracks in that western alliance. Given that you have a good perspective and you've been part of all these discussions, what is your view of that? Has this cemented the western alliance's response? How would you describe it?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you, Ali. Clearly, Vladimir Putin underestimated the west and its unity. Not only did he underestimate it, but his bad decisions and lack of judgment in making decisions have shown how much the west can become united in light of such a severe threat.

The unity comes in different ways; it's definitely through NATO, but also through the G7. The G7 has become this coordination group where foreign ministers talk to each other pretty much every week. Not only do we speak to each other and not only are we in contact with each other, but our political directors are talking to each other daily.

I would add that usually, the G7 ministers see each other two times a year. Since we wanted to make sure that our sanctions would have a lot of impact, that they would be very much coordinated and that there would be no loopholes, we have worked together to exchange data, names and entities. We're doing this to see how we can help each other, particularly on the question of energy security, as Michael mentioned, but also to make sure we are targeting the right individuals and the right entities.

We have also worked on refugees. We're working on questions in line with humanitarian aid.

Every single aspect of this crisis is being discussed at the G7 table.

• (1555)

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Thank you very much for that.

Just looking at the latest figures, this is the largest and broadest displacement of individuals in Europe since the Second World War. You know, having visited the neighbouring countries, that so far the latest figures suggest that two million individuals who have left the Ukraine are in Poland. Approximately 500,000 are in Romania, 400,000 are in Moldova, 400,000 are in Hungary, and 300,000 to date have moved to Slovakia.

Given that reality and given that you have been on the ground there in those neighbouring countries, how can we provide assistance to those countries to make sure they can continue to do an exceptional job welcoming individuals from Ukraine?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Indeed, at this point, one million refugees per week have been fleeing Ukraine. This is unprecedented. This is more than we saw in Syria. This is definitely having an impact on European countries, as many of these people are women, mothers and children. It is important for them to have the right capacity in terms of elementary school, high school and kindergarten places, etc.

We are working with the UN agencies, like the UNHCR. My colleague, the Minister of International Development, has also been in close contact with the UNHCR. The UNHCR is in Moldova and in different countries. We've provided \$200 million in terms of help.

There is something I would like to raise that is also having an impact on these neighbouring countries, because I think this was your question.

I had the chance to speak with the President of Moldova, Maia Sandu. She's a fantastic young woman who's a democratically elected head of state. She was telling me how there are really important disinformation campaigns going on in her country that seek to describe refugees as aggressive, violent and a threat to Moldovans. This is in itself a problem because the goal of these Russian disinformation campaigns is to destabilize the country, while Moldovans have seen a really important increase in refugees.

We want to work with Moldova to provide financial support, as was announced by the Prime Minister today, but we also want to make sure we counter disinformation campaigns.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Ehsassi, Minister.

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Bergeron for six minutes.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for being with us, Minister. I would also like to thank everyone who is working with you. Thank you for what you have been doing for several weeks to support Ukraine.

You will recall that in one discussion, I said that if Russia attacked Ukraine, there would be no daylight between you and us when it came to the reaction and the determination with which we must face this aggression.

I again offer you my collaboration and I reiterate that I do not think of myself as the Bloc Québécois foreign affairs "critic", but rather as my party's spokesperson on this subject. We have therefore supported all of the sanctions that have been ordered to date. We are pleased to see the sanctions announced today. We have even called for more sanctions against the oligarchs who have interests in Canadian companies. I named some of them in the debate on the motion by our colleague Michael Chong. I note that some of those oligarchs remain untouched by the Canadian sanctions. Even more concerning, TVA Nouvelles reported on March 17 that no Russian assets had yet been seized in Canada.

Minister, I would like us to impose more sanctions, but if sanctions have no effect, what purpose do they serve, other than simply to express an intention, but an intention that does not come with any action?

• (1600)

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you, colleague. I am happy to answer your questions. I have several things to say about this.

First, the Government of Canada's goal is clear: to suffocate the Russian regime. So our objective is to apply as many sanctions as possible, in coordination with our G7 allies.

The G7's objective is to apply the same sanctions to individuals and oligarchs. That is why the Global Affairs Canada team and my deputy minister are working on this. We are taking note of the names you gave us and we will certainly follow up.

Second, the goal of imposing sanctions is to make the assets useless. To date, we have imposed about 1,000 sanctions on Russian and Belarusian individuals and entities. Once the sanction is imposed, the asset cannot be sold or transferred. In other words, it loses its entire value. As well, when an individual tries to counter the sanctions, it is a criminal offence, and the consequences for that are extremely severe.

We have a good sanctions scheme in Canada. We have even inspired the United Kingdom, which very recently expanded its own sanctions legislation. There are several laws in place in Canada for imposing these sanctions on the oligarchs.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** You understood, Minister, that we will be behind you "100 miles an hour", as we say in French, so that these sanctions are not just wishful thinking, and so they are effective and they have effects on the oligarchs, among others.

I want to come back to a question that was asked by our colleague Michael Chong about Canada's capacity to help our European allies with natural gas and gasoline supplies, apart from the technical problem involved in shipping oil from the West to the Atlantic. That opens another chapter that I won't get into here.

I just want to point out that your mandate letter directs you, with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, to continue Canada's leadership on efforts to combat climate change. Today, your colleague at Natural Resources Canada announced that Canada was going to increase its production. We are talking about 300,000 barrels a day: 200,000 barrels of oil and 100,000 barrels of natural gas.

How do you reconcile this increase in Canada's oil and gas production with the objective you were assigned by the Prime Minister, to continue Canada's leadership on efforts to combat climate change?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you.

To come back to the last question, I just want to add that we are doing a lot of work with Ukraine and the Ukrainians to identify the Russian oligarchs. I am in contact with President Zelensky's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, and the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, Olha Stefanishyna.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** If I may, I would add something on the same question, Minister.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Yes.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Alexei Navalny's chief of staff has appeared before this committee. He provided us with a list of oligarchs who had to be targeted, and some of them are still managing to escape Canadian sanctions.

So I invite you to take a look at that.

Thank you.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Yes, we have taken note of that list and it is certainly our objective to work from that.

On the climate change question, it is a priority for me and for the government. I am aware of the announcement made by my colleague today, in collaboration with the European Union, which is itself aiming to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. I think we can agree that the European Union is one of the world leaders when it comes to combating climate change.

I had an opportunity to speak with my colleague Steven Guilbeault as well. The objective is to maintain our greenhouse gas reduction plan. He is working on that well known greenhouse gas reduction plan himself, that he will be in a position to make available over the next few weeks.

• (1605)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bergeron, Minister.

I will now turn the floor over to Ms. McPherson.

[English]

Ms. McPherson, please go ahead for six minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the minister, for being here, and to all of the staff for joining us today to share their expertise with us.

I have many questions I'd like to ask, but I'm going to start with those on Ukraine. Obviously I was recently in Poland with you. Thank you for allowing me the honour of accompanying you there. What we saw in Poland was very difficult to see, of course.

We have been discussing how we can help Ukraine. What is the best way that Canada can help Ukraine? As New Democrats, we have always believed that we need to provide the weapons we can and provide the defensive materials for our military, so they can stay safe and do the work they do. While these conversations are happening with regard to the support for our military, I wonder whether you'd be willing to tie humanitarian aid to that, whether or not we could say that.

Everyone here recognizes that war is a terrible thing. It is a failure of diplomacy. It is a failure of humanitarian aid. I hate to see a situation in which military spending goes up significantly and humanitarian aid does not follow.

You will know, of course, that our official development assistance is extremely low. We are nowhere near our target of 0.7%. I would really encourage you to consider tying that directly to aid. I'm wondering if that would be something you'd consider.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Well, definitely the question of humanitarian aid is important, particularly in this crisis. That's why we announced, as I mentioned in my speech, \$200 million to support Ukraine in this crisis.

I must say that, compared to other countries, including those in Europe, we are among the leading countries.

I agree, Heather, that we need to do more. The situation is dire. Since the situation continues to be dire and the future is quite dark as of now, of course we need to make sure we offer more support. That's why the Prime Minister today announced a \$50-million allocation to different UN agencies, but in particular with respect to Moldova, for the reasons I mentioned a bit earlier when Ali spoke about it.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** That's wonderful, and of course we welcome those announcements, but I think there is a bigger picture. It is looking at our overall humanitarian spending. We are definitely not one of the top countries. Many countries have met that 0.7% target. Many countries have exceeded that and gotten to 1%. We are nowhere near that. I just want to clarify that.



I also have a colleague who really wanted to be here today but unfortunately, due to a medical emergency, wasn't able to. I want to ask a question on her behalf. She has asked this before. With respect to transparency, in terms of the way we send our arms and the way we look at where arms go once they are sent out of Canadian control, I have some very strong concerns as to whether we are meeting that transparency and we are meeting our obligations under the arms trade treaty.

Will you provide the committee with unredacted risk assessments your government has conducted with regard to arms transfers to Ukraine?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you.

Who's that colleague?

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** She's on my team.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** That's okay. I can go to see her afterwards. That is no problem.

All that is to say that, yes, we abide by the arms trade treaty when we provide arms to the Ukrainian military for defence there.

That being said, I can't give operational details for reasons of security. I could definitely continue to have this conversation and provide the right reassurance. Our goal is to make sure that the arms we're providing, the lethal and non-lethal aid we're providing, are in the hands of the people fighting against the Russian army.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** We have seen that it has not necessarily been the case in the past with Canadian arms, of course.

• (1610)

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** That is why we are working directly with the Ukrainian military.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** There's one other thing. We've asked an awful lot of questions today about Ukraine, and of course that is the most pressing issue in the world. We want to do everything we can.

As you mentioned, on February 24 the world changed. We have to be aware of that, but there are challenges around the world that we can't forget about, that we can't forget.

One of those is what is happening with regard to Israel and Palestine. I want to just articulate that how it was described—or the lack of description—in your mandate letter was problematic. I know you will be aware of a report that Amnesty International brought forward recently on the state of the situation in Israel and Palestine. I'm wondering whether or not you will be responding officially to that report and whether or not you will be commenting on it or meeting with Amnesty to discuss it.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Obviously I'm meeting with many NGOs, definitely including Amnesty International, and my team has done so. I look forward to meeting with them directly. I'm very much aware of the report.

You know that the position of our government has always been that we are a friend and steadfast ally to Israel and a friend to the Palestinian people. At the same time, this report stated that Israel's actions constitute apartheid. We reject that view. We are firmly committed to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This is something that other ministers of foreign affairs from our government have said before, and this is still our position.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Will you provide a rationale for why you reject what the Amnesty report claims over four years? It's a very robust report over four years. Will you be providing any sort of acknowledgement of why that is the case or why you are rejecting it?

**The Chair:** Just give a brief answer, in the interest of time, Minister, please.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I look forward to talking with Heather and her colleagues about this even more, and obviously talking with the different communities involved across the country.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Minister.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Colleagues, before we go to round two, just a brief reminder of the Board of Internal Economy guidelines on mask wearing and health: When you're not speaking or consuming beverages, please continue to wear your masks, as mandated in those rules.

We will now go to round two. Leading us off with a five-minute allocation is Mr. Genuis.

Please go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister.

Does the government agreement with the NDP involve any commitments regarding foreign defence security or international development policy?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** No.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Are you confident that agreement will hold if the government chooses to increase defence spending?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** As I mentioned before, the world changed on February 24, and in that sense, as a government we will continue to deal with the crisis and face these challenges. I personally think we should increase military spending, and I support my colleague Anita Anand in this context.

We will have good conversations also with our opposition critics, and definitely Heather and I will continue to have these conversations.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I appreciate that you want to see defence spending go up. I didn't hear an answer to the question about whether you're confident the agreement will hold if that increase happens. You may have your reasons for not answering, so fair enough.

My next question is this. As much as the government says it's still thinking about banning Huawei, the long-running status quo by now is that there is no ban. Is the government's way of making a decision simply not making a decision?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Just to go back to your last question, it's difficult for me to answer a hypothetical question. You don't want a hypothetical answer, and I won't answer a hypothetical question. That being said, you have my answer.

The other thing also, regarding Huawei, is that you very much know this is under the purview of my colleague, François-Philippe Champagne, the Minister of Innovation. He will take a decision on this matter in the coming days and weeks.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** In the coming days and weeks, okay, that's encouraging. We'll be watching for that.

It seems to me that the Russian invasion of Ukraine demonstrates a failure of deterrence on the part of the western world. Many important actions have been taken since the invasion, but it is possible that more action prior to the invasion could have changed Putin's calculation.

What is your plan? What is Canada doing to ensure that we don't repeat this failure of deterrence with Taiwan? What are we doing to deter an invasion of Taiwan?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** There are a couple of things on that. Going back to Ukraine, our way right now to put maximum pressure on the Kremlin and the Russian regime is definitely to have more sanctions and make sure that there is also more legal aid sent to Ukraine. That has been what the Ukrainian government is asking for from us and from the G7, and that's what we are really coordinating together.

Meanwhile, we know that while we're doing this, which is at the core of the unity of the west, China is watching. Our expectation toward China as a member of the UN Security Council is that it won't do anything to escalate the conflict in Ukraine. Meanwhile, I have asked my diplomats to convey that position across the board in different multilateral fora, including in China.

Also, on the question of Taiwan, the minister of trade recently launched a free trade agreement with Taiwan, which is important, because there are strong people-to-people ties with Taiwan, and we think also that we can increase our trade with Taiwan.

• (1615)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Minister.

In the interest of time, though, could you speak specifically to the issue of deterring a possible invasion of Taiwan by the PRC?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Well, right now the unity of the west and the fact that we are protecting, through this unity, our strong stance on the importance of sovereignty and territorial integrity, are fundamental.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** We need to hear more on what the plan is with respect to that, Minister. That's an important thing for us to be discussing internationally.

I want to ask you one more question in the time I have. Do you believe that Canada experienced foreign interference by state or state-backed actors during the last federal election?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** This is a question much more under the purview of my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, Marco Mendicino. It's part of his mandate letter.

Should that be the case, obviously, we would take strong action on that.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** What is the government's current position with respect to whether or not the Chinese Communist Party is committing genocide?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** We take the allegations of genocide very seriously, particularly in the Xinjiang Uighur region. That is one of the reasons that, first and foremost, we didn't send elected officials to the Beijing Olympics. It was to show our strong opinion in this regard.

When I was in Geneva a month ago, I had the chance to meet with Michelle Bachelet, who is the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. She has been investigating these very important allegations. She will be going to the region in the coming weeks, and I look forward to her report.

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

Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Minister.

Ms. Bendayan, you now have the floor for five minutes.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being with us today, Minister.

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has brought the issues relating to defence and Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic back to the forefront, as you said in your introduction. We know that this issue is only going to grow in importance.

I would like to ask you what your read of the present situation is, and I would like to know how it has evolved or changed because of the war in Ukraine.

Who do you think our allies are when it comes to protecting our sovereignty in the Arctic?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you for that very good question, Ms. Bendayan.

Obviously, we have to take what has happened in Ukraine, and the fact that we share a maritime border with Russia in the north, into account.

In normal times, discussions around Arctic sovereignty took place within the Arctic Council. However, since Russia chaired the Council this year, and our stated objective was to isolate that country diplomatically, politically and economically, we, along with all of the other members, have suspended our participation in the Council's work.

In the circumstances, it is important to work with the United States, because, obviously, protecting our continent is something we do together with the United States. That is why Ms. Anand is working on modernizing NORAD. It is also important that we be able to work with our Scandinavian colleagues, who are also members of the Arctic Council. I have had the opportunity to hold several discussions with our Danish, Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian colleagues on the subject, because I think we also have to make sure that we protect our sovereignty in the Arctic. Canada has always had very important claims relating to its sovereignty and territorial integrity in the Arctic.

• (1620)

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Absolutely.

So you believe that the United States is our ally when it comes to our sovereignty in the Arctic.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** It is certainly the case when it comes to the defence of our territory.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Thank you.

I would like to come back to a question that was asked earlier by my colleague in the House, but which concerns me also.

Regarding Canadians who wanted to join the ranks of the International Legion of Defence of Ukraine, you said that this was an individual choice. I am in total agreement about that. However, as you know, the Foreign Enlistment Act makes it illegal for a Canadian to fight against a friendly foreign state, but the act does not include a definition or list of friendly foreign states.

How could this issue be clarified?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Obviously, we condemn any form of aid by Canadians to the Russians at this time. That is our position and it is the position I will be reiterating at every opportunity and on all platforms.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** So what about Ukraine?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** When it comes to Ukraine, there are various factors to be considered.

Since February 1, we have been asking Canadians in Ukraine to leave. We have asked people who might have had a desire to go to Ukraine not to go. Once the war started, we have also asked people who were affected by the bombings in Ukraine to protect themselves and take refuge in safe places.

As I have said in the past, this is a personal decision for the people who decide to go there. However, the capacity to offer consular services is extremely limited because our diplomats have left Ukraine and are working from southern Poland, at least for the time being.

In the circumstances, when people decide to go and fight alongside their Ukrainian colleagues and friends, and sometimes family, that is really a personal decision, but it must be based on an informed choice.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** In your introduction, you said that our government's goal is really to suffocate the Russian regime by imposing sanctions.

Can you explain a little more what that means? Does that goal include Vladimir Putin leaving?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** The goal is certainly to put enormous pressure on President Putin and his entourage. That is why we have imposed sanctions on Vladimir Putin himself. We have imposed sanctions on his Minister of Foreign Affairs, his Minister of Justice, his Minister of Finance, his Minister of Defence, and all members of the Duma, the lower house. Today, we have announced sanctions against members of the upper house, the equivalent of our Senate. We have also targeted several oligarchs. We have put enormous pressure on, in economic terms. We have removed several Russian banks from the SWIFT system.

So we can see that in economic terms, Russia is paying dearly for its decision to invade Ukraine. That is why we have seen the value of the ruble plummet.

In physical terms, we have closed the West's airspace in order to isolate the Russian public and prevent them from coming to the West.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Bendayan.

Your speaking time is up.

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Bergeron for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, you know there have been several newspaper articles that have brought to light the difficulty francophones have in finding a place in your department. One of the mandates assigned to you by the Prime Minister is to promote the French language across all diplomatic missions.

First, I would like you to tell us about the initiatives that have been taken by you to make sure that the other official language of this country is firmly in place and clearly visible within your department.

Second, in connection with that question, it will soon have been a year since the position of ambassador of Canada in Paris became vacant. If I am not mistaken, it took only six weeks to fill the position of High Commissioner in London.

Why does it take so long to fill the position of ambassador in Paris when our relationship with France goes back many years, in fact since this country was founded?

What explains our taking so long to fill this position? Is it because no one can be found in the Liberal ranks to hold the position?

• (1625)

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you, colleague. That is a very good question.

You know that the subject of official languages is a fundamental one for me. It has been part of my involvement in politics since I have been a minister and since I have been in federal politics.

In the White Paper I tabled as the former Minister of Official Languages, there was certainly an intention to do more in terms of the place of French at Global Affairs Canada and in our Canadian diplomacy. The objective of the bill on the modernization of the Official Languages Act was to crystalize the role of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie for Canada. That objective has been achieved.

When I was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I spoke with the Deputy Minister, Marta Morgan, about my concerns regarding the status of French at Global Affairs Canada. That is why two new francophone assistant deputy ministers were recently appointed. We can see them on the monitor. Allow me to introduce Antoine Chevrier and Alexandre Lévêque. They are responsible for Sub-Saharan Africa and for all public policy within Global Affairs, respectively. Of course, our colleagues at Global Affairs may work in both official languages.

I would like to point out that I ask that my preparatory meetings take place in French. I work with diplomats in French, and sometimes in English, of course, depending on my counterparts' language and the issues I am working on.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Bergeron; your time is up.

Ms. McPherson, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Minister, today you were talking about how what we're seeing in Ukraine has chilling echoes of what we saw in Syria. We are seeing the war crimes and the crimes against humanity that we saw in Syria being repeated in Ukraine, almost as if they were a blueprint.

One of the things I am seized with when I reflect on that is that we still have Canadian citizens who are being held with no charge—they're still being arbitrarily detained—in northern Syria. They are Canadian citizens. Many of them are children.

What is being attempted to bring those Canadian citizens back to Canada and, if needed, to try them here, if they are guilty of crimes?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you for that very important question, Heather.

You may recall that my colleague, former minister Garneau, worked on a very important directive to make sure that Canadians who were in Syria, particularly children, could be supported to come back to Canada. Indeed, that has happened in certain cases. Also, there was in that directive the fact that people who were facing health challenges would also be supported.

Our goal is to make sure that when they come to Canada, they are tried under the Criminal Code. We also take very seriously the threat posed by Daesh, because we know that people who are held in that camp in Syria are also linked to this threat.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** The children clearly aren't, Minister.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** That is why we put into place this approach.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I would highlight to you that, of course, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and all Canadians deserve consular support.

I have one last question.

Very quickly, could you tell us a bit more about how you are implementing the feminist foreign policy, when we can expect more information about that? Perhaps you could touch a little on what we could be doing to ensure that those principles of the feminist foreign policy are embedded in our response in Ukraine as well.

• (1630)

**The Chair:** Minister, with apologies, we need a very brief answer. You're literally down to seconds in this intervention.

There might be a chance to follow up in response to other colleagues' questions on that same issue.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Our government is definitely a feminist government and believes in this feminist foreign policy that we've put into place. Women's peace and security are fundamental.

In Ukraine right now, a lot of mothers, grandmothers and children are fleeing the country, since men are under conscription rules. That's why we want to have an approach that is based on their needs and that is in line with how we approach the crisis.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. McPherson. Thank you, Minister.

Next we will have Mr. Morantz, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your candid responses today.

One thing I'm curious about is NATO's position on the no-fly zone. I think the rationale is correct as to why it wouldn't be appropriate to have one, but what I'm more curious about is why NATO chose to make that position public. Why broadcast to someone like Mr. Putin what you might or might not do? Why not keep him on tenterhooks, wondering what we might do?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Marty, I can't speak in the name of Jens Stoltenberg, the Secretary General of NATO. This is the position that NATO took and decided to communicate. I won't go into the different hypotheses for why it did so.

I can tell you, though, that many members of the alliance want to make sure that we do as much as possible without crossing this red line posed by NATO. We know that the question of the airspace in this conflict is important. That is why we've provided ammunition and lethal aid, and that's why other countries have also done so in a very substantial manner.

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Thank you.

My next question has to do with the ongoing talks between Ukraine and Russia, although it's unclear what progress has actually been made. There have been reports lately of a potential peace agreement, or not a peace agreement, but a ceasefire, at least. I'm sorry. I wish it was a peace agreement.

Do you have any information you can share with the committee on what actual progress is going on in the bilateral discussions between Ukraine and Russia?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** That is one of the reasons I speak to Dmytro Kuleba, my counterpart minister of foreign affairs, two or three times a week: to know what is going on at the negotiation table and how we can reinforce them.

I can't go into the details, but we provide our reading of the situation and advice to the Ukrainian government. Since we have a very close relationship with Ukraine, many times we've taken the different demands that Ukraine wants to make to the G7 and we've passed them on bilaterally to many of the G7 members. That is why I have many conversations with my German counterpart, Annalena Baerbock, who I get along very well with, as well as Liz Truss from the U.K., Tony Blinken, etc.

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** One of the items in the mandate letter calls for you to work with the Minister of International Development to:

establish a Canadian centre to expand the availability of Canadian expertise and assistance to those seeking to build peace, advance justice, promote human rights, inclusion and democracy...

That's a very important initiative in light of how the world has changed, as you pointed out. Could you inform the committee as to what progress has been made on that item?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** We are definitely looking at what we can do in the world to promote, support and empower democracy. That is why we participated in the democracy summit organized by the United States, and it's also why we're working on different initiatives, including, for example, the arbitrary detention declaration. I will have more to say about that in the coming weeks, because it's something that my team and I are actively working on.

• (1635)

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Yesterday, the United States cybersecurity adviser—I realize this is a security question, but if you have any information on this, I'd appreciate your providing it to the committee—took to the White House podium to say that there's an increasing likelihood of a Russian cyber-attack on critical infrastructure in the United States.

Is Canada concerned about this? Are we prepared for something like that?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** We're always very concerned about any cyber threats, particularly coming from Russia. It is important that we be resilient to any form of cyber threat.

At the same time, I must say that the United States strategy to declassify information and intelligence has been quite helpful. It has helped make sure that we inform our different populations across the west regarding what is going on in Ukraine and Russia's intent. It has also been useful to make sure that Europeans and North Americans are on the same page in reading what is going on. Final-

ly, I think it has been a way to delay, to a certain extent, the conflict. Meanwhile, for Ukrainians, it has given them time to be ready to organize themselves, and that's true for us as well.

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Morantz, thank you, and thank you, Minister.

Our final intervention for this round goes to Mr. Sarai. Please go ahead for five minutes.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Minister, for staying longer and finishing the round. It's much appreciated, especially with these time-pressing international events.

There's been a lot of focus on the European Union and the European front in NATO, as the war is on their doorstep. However, it's just the same for central Asia.

What efforts are being made to garner support for Ukraine in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly with countries that are sitting on the fence? Things can very easily spill over into their backyards and into their regions. Are there efforts to get more allies in the Indo-Pacific and central Asia regions?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you, Randeep. It's a very important question.

We know there were 141 countries that voted at the UN against Russia's further invasion of Ukraine, but there were also 35 countries that abstained, and our goal is to make sure that we also engage with these countries.

Definitely, this is something that we're talking about within the G7. This is also something that my colleague Marise Payne from Australia and I spoke about earlier this week. I also had the opportunity to talk to Vietnam earlier this week to engage with them about Ukraine, because we partner with them in the context of our Indo-Pacific engagement. Also, my deputy minister was in India last week to engage with the government. I had the opportunity to have a good conversation with the ambassador here and look forward to also engaging with India.

Also, we need to make sure that we engage with China, for the reasons I mentioned before. I think, because they sit on the UN Security Council, it is important that they do everything not to escalate the conflict.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Thank you.

Going to a different angle, more in light of cyber, can you discuss the work led by Canada to fight disinformation in this context, whether it's propaganda within Russia or propaganda outside, and how the west can fight that war?

I know it's not a defence matter, particularly, but it is in a global affairs perspective.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Well, you know, in every war, information is key, because it justifies why you start war.

What we've seen since the beginning of this war...well, before the war there was a big propaganda campaign, because we were saying that there were troops that were getting organized around Ukraine, and Russia was saying, no, that's not the case. Clearly, they lied to our face and to the world.

Afterwards, they said that the reason they were sending troops to further invade Ukraine was to denazify the country. Well, we know that Zelenskyy himself is Jewish. They were saying that in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions there was a genocide happening. This is not only patently false, but is clearly manipulation. Also, since then, they've been engaging in more and more of their propaganda.

Meanwhile, we know that it is happening in Ukraine and in Russia, but at the same time, it's happening in our democracies. We've banned RT and Sputnik on the broadcasting side. We've pushed digital platforms to also ban them, but we need to do more, and Canada is chairing two important coalitions this year: the Freedom Online Coalition and the Media Freedom Coalition. Our mandate, and my mandate as foreign minister, is really to counter propaganda online.

Social media companies need to do more. They need to make sure they recognize that states have jurisdiction over them, and that they're not technological platforms but content producers. It is our way, collectively, to make sure we are really able to have strong democracies in the future, because this war is being fought with 21st-century tools, including social media.

• (1640)

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Thank you.

Quickly, how effective are sanctions and measures on curbing Russia's supply chain and ability to fund the war?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Well, they're very effective. It's not only us. It's clearly also, in general, Europe, the U.S. and the U.K., but we need to do more to make sure that Putin's war chest is not available to him. The fact that the ruble has lost a lot of value is a way for us to make sure we continue to put maximum pressure. We made a very important announcement today, with more sanctions but also more restrictions on exports. The Prime Minister announced that earlier today.

Also, you've heard me saying it in French and in English, but we need to suffocate the Russian regime, because this is our way to really, at the end of the day, make sure that Russian people understand what's going on, although they're under huge propaganda, and that also we are able to make sure that Vladimir Putin is under tremendous pressure, including within his country.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Sarai.

Thank you, Minister.

We have reached the end of our second round and of our hour with the Minister.

On behalf of all my colleagues, I would like to thank Ms. Joly for her work and for appearing here.

We look forward to meeting with you again.

[*English*]

Thank you very much for being with us. We will let you continue with your day.

We will go on to our second hour, with officials, on the same subject matter.

Colleagues, just before we go there, we parked a conversation earlier on the time allocation for this second hour. You're welcome to resume that. Maybe we can quickly come to an agreement.

I understand there's also a second point of order by Mr. Oliphant.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** It's on that same point.

Just to save time on this, because the only question I would really want to ask the officials is how much they like their parliamentary secretary, I would say that as a one-time deal, because of the different nature of this meeting, I will split my five minutes between Mr. Bergeron and Ms. McPherson so they have an extra two and a half minutes each, probably added on to their time. Then we can move on.

I don't think it should be a precedent. I think we really should follow the work we've done in setting times, but because of the nature of this, I'm happy to do that.

**The Chair:** That's very generous of you, and very kind and very pragmatic, Mr. Oliphant. Thank you for that.

The other point I was going to raise—

**A voice:** I think that requires unanimous consent.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** It doesn't require unanimous consent, because I'm giving it.

**The Chair:** It's a gift, yes. I think it will be gratefully accepted.

Colleagues, just before we launch into the second hour, please keep in mind that we are expecting bells at 5:15. Notwithstanding the conversation we just had, I just want to see if there's unanimous consent to continue to 5:30 before we go to votes.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay, so we'll carry through as far as we can with the round that's in front of us and the reallocation that Mr. Oliphant has just offered.

We will go right into our third round. Leading us off is Mr. Aboultaif for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

I'm just going to go back to the Arctic policy and the plan for how we're going to defend the Arctic. We know Russia is a headache. Russia owns, basically...or its land stretches toward the Arctic, and that's the biggest threat to our sovereignty and to the remaining partners out there. China also is showing a huge interest, not just on the development side, or the trade side or the belt and road initiative, but further, militarily speaking.

How are we going to really address that? How far is the plan going to make sure we are ready? As we speak right now, there is no plan. We don't have the policy in place. All other parties already have their arms in place and their plans in place. How are we going to deal with China on the Arctic?

• (1645)

**Ms. Marta Morgan (Deputy Minister, Foreign Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Mr. Chair, when we look at the Arctic, we think about it from a broad perspective. We have an Arctic and northern policy framework that we're co-implementing with provincial, territorial and indigenous partners. This framework is committed to ensuring that the Arctic remains a peaceful and stable region that's grounded in international co-operation. It looks across the various challenges that we see in the Arctic, including environmental challenges, climate change and ensuring the participation of indigenous people in the development of the Arctic. It also includes security and defence.

You have noted in your questions that one of the mandate letter items for the Minister of National Defence and also one of the items on the Canada-U.S. road map, which was agreed to last year after the inauguration of President Biden, is NORAD modernization. That will be a key element of moving forward in terms of defence in the Arctic, as well as many initiatives that are already under way. Those would probably be best discussed by my colleague, the deputy minister of National Defence.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Beyond NORAD and the redevelopment or modernization of this tool we have, there are other aspects that need to be developed in the Arctic. What do you see as the top priority of our government as far as developing the strategy that's most needed is concerned? Time is definitely of the essence. All the winds are blowing against our face as far as the Arctic is concerned, due to its having been neglected for the last five or six years of this government.

How can we assure ourselves that we are ready in all aspects of the broader view that you've just mentioned?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I think there are two issues here. One is the broad perspective about the Arctic. We see the impact of climate change on communities and on infrastructure in the Arctic. We see the need for a rules-based international system to be followed, to protect the environment of the Arctic. We know that we need to work with our Arctic neighbours. Of course, that is very challenging right now, given what Russia is doing in the Ukraine.

We also know that one element of that needs to be defence. There are a number of areas right now where the Government of Canada, from a security perspective, is already working with the U.S. to modernize NORAD. The Royal Canadian Navy is taking possession of new ice-capable patrol vessels. Work is going on with the Nanisivik naval facility. There are a number of areas where

work is already ongoing in the Department of National Defence, with key partners and with the United States.

As the minister noted, we are maintaining close collaboration with our other Arctic partners, because we really need to see this region holistically for the important region that it is and one that touches so many of Canada's interests.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Between Russia and China, do you see that the challenge is going to be different between a country that has land in the Arctic and a country that does not? How do you see that we can approach both of those? Are we going to position it the same way, or we do we have a different relationship with Russia, for example, with respect to the Arctic?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** There's no question that we are concerned about the increase in the military presence of Russia in the Arctic. Russia is obviously a neighbour of ours in the Arctic, and it has been building up its military presence in the region.

From China's perspective, I think they see the Arctic primarily as an economic pathway and a way to get goods more efficiently to other parts of the world. We also see Chinese research ships and that sort of thing, for example, sailing through the Arctic, so we have to be mindful that China also has broader geostrategic interests. Given Canada's primacy in the Arctic, we need to take that very seriously.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Bergeron, since Mr. Oliphant gave you half of his speaking time, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my hearty thanks to Mr. Oliphant for his generosity, which avoids us having to take up the committee's time to discuss speaking times.

I would like to come back to the very timely question asked by our colleague Ms. Bendayan, concerning the countries we can count on to protect the Arctic. While I do not want to appear to be speaking in bad faith, what concerns me is that some of our closest allies are disputing Canadian sovereignty in the north. I am thinking of the United States and Denmark, among others.

We are dealing with core issues concerning Russia's and China's ambitions in the far north, and particularly the Canadian far north. We will recall that a Chinese company wanted to acquire a mine in the far north. Can we really count on our allies to protect that territory, given the fact that some of them are disputing Canadian sovereignty over that territory?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Thank you very much for the question.

One reason we and our partners are working on a strategy is to address questions like that.

[English]

One key element or pillar of our strategy is to ensure that the rules-based international order—the international rules that govern all of our conduct—respond effectively to new challenges and new opportunities in the Arctic.

I'm very confident that we will be able to work through our issues with Denmark, for example, under the existing rules-based international system as two countries who respect that system and will use its rules, procedures and processes in order to do that.

With that being said, I think we have to have eyes wide open as an Arctic nation. We need to work with all of our neighbours to resolve the issues we may have. We also need to constructively work together on the common challenges we see in the Arctic.

I think it really does go to the importance of having agreed-upon international rules and systems to resolve issues. It also goes to the importance of having international institutions within which we can work constructively with our allies to move our common priorities forward.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you.

Given that the Canadian government has already stated its intention not to expand its military presence in the north, how does it intend to go about securing its sovereignty and modernizing NORAD equipment to protect its territory?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Certainly, we recognize that the security and defence of the Canadian Arctic call for effective international frameworks and international cooperation, as well as national defence and the capacity to use that defence.

[English]

Mr. Chair, I noted before, in response to a question, all the items that the Department of National Defence is currently working on in order to strengthen Canada's defence in the Arctic, and also that there's a commitment in the mandate letter to both the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to NORAD modernization. That's something we'll work with the United States on.

There are the things we are already doing, that are already being done, as well as the NORAD modernization, which is a commitment that the government has undertaken. We'll really work closely with the U.S., because the U.S. is our key partner there.

• (1655)

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will move on...

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Oh! Well, I think...

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** You don't know what to do with all your time.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** I'll give it to you.

**The Chair:** Ms. McPherson, with the second half of the allocation that Mr. Oliphant has transferred and the additional 30 seconds, you have five and a half minutes. Please go ahead.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I feel as though I'm welcomingly receiving charity from many of my colleagues today. I will take it.

Thank you very much for being with us again today.

I'll start with some alarming news that we have heard out of Afghanistan recently: that the Taliban is banning women from participating in education. This is devastating. It has been just over six months since Canada left Afghanistan. We have not met our obligations to the Afghan people in terms of refugees coming to Canada. While Ukraine is seizing all our attention right now, I don't want us to lose track of the fact that there are other humanitarian crises happening around the world.

Can you tell me what response Canada will have with regard to this, perhaps even touching upon how this intersects with our feminist foreign policy, since I know I didn't give the minister enough time to speak about that?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Canada's priorities with respect to Afghanistan are, first of all, safe passage for vulnerable Afghans and for Canadians; the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance; the Taliban's respect for its international obligations, notably the fundamental rights of all Afghans, including women and girls; and coordination with partners on counterterrorism.

Clearly, the decision we all learned about yesterday, the Taliban's decision to send girls over the age of grade six home from school and not to allow them to go from home to school, is something that we think is absolutely unacceptable. We're very concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, and also about the Taliban's control of the rights of women and girls. This is but one indication.

On the humanitarian side, Canada has provided over \$130 million in humanitarian aid, and we're working closely with UN humanitarian organizations to make sure it meets the needs of the most vulnerable Afghans.

In terms of what I would say on how this intersects with Canada's feminist foreign policy, there couldn't really be a better example of how Canada's feminist foreign policy makes a difference. We look at the assistance that we provide from the perspective of whether it will reach women and girls. We look at whether women in that humanitarian sector are actually able to be part of the workforce there. We look in terms of what more we would do to support other needs of the Afghan people in terms of the positions that Taliban is taking. Every chance we get, we advocate for the Taliban to respect the rights of women and girls.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you. That's such important work. It breaks my heart to see the losses that we've seen in the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.

Another thing that's very difficult right now is the threat we are seeing around the world with regard to nuclear weapons being used in the conflict in Ukraine.



Your colleague Mr. Hamilton won't be surprised by the question I'm about to ask, but we know that this is a moment in time where we could be looking at disarmament more. Canada could play a bigger role in disarmament. We have the TPNW, which has now been announced. It will be in Vienna at the end of June.

Will this government consider, as Norway has and as Germany has, sending an observation mission? Knowing that there will be parliamentarians from the Parliament of Canada, from almost all political parties, will the Government of Canada send an observation mission?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Let me just say by way of introduction, before I turn it over to my colleague Kevin, who's at the table with me, that we are outraged by the threats that President Putin is making in this regard. We and our G7 and NATO allies have decried these threats at every opportunity. It is irresponsible and, in fact, reckless. I cannot believe, in 2022, that President Putin believes it is acceptable even to suggest this.

Let me turn to Kevin on your more specific question.

• (1700)

**Mr. Kevin Hamilton (Director General, International Security Policy Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I agree wholeheartedly that arguably there's never been a time in our history when movement towards nuclear disarmament was more important. Unfortunately, because of COVID, the NPT review conference has had to be postponed several times. It is now set for August. Canada will be a full and constructive participant at that review conference.

On the TPNW specifically, we have some reservations about the structure of that treaty, in that there's no verification mechanism involved in it. However, we understand that it exists—that the TPNW has been formulated—because of large-scale frustration among the international community about the slow pace of disarmament. No decision has been taken at the moment as to whether Canada will send an observer to that conference, but it is under active consideration.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. McPherson. That's your time.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** You'll have a chance to come in again in a subsequent intervention.

Mr. Chong, go ahead, please, for five minutes.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Madam Morgan, for coming to us today. I have a question first about the Arctic and then some questions about Canadian energy and the European Union.

On the Arctic, in recent years, predating Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there was emerging co-operation between the United States, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland in the Arctic, in particular joint military exercises with fighter jets. Is Canada seeking to participate in that multilateral initiative?

Just by way of background, in recent years the U.S., as an Arctic nation with the state of Alaska, began to co-operate very closely with Nordic countries, some of them non-NATO members, to the

point that they were conducting joint military exercises. U.S. fighter jets were being staged and based and were leaving from Nordic country air bases, participating in joint training exercises, not just in the Baltic Sea but also in the Arctic.

Canada, to my knowledge, has not participated in that initiative. I'm wondering if we are seeking to participate in that Arctic co-operation going forward.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I'll ask Kevin Hamilton to answer this question.

**Mr. Kevin Hamilton:** On those specific exercises, I'm afraid I don't have a good answer for you. I don't know what our plans might be. I'd have to defer to National Defence on that.

I know we take an active part in NATO exercises, including deployment for the exercise we've just done in Norway. Also, Finland and Sweden often take part, as NATO partners, in NATO exercises—

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Are you talking about Cold Response 2022?

**Mr. Kevin Hamilton:** That's correct. Yes.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I appreciate that.

I have a couple of questions on energy security. We have this joint statement between the Prime Minister and the European Commission president that says a working group of officials is going to be established. They're apparently going to meet this week to talk about reducing European Union dependence on Russian natural gas.

What are officials going to be proposing at this meeting? What are Canadian officials going to be proposing at this meeting, seeing that the statement's now public and discussions are going to begin?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Mr. Chair, the issue around energy dependence brings up a broader issue around the knock-on effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including the increase in the price of energy; including the commitment, in response, of the EU to reduce its dependency on Russian oil and gas; and including the increase in the price and the reduction of the availability of food and the potential for a broader humanitarian crisis. All of these are issues that we need to work on collectively with allies.

On the issue specifically of the working group, that question would be best directed to my colleagues at the Department of Natural Resources, who will be engaged in that group. The response to the issue, to the crisis in Ukraine, is really a multidimensional one. We are all bringing all of our tools and all of our policies to bear in order to address the multiple and variable consequences of it.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you, Deputy Minister, for that answer. I'm glad you raised the issue of food. The World Food Programme indicated last week that food prices could escalate as much as 22% in the next six months as a result of the lack of natural gas.

Most people who don't live in agricultural regions don't realize that almost half of our global food production is based on natural gas. The revolution of modern agriculture has allowed for the production of nitrogen fertilizer from natural gas through what I believe is called the Haber-Bosch process, which has allowed for massive increases in food production. I know in my area of Wellington County we're looking at potential problems with crop production this year because of the lack of natural gas, particularly due to the price of natural gas, the increase in nitrogen fertilizer costs and the lack of fertilizer available to feed the world.

I think this is something the Canadian government should be very seized with, seeing that we are the fifth-largest producer of natural gas in the world. We have some time to head this off if we start working on it right now.

I'll just finish with that. Thank you very much.

• (1705)

**The Chair:** Mr. Chong, thank you.

Thank you, Deputy Minister.

We will now go to Mr. Zuberi for five minutes, please.

The floor is yours.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** I'd like to thank Global Affairs for being here with us and making their time available.

I'd like to start off with the war in Ukraine. We know that Vladimir Putin, who's the aggressor and perpetrator of this war, started it for many different reasons. We see that he is insistent on continuing this conflict. Also, many have speculated that there are imperial sorts of ideas. He has a large ego, etc.

With respect to allowing this conflict to wind down and for him to save face, are we as a country working with our partners and allies to create an off-ramp for Vladimir Putin that allows him to save face and brings an end to the conflict?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** One of the questions on all of our minds right now is how this ends. At this point, our primary objective is to isolate Russia, working with our allies to impose significant costs on Russia so that President Putin understands the consequences of what he's done and is therefore encouraged to cease his aggression and to engage in diplomacy and resolution of this issue in a meaningful and trustworthy way.

I think you will have seen reports in the media that there are technical discussions happening between Ukraine and Russia, and that various world leaders have intervened with President Putin. Those world leaders have been encouraging him to cease and desist the aggression and to, in good faith, engage in discussions with Ukraine. That's really what has to happen here.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you for that.

I'm sure you're aware that on February 22, 2021, the House of Commons voted unanimously that what the government of China is doing to the Uighur people rises to the level of genocide. While this was not a binding motion, there is a moral prerogative, I would say.

I'd like to know what we are doing to protect the vulnerable Uighur populations, in particular in third countries outside of China. What are we doing to protect those populations? Could you update us on that?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We believe that the human rights situation in China is of grave concern, specifically with respect to the Uighur people but for other minorities as well, in addition to the situations in Tibet and Hong Kong. We've called for, as Minister Joly noted, a transparent and unfettered access in order for the situation to be assessed, particularly by Madam Bachelet.

In terms of what else we're doing, we've taken a number of actions in order to address the risk of forced labour by Uighurs. That includes, for example, the prohibition of imports made in whole or in part by forced labour, responsible business conduct guidelines developed for Canadian companies and business advisory export controls. As well, we have imposed sanctions on a number of officials within China who we believe are implicated in the human rights abuses of the Uighur population.

• (1710)

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** While I am on the subject, I would be remiss not to bring up the name of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian citizen who has been detained for several years in China.

We've given a lot of attention to "the two Michaels". Huseyin Celil hasn't benefited from the same amount of attention.

There have been suggestions—actually, more than suggestions—calls for us to have a special envoy to ensure his release. This was made by former attorney general Irwin Cotler.

Can you comment on the consular services and the idea of the special envoy?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Yes. We have been very actively engaged since Mr. Celil's initial detention in 2006. We continue to raise his case at every opportunity. The department continues to provide support to the family of Mr. Celil as well.

This is an issue that is very important to us, and we continue to raise it at every opportunity with our Chinese interlocutors.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Genuis, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Those were excellent questions from my colleague, Mr. Zuberi. I would note that Mr. Celil's wife has expressed some frustration in terms of the interactions, or not having the same level of engagement in recent years, especially since 2015. That is what she has said.

I want to ask further about sanctions. Could you advise on how much money and how many assets are frozen in Canada because of sanctions on Russia?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** As Minister Joly noted, we have imposed sanctions on over 1,000 individuals and entities. In addition, we have worked with the G7 to remove the access of a number of Russian banks to the SWIFT system, as well as to remove their access to their reserves.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I am aware of that. My question was with respect to how much money and how many assets have been frozen in Canada as a result of that sanctioning.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I don't have that information because really, once we get into the enforcement space, that is the responsibility of financial institutions, and it's a responsibility of the RCMP and the CBSA in terms of enforcement.

What I can tell you, though, is that for anyone who is sanctioned—anyone who is on that list—any assets they have in Canada are frozen, which means that they can't trade them, sell them or do anything with them.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I understand that.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** At Global Affairs, we don't track what those assets are.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Would you be able to get that information from partner agencies and share that with the committee?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I will get whatever information I can, but I'm not sure that we actually have that comprehensively. This is actually one of the reasons you've seen the formation of the task force globally within the G7, in order to ensure that these assets are tracked and that there is appropriate enforcement. This includes our Department of Finance and the Treasury in the U.S., as well as our European counterparts. That's one area we're working on as well with allies.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** It would be of great interest to the committee to receive that information, so we do look forward to a written follow-up advising what information you have and sharing that information to the extent that it's available.

Is the government considering sectoral bans as part of its suite of sanctions, perhaps things like the sale of equipment used for oil and gas production in Russia?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We've actually just approved a swathe of sanctions that are essentially more like an export ban on certain commercial products. This will align us with the export ban that was announced by the U.S. right after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

While I can't go into detail on that here, I am happy to provide you with all of the export controls that includes. It will include a lot of equipment, machinery, parts that are useful in different industries and so on. That's the purpose of those export controls.

Beyond the process that we have right now, which is really focused on military or dual-use export controls, this will control the export of commercial-grade products.

• (1715)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay. Thank you.

The minister talked about really suffocating the regime and its capacity to wage war. Those are important words, and we want to see strong follow-up in terms of sanctions that target Russia's economic capacity to wage this war.

I asked the minister about foreign interference, and she replied that it wasn't her area of responsibility. I had a look at the mandate letter, and her mandate letter from the Prime Minister actually does speak about combatting foreign interference.

Could you advise what Global Affairs is doing, or how Global Affairs is involved in the issue of foreign interference?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** The lead role in terms of combatting foreign interference is within the Public Safety agencies, but of course there are foreign policy considerations that need to be brought to bear when we look at foreign interference.

One initiative that we have, which is actually quite interesting, is called the RRM, or the rapid response mechanism. The Prime Minister just announced its renewal a couple of weeks ago when he was in Europe. It's a small group in my organization that actually looks at foreign interference in elections abroad, from a social media perspective.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Just quickly, in the time I have, can you tell me whether we saw that interference in Canada's last federal election? That was my question to the minister, and you would seem to know about it.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** That question would best be put to the Minister of Public Safety. It's really the Public Safety agencies that have the primary responsibility, but I do have a small unit that looks at foreign interference abroad and looks at what is happening in social media and whether we see any sort of evidence of that.

**The Chair:** We'll have to leave it there. Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

Colleagues, the bells are going. This is just a reminder that we agreed to go until 5:30, and I think we'll land pretty much on the nose with the time that's left.

Mr. Ehsassi, go ahead, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Ms. Morgan.

As you know, the minister didn't really have a chance to get into the issue of how Canada's leading the way to make sure we are documenting and gathering evidence about war crimes and crimes against humanity that Russia may be committing.

Could you tell us what the significance of that is?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We have been very actively working with our partners, first of all, in the motion that was brought before the ICC by Ukraine in order to declare that Russia's rationale for this invasion was completely unfounded. That was a successful motion.

We will continue to work with our allies as we move forward to document war crimes, because our view is that there will have to be accountability and that it will be critical, not just for Ukraine but for the entire world, that there be international accountability for the actions that are being taken now that are targeted at civilians and that contravene international law.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Thank you for that.

Perhaps I could follow up on the question Mr. Zuberi asked with respect to the case of Mr. Celil. As you know, the facts of that case are painful just in terms of how long we have been trying to effect his release, which, of course, has not happened.

Would you be in favour of appointing a special envoy, as Irwin Cotler has suggested?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Mr. Chair, we have a very strong consular team within the Ministry of Global Affairs, and we work tirelessly to assist on all consular cases, including the case of Mr. Celil. We are constant—

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** So far it seems as though it hasn't been effective after 15 years. Is that correct?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I understand the frustration around this and I certainly understand and note the frustration of the family, because this is a very difficult situation for a family to find themselves in and for an individual to find themselves in, but you can be assured, Mr. Chair, that our department is actively engaged at the most senior levels and is consistently trying to, at a minimum, gain consular access to Mr. Celil, which has been a challenge.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Thank you.

It was just announced that President Biden and the White House have indicated that they would like to see Russia ejected from the G20. Does Canada have a position on that issue as of yet?

• (1720)

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We are working with our close allies to look at how we need to deal with Russia in every international forum in order to isolate it, and we would support isolating Russia in every international forum. The question is really, on a case-by-case basis, what the best way is to do that.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Given that the G7 actually released its communiqué and indicated the position you have just stated, what are some of the other fora from the membership of which it appears we could successfully eject Russia?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We're looking across the whole range of international fora and working not just with Global Affairs but across all government departments. I think you would be surprised to know how many international fora there actually are. We need to look at each one on a case-by-case basis to see what the most effective way or the most effective thing we can do is.

The Arctic Council is a good example. We have paused all meetings of the Arctic Council, because Russia is in the chair of the Arctic Council. We're assessing what the best way would be for us to actually sustain the constructive work that organization has been doing over many years, which is of real importance to Canada.

In each case, we need to look at what the best way to do it is, how we do that and how we make sure that we sustain the effective, important work those organizations are doing.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Thank you very much, Ms. Morgan. That's it for me.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Ehsassi.

We are coming up on eight minutes before 5:30. We have four intervenors waiting.

If we do two minutes each and get everybody in that way, would that be okay? It will be a very quick two minutes back and forth, and then everybody gets a chance to get in their last question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for two minutes.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to be brief.

In May 2020, the previous Minister of Foreign Affairs, François-Philippe Champagne, came out in favour of Taiwan joining the World Health Organization. After that, we felt that the Canadian government seemed more favourable to admitting Taiwan to the World Health Assembly.

So, first, are we still in favour of Taiwan's membership in the World Health Organization?

Since then, we have heard Taiwan express its desire to join the International Civil Aviation Organization, which I think is entirely appropriate, and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

What is Canada's position on those requests by Taiwan?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Thank you for your question.

We are in favour of supporting Taiwan's participation in organizations to which its participation and its presence have made an important contribution. We are disappointed that Taiwan has not been able to participate, for example,

[*English*]

in some of the World Health Assembly and the ICAO triennial assembly since 2016, due to pressure from the mainland. However, we would certainly support Taiwan's participation in those fora.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** If I might ask another question, Mr. Chair.

According to Al Jazeera, the Ethiopian government has declared an indefinite humanitarian truce, effective immediately, stating that it hoped to expedite the delivery of emergency aid to the Tigray region.

Have you heard this information, that there is now an indefinite humanitarian truce, effective immediately?

If so, does the Government of Canada intend to take the opportunity offered by this truce to expedite the delivery of aid to the people of Tigray?

**The Chair:** Please give a brief answer.

[English]

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** This is something that the Government of Canada has been calling for since this conflict began. We think it's critical to get humanitarian assistance into the region.

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

Next is Ms. McPherson, please, for two minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This came up in the House today. I think you all are aware that we are about to celebrate the anniversary of the seventh year that Yemen has been under attack and at war. Over a quarter of a million people have been killed. There have been four million people displaced because of the war, and 70% of the population, including 11.3 million children, are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.

For me, the obviousness of Canada selling arms to the Saudi regime, which is in fact putting these harms on the people of Yemen, is quite hard to bear. The United Nations Human Rights Council has twice named Canada as one of the states that are fuelling the ongoing war in Yemen by continuing arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Considering that Canada is trying to become a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, will you be reviewing the sale of LAVs to Saudi Arabia, which have been named by the United Nations as being used in the conflict in Yemen?

• (1725)

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Mr. Chair, Canada has one of the strongest export control systems in the world, and respect for human rights is enshrined in that legislation. Every export permit application is reviewed under our risk assessment framework and is fully consistent with the Arms Trade Treaty, which is inscribed in our Export and Import Permits Act.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** A 2019 report by Global Affairs Canada said there were some concerns about that. I'm wondering how you can have concerns in 2019, but in 2022 think it is completely all right.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Mr. Chair, we are also very concerned about the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which is one of the most difficult situations globally right now. We fully support humanitarian assistance for Yemen and doing everything we can to support a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. McPherson.

Next is Mr. Chong, please, for two minutes. Go ahead.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you.

I just have a clarification. I think it was the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations that said that food prices were going to spike by 22%, but there are alarm bells ringing, and I guess I'll finish not with a question, but with a comment to Global Affairs officials, both online and here in the room.

I do not think the government is seized with this problem. I think it's pertinent in the discussions taking place about natural gas in Eu-

rope, whether it's at the International Energy Agency, the joint statement between the Prime Minister and the European Commission or the discussions that have taken place at NATO.

Canada is the fifth-largest natural gas producer in the world, and nitrogen fertilizer, which accounts for a half of the world's food production, comes from natural gas, from this process called the Haber-Bosch process. I know this because I come from an agricultural region.

Agricultural producers are ringing the alarm bells. I've had agricultural producers in my region and farmers coming to me in the last several weeks saying there is an emergency with nitrogen fertilizer. Crops are going into the ground in the next 10 weeks or so. If that nitrogen isn't applied, crop yields will drop. In fact, right now in Europe there is a 10% shortage in nitrogen fertilizer. Analysts estimate that's going to lead to a minimum drop in European crop production of at least 7% to 9% this year. You add to that the food inflation of the last 24 months; you add to that one of the world's major breadbaskets, Ukraine, at risk of not planting the crop this year, and we could be looking at a major food shortage in six months. Governments need to be seized with this issue right now.

I want to put this on the table, Mr. Chair, because I don't think we are seized with it. We as a country are privileged, not just because of our immense land mass, which produces lots of the grains and oilseeds this world consumes, but also because we have the natural gas to produce the urea that needs to be applied in the next 10 to 12 weeks to make sure we can feed the world.

This is a crisis we have not seen in decades. I think governments need to be seized with it right now, particularly in light of the discussions taking place at NATO, the International Energy Agency, and between Canada and the European Commission this week.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Chong, thank you very much.

Our final intervenor this afternoon will be Mr. Zuberi or Madam Bendayan.

Mr. Zuberi, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you.

Very quickly, I'm of South Asian heritage. There have been concerns around the treatment of minorities within the world's largest democracy, India, our friend, and the protection of those minorities, especially as of late. Can you tell us what we are doing as a country to see that the touchstone values of minorities within India, the world's largest democracy, are being respected and protected, and are actually being realized?

• (1730)

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Maybe I could comment on the previous comment before I answer this question, which is to say that we are very seized with this issue. The G7 is very seized with this issue. We see fertilizer prices increasing. We see food supply shortages. We know there will be a humanitarian consequence and that it needs to be addressed collectively.

In terms of the human rights issues in India, I was actually in India last week, and I had the privilege of meeting with a number of human rights defenders and also a number of women to discuss feminist foreign policy. One of the things we do in our mission is support this kind of discussion. We provide safe spaces for human rights defenders to come and to discuss issues and to talk about how they're going to work together. We also have local programming through which we can support that kind of work.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds, if you have another quick one.

Ms. Bendayan.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Very quickly, I have a question as to what may be causing you to hesitate or block the possibility of establishing an embassy in Armenia.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Our international footprint is determined by our budget. We have embassies in over 110 countries, and we

have offices in different places. Really, our footprint is a function of decisions that have been made and the budget that we have.

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

We are 15 minutes away from the vote. As agreed to, I would like, on our collective behalf, to thank our officials—the deputy minister, Ms. Morgan, and her senior leadership team—for being with us. We look forward to speaking to them again in the near future.

With that, colleagues, we are adjourned.

[*Translation*]

Thank you. Have a nice day.

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