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• (1635)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Good evening, and welcome to meeting number 35 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room, as well as remotely through the Zoom application.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

First of all, kindly wait until you have been recognized before you speak. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. Please mute yourself when you are not speaking. I should also add that the clerk has asked that to the extent possible, we use our earpieces, because we are experiencing some problems hearing everyone.

The interpretation button for those on Zoom is at the bottom of your screen. You have a choice of either “floor”, “English” or “French”. Those in the room can use an earpiece and select the desired channel.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motions adopted by the committee on Monday, January 31, 2022, and Wednesday, October 19, 2022, the committee resumes its study of the current situation in Haiti.

It is now my pleasure to welcome our witnesses. From the Embassy of the Republic of Haiti, we have His Excellency Dr. Arthus, the Ambassador of the Republic of Haiti to Canada. Joining the ambassador are Mr. Ossé Aristild, the minister-counsellor at the embassy here, as well as Mr. Nesly Numa, the minister-counsellor, as well.

Mr. Ambassador, you have five minutes for your opening remarks, after which we will open it to the members to ask you questions. Once you only have a minute left in your opening remarks, I will put up a signal that you should be wrapping it up within the allotted time.

Thank you. Please proceed.

His Excellency Wien-Weibert Arthus (Ambassador of the Republic of Haiti to Canada): Thank you, Chair.

[Translation]

I was very pleased to accept your invitation to appear before you today to discuss the current dire situation in Haiti.

First of all, I must congratulate you and thank you for the interest you have shown in my country.

As you know, the situation on the ground is challenging. The violence orchestrated by armed gangs has paralyzed the country and plunged millions of Haitians into an acute humanitarian crisis.

The violence began some time ago and peaked with the despicable assassination of President Jovenel Moïse on July 7, 2021. Since then, theft, rape and kidnapping have become features of Haitians' everyday lives.

Haiti has come to a virtual standstill in the past two months. The gang-led blockade of the country's main terminal prevents fuel from being distributed across the country. Students have been unable to start their new school year. More than 2.4 million children have been unable to go back to their schools, which have remained closed, and have been shut in at home since June of this year. Nearly 4.7 million persons, almost half the population, are facing high levels of food insecurity, in the wake of which the cholera epidemic has returned and has already claimed some 50 victims.

In the circumstances, the Haitian government has called on the international community to organize a special force to address this security and humanitarian crisis. It is no secret that Canada is very well positioned to conduct an international mission that could be deployed to Haiti to assist authorities in meeting this immediate security need. We are relieved at the prospect because, as I need not remind you, Canada is a partner that enjoys a prestigious reputation in Haiti and has chaired many international meetings on Haiti this past year. The interest that Canada and Canadians have taken Haiti is undisputed.

Yes, a debate has arisen over the possibility of sending a military force to Haiti. First of all, every Haitian knows in his soul that a foreign force is never welcome in our country. That's how it has been since the country's first constitution. The prime minister himself has long, and publicly, dismissed the idea of requesting international military assistance for Haiti. It must also be acknowledged that previous missions have left many bad memories. I therefore see this as an opportunity, though definitely not one of the happiest, but an opportunity nevertheless, to foster Canada's international solidarity toward Haiti.

However, that solidarity must not be restricted to our security problems alone but should be expanded to include construction and reconstruction projects in our country. This can be an opportunity to help Haiti address certain major challenges at the root of our recurring instability problem.

For example, it would be good if a Canadian military mission could include a contingent of military engineers and construction materials in addition to troops and armoured vehicles. It seems impossible that the Haitian capital has yet to be rebuilt 12 years after the earthquake. Canada has a tremendous engineering capability that can help us in that area.

Another lesson that we must learn from the past is that democracy isn't merely a system of functioning institutions. It also has attributes such as justice, accountability and the fight against corruption. There is another fundamental element, and that is the economy. More than 80% of young Haitians 18 to 30 years of age are unemployed. Their only ways out are emigration, crime or politics.

I therefore call upon Canada to help us put our young people to work. Humanitarian aid has never reconstructed a country, and charity won't help Haitians recover. They need assistance in getting to work and earning a living with dignity. That obviously requires an enormous investment, but also, and especially, a greater commitment to do something lasting to help Haiti.

• (1640)

Lastly, Haitians like me would be happy to hear Canada say that, when it began its mission in Haiti, 60% of women didn't have access to health care but that our engineers cut that number down to 12%. We would also like to hear that unemployment, which mainly affects women and forces young girls into prostitution, was also reduced by a wide margin, that Haiti has a president and a parliament and that Port-au-Prince has been reconnected to the rest of the country.

In conclusion, I will be 49 years old next week. I have never known seven years of stability in Haiti since I entered high school in 1985. Since 1994, there have been two major military interventions and a dozen UN missions, and a third intervention is likely upcoming.

If the international community, and Canada in particular, want to help us and to ensure they don't return to Haiti in five or seven years for a new operation, you must help us address our security problems now and build the infrastructure and economy of our country.

This will enhance Canada's prestige, aid Haiti in its recovery and give hope to other vulnerable peoples who turn to the more developed countries for a better tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Your Excellency.

We will now open it up to questions. The first member is MP Hoback.

You have six minutes, sir.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

First of all, thank you, Your Excellency, for being here and giving us some insight into what's happening on the ground in Haiti right now. It sounds like it's a dire situation.

Can you give me a sense of what type of violence we're facing here? Is it based on gangs, criminals or cartels, or is it politically related? Can you give me a more in-depth sense of exactly what that looks like?

[Translation]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: It's a somewhat complicated situation with resulting ramifications.

There are definitely political ramifications; that's a well-known fact. Studies have been conducted on this problem in Haiti. Politics hasn't always served the people. It's a well-known fact that it's an instrument of power, prestige and corruption.

The people who belong to gangs are poor; they aren't rich. They don't have opportunities to travel to buy their weapons. Consequently, there are also economic ramifications. There are all kinds of criminal activity wherever the gangs are. Sometimes the police seize weapons that come from other countries in the region.

There are various economic and political factors. One of the factors that cause the problem to persist and that haven't been addressed over a long period of time is poverty among young people, who are highly vulnerable.

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: What is the impact on the Dominican Republic next door? Are we seeing lots of refugees fleeing Haiti and going to the Dominican Republic? What's the relationship like there?

[Translation]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: Our relations with the Dominican Republic have always been somewhat complicated. Our historical relations have been both close and distant.

What happens in Haiti definitely has an impact on the Dominican Republic. It's also true that certain gangs in Haiti are armed by gangs from the Dominican Republic and that they have ties with each other. The problem is that the Dominican Republic is a far more organized and much stronger state than Haiti. It controls its territory much more effectively. Consequently, it's Haiti that's negatively affected.

I know the Dominican Republic takes in many Haitian migrants as a result of our country's situation, which has a considerable impact on the region.

• (1645)

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: What has been the response from the OAS in regard to your requests for help?

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: I know that the Organization of American States, the OAS, and the United Nations, the UN, are studying the matter, and the UN has passed a resolution to impose targeted sanctions.

We're still waiting for a response to the prime minister's direct request.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: How would you target sanctions in a country such as Haiti?

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: It's both simple and complicated. It's complicated in that the gangs, the people who own the weapons, are young people who are poor and highly vulnerable. It's important to find out who supplies those weapons. Who buys the weapons on the international market, imports them and supplies them to those young people?

We also need to know who benefits from kidnapping, which is a thriving business in Haiti. Every kidnapped person can earn them tens of thousands of dollars in ransom money.

That money goes somewhere, and I think that certain countries, including Canada, are looking into what happens within their own borders, which is very good. In practice, people who commit corruption or other crimes in Haiti then head for cover in the United States, Canada or elsewhere.

It's important that the international community decide, as Canada is doing, to sanction individuals who are in hiding in their countries.

As I said, it's important to sanction the gangs, but they aren't the only ones responsible.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: How would you go about identifying who these persons are? If they're coming into Canada, I want to know about it and I want to make sure they're not bringing their illegal activity with them.

Maybe my question is more like this: What exists right now for infrastructure for a police force or the military to try to bring back the rule of law?

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: The situation is very tough for the police. The whole problem stems from the fact that the gangs are better armed than the police, which also have a lot of internal problems that prevent them from addressing the situation. Of course, considerable effort is being made on the ground, although clearly not enough, otherwise we wouldn't be here today.

Efforts must be ongoing. That's why I say that, regardless of the form international cooperation takes, including that of Canada, international contingents will have to work continuously with the Police nationale d'Haiti, the PNH, to ensure that guilty parties are identified, tried and punished.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: You talked a little bit about reconstruction—

The Chair: Mr. Hoback, I'm afraid the time—

Mr. Randy Hoback: I guess my next colleague will ask those questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hoback.

We now go to Mr. Dubourg. You have six minutes, sir.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

[*Translation*]

I want to welcome His Excellency the Ambassador and the guests accompanying him to the committee today. Greetings to you all.

[*The member spoke in Créole*]

[*French*]

Before I go any further, Your Excellency, I would like to offer my sincere condolences through you to the family of Mikaben, the talented young artist who suddenly died. We were all saddened by his death.

Your Excellency, since I have only six minutes, I'd like to ask you some questions and get some brief answers. If my questions make you feel uncomfortable in your capacity as a diplomat, please feel free to ask me to move on to the next question.

Here's my first question.

Doesn't the Haitian government's request constitute, for it, an admission of failure to lead the country?

• (1650)

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: Would you please move on to the next question?

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Thank you.

Here's my second question, Mr. Ambassador.

We know that the armed gangs are partly funded by the economic elite and the politicians. You asked a question in your opening statement. You also know that Canada is prepared to impose sanctions.

With respect to the politicians in question, on whom we want to impose sanctions, do you believe that the Canadian government should consider including politicians from previous governments as well as the present government?

Should it look for corrupt politicians who are funding armed gangs in Haiti?

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: The answer to that question is quite obvious: everyone funding the gangs should be sanctioned. As a Haitian, I have mourned the deaths of friends, colleagues and relatives. So this is something personal, if I may say so.

At least this will be an example that will show the next generation that the international community and Canada don't take these situations lightly. The weakness of Haitian justice is a well-known fact. All the studies have been conducted on the subject. However, the international community, and Canada in particular, can take the lead by saying that they don't take this lightly and that those persons can't go unpunished.

Consequently, all politicians involved, both present and past, should be sanctioned.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Thank you for your answer.

Your Excellency, Haitians can't seem to agree. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly, has made a request to the prime minister in this connection. A lot of agreements are circulating, and some of the people responsible for them are even resigning. However, one gets the sense that all the agreements circulating in Haiti are about replacing the prime minister or the president. As far as we can tell, there's no credible plan for getting out of the crisis. In addition, the purpose of those agreements is to seize power without holding elections.

Consequently, why are the leaders of the Haitian community seeking the assistance of the international community if they can't establish a consensus among themselves?

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: I'm quite disappointed to note that we haven't established a political consensus in the country in all this time. I have to acknowledge that. We have a duty to do so, and I believe that Canada is right in pressing Haitians at least to reach a consensus among themselves.

I know the government has made a considerable effort to bring the various groups together so they can reach an agreement. That may take much more time than we thought, but I'm hopeful. I'm not a dreamer, but I hope that Haitians can manage to agree on what they want and on the level of support they want from the international community and Canada.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Thank you.

I believe I just have enough time for a final question.

I think you've already stated your position on this, but in the event of military intervention in Haiti by whatever force, what problems would that force face on the ground?

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: The first problem would be a difficulty in being accepted. As I said, the issue is being debated, and those debates are almost legitimate, given the history of Haiti and its experience with international forces.

I'm also not a security expert, but I think there'll be a challenge in that regard. The forces will have to identify the gangs and enter the neighbourhoods in order to conduct operations, which could be complicated. That's why it'll be important to cooperate with the police.

My dearest wish is that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development not meet again in five or seven years to discuss Haiti, its crisis and security. That's why I support the Canadian strategy to come up with a plan.

I'm glad that a mission went to Haiti last week and came back with findings and recommendations. I hope the result will be a credible plan to enable at least a clear majority of Haitians to understand and accept the aid that we need from the international community, particularly that from Canada. We will never get all Haitians on board, and that's normal.

• (1655)

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll now go to Monsieur Bergeron. You have six minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Your Excellency.

I want to thank you and your associates for being with us today.

I find your remarks thus far very informative for the members of this committee.

I won't conceal from you that every one of us has received many messages from people telling us that we should go to Haiti and many others from people telling us we really shouldn't. If we've learned a lesson from all previous experiences, it's that we landed in Haiti with the impression that we knew what to do but never managed to improve the situation. We can see that clearly today.

One of our present concerns is to ensure that Haitians are involved and that the project, solutions and what's implemented are inspired by Haitians themselves.

The problem we face is that the diaspora in Quebec and Canada encourages us both to support and to oppose a military mission, which puts us in a situation where we don't know who we're dealing with. The government has installed a government in Port-au-Prince that doesn't control its territory for the reasons you mentioned. It's a government whose legitimacy is seriously in doubt. In the absence of any other interlocutors, we're forced to consider the request that's submitted to us, while the diaspora in Quebec and Canada tells us to go to Haiti, on the one hand, and not to go, on the other.

Without an interlocutor, how can we ensure that the request the Haitian government has made to us is consistent with what Haitians want?

Your Excellency, you mentioned the bad memories that Haitians have as a result of previous experiences, and I can understand that.

How can we be assured that the request the Haitian government has submitted to us is consistent with, or corresponds to, what Haitians want? Have any surveys or consultations been conducted, considering that the government doesn't control the territory? I imagine that's a problem that can be solved through this intervention request.

You understand the problem we're facing, Your Excellency. Without an interlocutor, how can we be certain we're including Haitians?

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: I entirely agree that it's a difficult issue to resolve and that consensus is hard to reach.

As regards interlocutors, as I said a few years ago, I have to acknowledge that Haiti isn't in an entirely constitutional situation, although we do have a government in place. We have an internationally recognized prime minister who has attended international summits and conferences and submitted a request to the UN Secretary General and to many governments, including that of Canada.

In addition, the situation on the ground speaks somewhat for itself. I believe the Canadian media, which have correspondents in Haiti, have clearly explained the situation to us: it's a hopeless situation for which a solution must be found. Now, I entirely agree that the form that solution should take isn't clear, or at least that the solution doesn't yet have unanimous support. That's why I think that the continuing dialogue to reach a basic consensus among Haitians is important, even though it may not be a broad consensus.

I've heard talk of the Canadian mission that was in Haiti. As I said, I'm glad that Canada sent a mission to Haiti. The representatives of that mission met with various actors from both the government opposition and civil society, people who are absolutely not part of the government.

I'm sure that, within a few weeks, the Canadian mission to Haiti will provide a report that's fairly clear and virtually neutral, as it were.

• (1700)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Your Excellency, I know, because we were told earlier this week, that negotiations on the international force are ongoing under the aegis of Mexico and the United States. We don't really know where that stands.

I don't know if you—

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, I'm afraid you're out of time. Could you make it very quick, please?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Yes.

Your Excellency, if that force were to be organized, how could we ensure that the lessons of the past would be taken into consideration.

What rules of engagement, mandate and timeframe would the Haitian government like to see assigned to that international force, provided, of course, that it's deployed?

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: I believe that the lessons are there and that they're clear. There are certain disciplinary and deployment errors that should be avoided.

As I said, one of the significant factors that could lend considerable legitimacy would be to have a force that, regardless of its name or composition, arrives in Haiti and genuinely gets to work and that, in addition into providing security, starts work on con-

struction. Construction is very important for us in Haiti today because we still haven't recovered from the earthquake.

I'm sure that people would see results, that they would see work done, very soon, in two or three weeks. Then they might understand that those who come from elsewhere don't necessarily come to Haiti to humiliate Haitians or for purely imperialistic reasons, but...

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Ambassador, could I ask that you wrap it up in the next 10 seconds, please?

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: ...to really help. I think that's important.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

We now go to Ms. McPherson, please. You have six minutes, Ms. McPherson.

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

I would like to thank His Excellency for being here with us. This has been a very interesting conversation. My colleagues have asked some very important questions, and you've provided some very important information to us.

I also want to express, as I know others have as well, my condolences about what is happening in Haiti. I hear from His Excellency how this is impacting him, but in fact it affects all people in Haiti and all of the diaspora communities in Canada with ties to Haiti. Obviously this is a horrific time, and all of us in this room are trying to find the best way forward to support Haitians at this time.

I am going to ask about a variety of different areas. I am going to start with the political crisis.

Ambassador, we know that Haiti has not held elections for several years. We know that the prime minister is unelected. You spoke about other countries recognizing the prime minister, but the reality is that he is an unelected leader.

What discussions is the prime minister having with opposition parties and with civil society? Perhaps you could note the people behind the Montana accord. What are the possible avenues for transition to a provisional government and subsequent elections?

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: What I can say is that there's no constitutional response to the present situation, which isn't really normal.

This is precisely where the political negotiation issue comes into play. It's up to the political actors, the people who engage in politics in Haiti, including the Montana group and other groups—quite a number of groups have emerged more recently—really to work together and determine how something can be organized.

From where I stand, I unfortunately don't have the answer. I think I'm also waiting for the leaders on the ground to do something of that sort.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Isn't the prime minister playing a role in finding a resolution? Is that not happening at the moment?

[Translation]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: In the past year, the prime minister has been involved in negotiations with the various parties. Incidentally, the government currently in place is a coalition government, the result of an agreement signed on September 11 of last year.

However, no other parties are included in that government. I know that extensive negotiations have taken place directly between the prime minister and the Montana group and that talks are under way between the prime minister and other groups on the ground.

As regards the prime minister personally, I know that he's trying to rally more people around a consensus for Haiti.

Now, what's causing the stalemate? Why are we still unable to reach a solution?

I don't have an answer to that.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Your Excellency.

I will turn to human rights now. It probably won't surprise very many people in this room that human rights are, of course, very important to me.

I was just reading a 2021 Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic article called "Killing with Impunity". It talked about the fact that in Haiti over the past several years, human rights organizations have reported serious allegations, including massacres of civilians, corruption, and targeting of political demonstrators and opposition members. Some of these abuses were allegedly perpetrated by the government or the police.

Can you talk about the work your government is doing to combat the corruption? What avenues for justice do these victims of abuse have?

[Translation]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: We're in an extremely difficult situation, as I previously said. Considerable effort has been made to support the police and justice, but we sense that we're losing all that. Canada, for example, has invested a lot of money in an attempt to support the police and ensure justice. We feel we're losing what we gained after many years of work.

I must say for the moment that the justice situation is dire. The courts in Port-au-Prince shut down nearly a year ago because their location was besieged by gangs. The situation is very bad, but not

just from a security standpoint: it's also a human rights and justice disaster. It's complicated.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: I hear the frustration in your voice, certainly. I know you have spoken about the need for reconstruction. You've spoken about the need for an economy that works. You've spoken about justice and accountability.

Do you think there is a way through this current crisis if there are not mechanisms in place to provide justice for people in Haiti at this time?

[Translation]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: I don't think we can move forward without securing justice, without people being accountable and without certain individuals being punished. But that's not all. We won't be able to move forward unless we ensure that the next generation won't experience these kinds of moments and that young Haitians, my cousins and brothers, who are between 18 and 30 years of age, can find something to do and not fall prey to gangs.

That's a lot to ask, but it sums up what I've just touched on.

• (1710)

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I think that's my time.

The Chair: Yes, it is. You were over. Thank you, though.

We now go to the next round. Each member will have three minutes for their questions.

We will start with Mr. Epp, who is joining us virtually.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Thank you, Your Excellency.

Thank you to your counsellors for joining us today and thank you for sharing your experience as well.

My initial questions are informed by one of my staff, who is a member of the Haitian diaspora. She actually still has family in Haiti presently.

She recalls that in the early 1990s, Canada helped to train police officers in 2004 and, as you mentioned, Canada had peacekeepers on the ground in Haiti.

Your government is calling for additional external forces. What is the reception from the Haitian police for external forces? What would you anticipate that reception to be?

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: I don't have an answer to that. No surveys or studies have been conducted to determine what the police reaction would be. However, I can imagine what it would be, given that the situation is complicated. Since many police officers have been murdered recently, I suppose the police would welcome international assistance in supporting their actions.

[*English*]

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

Given that situation, what would be your advice? What would be the process of having external forces versus internal forces identifying, for the lack of a better term, the “bad actors?” How do external forces determine how to help or who to target for sanctions or other measures domestically in Haiti?

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: The main problem is firearms. The gangs have better weapons than the police.

Then there's a problem with training. One of the things no one says is that many Haitians have left the country, including many police officers from our special forces. In some instances, those forces have been trained or funded by Canada. So their departure leaves a void.

One of the things that people very rarely say, but that everybody thinks, is that when a country has a high or increased level of violence, that means the security forces in place are involved to some degree. That's been proven elsewhere, and Haiti is no exception to the rule.

We talk about economic and political interests, and you can understand that the established forces want to protect those interests. That's why international cooperation is important. However, I'm not sure another force can come in and do the work of the police. I'm also not sure that's what the government is requesting.

In any case, the international community's support will be needed, if only to assist the police force. This is both a security problem and a political and economic problem.

Haiti won't be able to cope without the international community's help.

[*English*]

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

Given the over \$1.8 billion paid that Canada has—

The Chair: Mr. Epp, you're well over your three minutes.

Perhaps we could go to Mr. Zuberi, please. You have three minutes, Mr. Zuberi.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague Ms. Bendayan.

Thank you for being here, Ambassador Arthus.

There is a large Haitian community in my riding. I'm sure Canadian and Quebec citizens are very interested in your testimony.

You briefly discussed solutions. Would you please tell us a little more about the solutions being advanced in Haiti and how Canada can implement them?

• (1715)

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: There are important lessons to be learned here. In the past 20 years, Haiti has been a fertile ground for NGOs. I'm not opposed to humanitarian aid, but humanitarian aid and charity won't help improve the situation. The emphasis has to be on the economy for the situation to recover over the long term.

A lot of money will have to be invested. Canada obviously can't do it alone, but it can provide leadership and recruit other partners. However, we mustn't be afraid to tell the truth: Haiti is a country that has been destroyed from a security standpoint and doesn't have a functioning economy. There's no infrastructure in the country. Schools and the Port-au-Prince cathedral haven't been rebuilt since the earthquake, nor has the Palais national either. I'm obviously not asking Canada to rebuild it. I cite that example more to illustrate the situation, as it will give you an idea of the state the country 12 years after the earthquake.

Those are ideas for solutions that could be put in place.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

I now yield the rest of my time to my colleague.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Your Excellency, thank you once again for being here.

Several thousands of Haitians from my community in Montreal are obviously concerned about the situation in Haiti. As you are no doubt aware, the Prime Minister is currently discussing the situation in Haiti with the ministers concerned. Your appearance on Parliament Hill is important for our government.

I'd like to ask you a question in the wake of the UN report on sexual violence and rape committed in Haiti. As I understand it, sexual violence is used as a weapon of war and is being committed against Haitian women and young girls.

I'd like to understand how you view the situation on the ground and to know how Canada could help the women in Haiti.

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: The situation is very complicated for women.

An individual very close to me was kidnapped in early September. It happens every day.

My female cousins, who live on the plains, send me voice messages explaining that they have to leave because rape is one of the weapons that the gangs use.

What forms should the aid take? How can we help women?

This goes back to what I said earlier. We need a very clear plan on how to help Haiti.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: That's a very important element; there has to be a plan.

Do you think that plan exists?

Is there a plan to achieve the degree of success in the event Canada provides aid to Haiti?

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Bendayan, you're very much over your time period, very much so. Thank you.

We will go to Mr. Bergeron. You have a minute and a half, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

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

You said that the armed gangs are better equipped than the Police nationale d'Haïti, the PNH. On October 15, Canadian and American military aircraft transported to Port-au-Prince the security equipment the Haitian government had purchased, including tactical and armoured vehicles and other supplies.

My understanding is that isn't enough. We need an international force to cope with the armed gangs. Is that correct?

• (1720)

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: I know the police used that equipment yesterday. They also conducted an operation in Pernier, east of Port-au-Prince. I acknowledge that the police are making considerable efforts on the ground, but, the situation being what it is, even though those efforts are enormous, they may not be enough.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: That's tantamount to saying that, although the Haitian government has purchased this equipment to deal with the criminal groups, it won't be enough to defeat them. You'll really need support from the international community to do that.

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: No more equipment has been delivered yet. Perhaps we should wait for it to arrive and see what the result is.

We'll have to consider the PNH's new strategy to determine where we stand. I don't exactly know when the equipment will be delivered or how well defended we'll be.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I'm going to go very briefly back to Ms. Bendayan's question.

Is there a plan in the event an international force is deployed?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, we are now well over a minute and a half.

We are considerably over time. Everyone is going over the time limit. I would ask all members, out of courtesy for our colleagues, to please stick to the time limits to the best of our abilities, please.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Chair, I have a question of privilege.

I think that we all have a lot of questions and we are learning a lot from the excellent testimony of the ambassador, so I'd like to know if we can send you questions in order to send to the ambassador and maybe he will reply through the clerk. It would help a lot for our report on Haiti.

The Chair: Absolutely, I don't see any problems.

Is it acceptable, Mr. Ambassador, that we forward questions to you and you could kindly send the answers back to us?

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: Of course, Mr. Chair.

I will be very pleased to do so.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador. We are very grateful indeed.

We will go to Ms. McPherson. You have a minute and a half, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I will be very close to that minute and a half, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I have heard you.

Mr. Ambassador, again, thank you very much for being here. As my colleague has stated, it's been very interesting.

You talk about the need to rebuild, the need to be there, and what I'm hearing from you is that a commitment to long-term predictable funding would be most beneficial to Haiti as Haiti rebuilds its country. Is that accurate?

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: Yes.

I can provide a guarantee, and I can say that the MPs who have significant Haitian communities in their ridings can do the same: the members of the Haitian diaspora in Canada and other countries are prepared to cooperate, invest and work in Haiti. In other words, Canada will not be the only country involved in this effort to rebuild the country's economy. I'm certain that the Haitian diaspora in Montreal and across Canada is just waiting for the right moment to invest in Haiti.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

I have 10 seconds left, but I will say that something I've always struggled with is our inability as a country to be there for the long term. I would urge Canada to have that predictable long-term funding.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. McPherson. You're the first person who has actually managed to do it within the prescribed time limit. Thank you.

We now go to Mr. Aboultaif. You have three minutes, sir.

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

Thanks, Ambassador, for being here today.

I have a quick question. Haiti has one border, one neighbour, and is surrounded by water. We have gangs on the street, killing people and causing unrest. I know that you've alluded to the economic situation being one big factor in what's happening in the country, but who is helping or supporting these gangs? Who is backing them with weapons? They must be getting some support from outside.

If you can advise us on this, that would be great.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: The Haitian police, like the American police, have made many arrests. It has to be acknowledged that bad-faith Haitians have unfortunately attracted many of these men to Haiti.

As you know, that's not just a Haitian problem; it's a problem throughout the Caribbean. The ease with which people can find weapons, particularly in the United States, which is a well-known fact, has consequences for us in Haiti. It's turning into a business. People buy a weapon in the United States and resell it for 10 times the price in Haiti, and that's not including the weapons that come from bandits, smugglers and other groups operating in the region.

It's a bit complicated. There must be sanctions, and we have to find the people who are exporting weapons to Haiti, weapons that kill and that assist in the commission of crimes in Haiti.

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: How successful has the government been in at least identifying those people so they can be traced and then held accountable, at least to somehow minimize their effect? It may not be the end of the story, but at least it could put some control over the situation.

[*Translation*]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: I don't have the police reports on exactly who's involved or what investigation has been conducted, but I do know we have names and have made arrests. The gangs are known. The police just have to do their job. First, they have to arrest them and interrogate them to determine who's responsible. That's not an easy task because the problem would already be solved if it were, but it isn't particularly hard.

At my level, I don't have a list of all those individuals involved in this situation in Haiti.

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

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

Our last question goes to Mr. Dubourg. You have three minutes, sir.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Thank you so much, Chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ambassador, like you, I sincerely hope that Haiti is restored to the cherished Haiti we once knew. Although I left Haiti when I was 15 there is old, I follow the situation very closely.

I have two questions for you.

First, Prime Minister Henry's request does not include a time-frame. Do you have one in mind?

Second, we often hear talk of a solution managed by Haitians. People say there are oil and mineral ores in Haiti and that's why countries are lining up to get in.

What can you tell us about the resources that are concealed in the ground in Haiti.

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: That's frankly beyond my field of expertise. Consequently, I can't really answer the question, but I laugh every time someone tells me there are hidden resources in Haiti.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Mr. Ambassador, the prime minister's request is dated October 6. That's almost one month ago.

Are you afraid that other criminal groups, domestic or foreign, may take control of the Palais national and plunge the country into an even worse situation than the one it's in today? Would that be possible?

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: It's really hard to say. That would be the worst possible scenario. However, we're already in a fairly complicated and disastrous situation. I hope with all my heart the situation doesn't come to that, but what we're experiencing today is already dire.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: I have a final question for you, Mr. Ambassador.

You've been here for a while, and you know that we have a system here for elections, Elections Canada. In a democratic country, people would like there to be elections. We're talking about an intervention.

What is the electoral system in Haiti? Is a system in place? How does it work?

• (1730)

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: A system is in place, and it's so complicated we would need an entire meeting to explore it. It's a system under which elections are held at least every two years. We have to replace the senators, who serve for terms of six years. The deputies serve for four-year terms, the mayors the same, and the president serves for a term of five years. Elections should be held every year in our country.

To date, the diaspora, as strong and large as it is, unfortunately doesn't take part in the electoral process. Haitians living abroad may not vote or support candidates. That's what I can tell you briefly about the process to show you how complicated it is.

Talking about Canada, I'd like to add something that I've often told my colleagues. I've been here for exactly two years, and I've seen that there's a Canadian way of doing things. I've seen the discipline, the dialogue and the search for consensus, even though that isn't always easy in politics.

Canada won't abandon Haiti and, with or without intervention, will remain a good partner. Regardless of the solution that Canada anticipates for Haiti, I'd like it to employ that Canadian way of doing things in the way it operates with Haiti.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: As you know, Mr. Ambassador, the Prime Minister often says, "*Avè nou map mache*," when he speaks to Haitians. Canada stands with the Haitian people.

Thank you for your excellent remarks, Mr. Ambassador.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dubourg.

Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Yes, go ahead on a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I believe there's going to be a brief break to prepare for the next session. Perhaps we could take a picture with His Excellency as a way of showing our support.

[English]

The Chair: Absolutely. That's a very good point to raise. Should the ambassador have no objections, we will certainly do so.

[Translation]

H.E. Wien-Weibert Arthus: It would be a pleasure.

[English]

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

Thank you also to Mr. Aristild and Mr. Numa. Your testimony was very helpful.

As I'm sure you could tell, all of our members are very much interested in focusing on the path forward. We recognize how important it is, how imperative it is, that stability return to Haiti, and as our member said, hopefully we will see a period very soon where we can refer to Haiti as "*Haiti chérie*" and we can work towards the reconstruction of Haiti.

Please, when we do send you the questions, we'd be grateful if you could kindly answer those inquiries and send them back so they are reflected in the study we're doing in this committee.

Thank you.

We will now suspend for a few minutes to have an opportunity to take a picture with the ambassador, and then return to resume our study on extreme flooding in Pakistan.

Thank you.

• (1730)

(Pause)

• (1740)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Wednesday, September 21, 2022, the committee resumes its study of the extreme flooding in Pakistan.

It is now my pleasure to welcome our two witnesses. First, from the International Development and Relief Foundation, we have Ms. Zeina Osman, the director of giving and impact. Second, we have a witness from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It's a great pleasure to welcome back Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis, the representative of the UNHCR in Canada.

You will each be provided five minutes for your opening remarks, after which we will open it to questions by the members.

Ms. Osman, please do proceed.

Ms. Zeina Osman (Director, Giving and Impact, International Development and Relief Foundation): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to begin by thanking the committee for allocating some time to talk about the devastating humanitarian crisis unfolding in Pakistan.

I'm sure at this point we're all aware of the magnitude of this climate-induced disaster, and subsequently Canada's role in providing aid to the people of Pakistan.

Since 1984, the International Development and Relief Foundation has provided effective humanitarian aid and sustainable development programs through human dignity, self-reliance and social justice principles. A Charity Intelligence top 100 charity, IDRF works in a localization model whereby the majority of our international work is done through reputable local partners to reach the most vulnerable, most efficiently.

We all know that Pakistan is largely being affected by climate change, but they're not largely responsible for it. As we continue to see more and more extreme weather events around the world like this one, it's a little outrageous that climate action is still being put on the back burner as global emissions of greenhouse gases are still rising, putting all of us everywhere in growing danger. The funding Canada has provided in climate financing is not adequate for these kinds of events that are happening more frequently and with rapidly increasing severity. Will Canada wait until these devastations are at our doorstep before we put together a serious plan of action?

At the end of August, we wrote an open letter calling on the Government of Canada as a key ally in support of our humanitarian response in Pakistan, where some 30 million people had been impacted by these destructive floods. In line with the humanitarian principle of “do no harm”, we felt it was necessary to have the Government of Canada provide support to organizations outside of just a few selected humanitarian members of a coalition. Equally important is the commitment to have the greatest impact by providing assistance to the many international organizations that have a strong footprint already in Pakistan.

In this open letter, we not only detailed our 30-year-long history of working in the region as an international organization but also highlighted our work in the 2010 Pakistan flood relief, where we constructed over 1,000 homes, operated maternal health clinics where pregnant women were allocated health benefits and built over 1,000 hand pumps to supply fresh water. This was really to outline our strength in this type of disaster relief.

Along with many of our peers in the humanitarian space, we invited the government to reconsider its policy of distributing Canadian matching funds through a handful of organizations, as it would directly impact the ability for us to help the most people, and still we were left disappointed. Thankfully, our community of supporters rallied behind us, and we were able to raise \$3 million to support the people of Pakistan—a true testament to the reputation and integrity of both our organization and its supporters.

The 2010 floods took about three years in recovery, and it's expected that the recovery from the 2022 floods is going to take more time, since the damages are already climbing up to \$10 billion. Coupled with economic instability and inflation, recovery will be even more challenging without adequate funding for these communities. Similar to 2010, we are asking that the government establish a Pakistan relief fund in support of continued humanitarian response to provide both immediate and long-term rehabilitation.

IDRF is uniquely positioned to be able to access communities through our local network of partners and a robust network of community-based organizations. A key success to our work is our localization model. It's important that IDRF ensures our projects and programming are relevant, context-specific and culturally appropriate. We customize our response to the needs of each community.

I'll leave it at that, and I look forward to a thorough discussion.

Thank you.

• (1745)

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

We now go to Ms. Jamous Imseis.

Welcome. You have five minutes.

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis (Representative to Canada, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

Allow me to take a moment just to set the scene so that we're all working from the same information as we commence this important session.

Since June of this year, torrential rains and flash flooding have led to an unprecedented climate disaster in Pakistan, impacting the lives of more than 33 million people. Thousands have been killed and injured, and infrastructure across the country, including houses, roads, bridges, health facilities and schools, has been damaged or destroyed. Widespread damage to agricultural lands and the death of livestock have had a massive impact on sources of food and livelihoods for many, pushing millions deeper into poverty.

The flooding has also impeded access to isolated communities, making it difficult for them to find safety and harder for humanitarian actors to reach them with much-needed aid. Close to eight million people have been forced to flee their homes, with many seeking shelter in relief sites. While the worst of the floods have receded, conditions in the hardest-hit areas where stagnant water remains are deeply concerning. The risk of waterborne diseases threatens millions of people, the majority of whom are women and children. Already we've seen cases of malaria, dengue fever and cholera on the rise.

Here it is important to recall that in addition to the Pakistanis who have seen their lives devastated by the floods, the country and its people have generously hosted Afghan refugees for over four decades. Over half of the districts declared as calamity-hit by the government host an estimated 800,000 Afghan refugees. Pre-existing inequalities exacerbated by the flooding, including gender-based violence and child protection risks, have increased protection concerns. As winter quickly approaches, the millions displaced are in need of urgent assistance to prepare for harsh weather conditions, especially with their ability to cope having already been eroded by soaring inflation and rising food prices even before the rains.

Since the onset of the emergency, my organization, the United Nations Refugee Agency, together with local and international humanitarian actors, has been supporting the response led by the government in affected areas with a high concentration of refugees. We've delivered thousands of metric tons of relief supplies, including tents, sleeping mats, blankets, solar-powered lanterns, kitchen sets, mosquito nets and dignity kits from our stocks in the country and regional warehouses in the United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan, dispatching over 300 trucks and 23 airlifts. We've also provided cash assistance to the most vulnerable families who have exhausted all other coping mechanisms.

Given the colossal scale of the needs, the UN and its humanitarian partners have issued a funding appeal calling on the international community to support the relief efforts. Likewise, my agency has appealed for further financial support to address the mounting needs in areas with high populations of refugees. These appeals are to assist us in meeting immediate life-saving needs and also in making early recovery efforts, such as repairs to homes, health facilities, and schools, as well as to water, sanitation and hygiene systems.

Beyond these immediate needs and with Pakistan on the front lines of the climate emergency, the response plans incorporate prevention and preparedness measures to avert and minimize the effects of extreme weather events in the future and to help build resilience, particularly among the most vulnerable communities, including refugees. Unpredictable weather is likely to further worsen conditions, so investing in sustainable, durable housing and community infrastructure will be key to enhancing preparedness and resilience in future disasters.

Since similar rainfall may reoccur in the future, the shelter program will need to adapt building materials to ensure that homes can withstand the rains better than could the mud brick structures that have proven vulnerable in this emergency. This program must also include an expansion of livelihood programs linking climate-smart reconstruction and rehabilitation to the creation of green jobs and an emphasis on the environment.

The country and people of Pakistan have so generously welcomed Afghan refugees for over 40 years. We urge all countries, including Canada, to stand in solidarity with Pakistan and with refugee-hosting communities across the country to rebuild their lives while mitigating against future climate shocks.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1750)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now go to questions from the members. For the first round, we have four minutes each.

Mr. Genuis, you are first.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. We we're going to divide the time. Can you just clarify what you're doing? Is it going to be four minutes and then a second round as well?

The Chair: For the first round, we'll have four minutes each, and for the second round, we will have three minutes each.

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

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: How much time is it for the second round?

The Chair: It's three minutes each.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Including us?

The Chair: No, you would get a minute and a half. Sorry, Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: What is the meaning of "each"?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: My five minutes is starting now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It's four minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I know. I'm just kidding.

Just very briefly on another matter, I want to put a notice of motion on the table. This is a notice of motion; I'm not moving it.

It's this:

That given disturbing revelations about corruption and multiple instances of sexual abuse at the World Health Organization (WHO) and pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee conduct a study regarding corruption and abuse at the WHO and invite senior WHO leadership, including the director general, and also Dr. Akjema Magtymova from the WHO Syrian office and Canada's Minister of International Development to provide testimony as part of this study.

I wonder, Ms. Osman, if you could speak about the government's matching program and proposals that we've heard from other witnesses that the matching program be more inclusive so that donations to any organization working on these issues can benefit from that matching.

Ms. Zeina Osman: I've watched some of the other witnesses and some of my peers talk about this, and you yourself speak so passionately. We urged the government to avoid this type of policy because we knew what it would cause. We knew that it meant that we would get certain calls requesting us to somehow magically become a part of that coalition so that we could also be matched.

This creates an issue not just at the fundraising level but also for us to quickly disburse funds, knowing that the government is behind us. I've heard from the previous testimony and directly from the ministry itself that pre-vetting is necessary because that is what the government has to do, but there are groups of us that have government funding. We work on several large projects and we are pre-vetted. However, we were still excluded from the matching fund. That creates a whole other problem for us.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is it your view that these funds could be disbursed in a fairer way without compromising speed? Speed is obviously a major consideration.

Ms. Zeina Osman: Yes, it is, especially considering organizations that currently already have existing infrastructure and work in the regions that we're fundraising for.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You worked in response to the flood in 2010. Could you maybe compare this particular matching program to some of the program structures in 2010?

Ms. Zeina Osman: Of course.

In 2010, there was a Pakistan relief fund that all organizations that were working in the region had access to. This saw that there was collaboration across the board, multilaterally. Everyone felt that they were on an even playing field.

However, this year there was an announcement of just \$5 million from the government and then a matching fund for just the coalition of 12 members. If you could imagine, that really excludes upwards of 50 to 100 organizations. In 2010, that was not the case, and we saw that it was about \$33 million that was matched in 2010.

• (1755)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You would have preferred it if the government had simply used the pre-existing model that was used last time—and used effectively—rather than inventing a new model that was less fair and didn't work as well. Is that fair to say?

Ms. Zeina Osman: That's fair to say. We would have appreciated at least a reasoning behind the change that we could all find was adequate, or at least being invited to the table to discuss it.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You didn't receive any reasoning in terms of why the government changed the model.

Ms. Zeina Osman: No.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is it your view that the model used in 2010 was a more inclusive model that also got the money out quickly?

Ms. Zeina Osman: We did not see any disruptions in the disbursement of funds.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

I think I have about a minute left, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds left.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: All right.

Well, thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

We will now go to Mr. Zuberi for four minutes.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I'd like to thank the witnesses, Ms. Osman from IDRF and Ms. Imseis from UNHCR, for being here. Thank you for the fantastic work that both of you and your organizations are doing.

I will share that I was in Pakistan in June of this year, prior to the news hitting and the intense flooding starting, but I saw the beginning of the monsoons and some of the impacts around that.

I am half Pakistani. Contrary to what people might think, I'm not full-blooded; I'm part. I was engaging with many Canadians of Pakistani origin who were speaking with me and trying to have Canada, our country, do something for the flooding situation.

I want to note that while in Pakistan, I saw many UNHCR tents along the roadside as I was travelling through the north. Many people were living along the highways in those tents that had "UNHCR" written all over them.

We know there are 1.4 million Afghans who are registered in Pakistan. Can you tell us how many registered and unregistered Afghans there are, and how this flooding situation further puts these refugees—not only Afghans, but all refugees—on the edge literally and figuratively?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: I assume that question was for me.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Exactly.

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: Thank you for that question.

Indeed, we have 1.3 million Afghans who are registered as refugees with UNHCR. In addition to that, we have somewhere in the neighbourhood of 850,000 Afghans who carry something called an Afghan citizen card, and we estimate that another 600,000 or 700,000 Afghans are undocumented. It's quite a substantial population in the country, and, as I said in my opening remarks, they have been, in large part, there for over 40 years.

Of course we've had recent influxes and new flows of refugees coming into the country following the Taliban's takeover last August, but the conditions were quite dire to begin with. When you have a protracted displacement situation of this sort, one that spans decades, it becomes very difficult to sustain donor support and donor funding for the operations in the country. UNHCR has been there for over 40 years, so there have been many moments when we have struggled to fund the needs of those in the country consistently in a sustainable way.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I want to ask you about the security situation and how displacement and lack of security for refugees leads to insecurity and how that impacts the globe, including western countries. Perhaps you could think about that as you continue your answer.

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: I'm not sure I follow the thread.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I'm talking about how insecurity, when people are living in extremely precarious situations, can lead to people latching onto inappropriate ideas and causes.

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: Certainly desperation drives people to do desperate things. That can be any range of activities and things that certainly we wouldn't condone.

• (1800)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Would you say it's in Canada's direct interests to ensure that people who are displaced are living with dignity and respect, and that this will lead to help further international peace and security?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: As a UN official, I will firmly stand behind the UN charter and the principles in the charter, which indeed call for countries like Canada and all member states of the UN to honour their international obligations and also to provide humanitarian support for emergencies as they arise.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: On extremism and terrorism, would you not agree to that?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: I would certainly say that hopelessness drives those sorts of activities and those sorts of phenomena.

I mentioned in my remarks that child protection risks and the risk of sexual and gender-based violence are things that arise in emergency situations, not just in Pakistan but around the world.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: One hundred per cent, I totally agree.

The Chair: Mr. Zuberi, I'm afraid you're out of time.

We will now go to Mr. Bergeron. You have four minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us today and for the work they're doing.

On October 28, the United Nations Development Programme, or UNDP, published an assessment of the damages, losses and needs in the wake of the floods in Pakistan. According to that assessment, total damages will exceed USD \$14.9 billion, total economic losses will amount to approximately USD \$15.2 billion and rehabilitation and reconstruction needs to at least USD \$16.3 billion.

In an open letter dated August 30, 2022, the International Development and Relief Foundation, the IDRF, asked the Government of Canada to create a \$50 million aid fund for Pakistan to finance both immediate humanitarian intervention and long-term recovery. Canada's response to the floods and to ensure Pakistan's long-term recovery amounted to \$33 million in aid.

My first question is for Ms. Osman.

On the one hand, given the request for \$50 million, I imagine you consider \$33 million in aid inadequate. On the other hand, I would like to know how you came up with the \$50 million amount. Do you believe that amount represents adequate funding to enable Pakistan to recover from the trials it has endured?

[*English*]

Ms. Zeina Osman: I understand your question to be with regard to our open letter and the request to have the government aid be at \$50 million as a relief fund that all organizations will be able to access. The reason we came to that number was that the previous 2010 floods were seen at \$33 million, matched by Canadians who were looking to help, along with the government. This current flood is unprecedented. We see from international reports that they're estimating \$10 billion in damages, so \$50 million would just scratch the surface in being able to provide Pakistan with the help they need with rehabilitation over the next two to three years.

As my peer Rema just mentioned, we're looking at health effects. We're looking at outbreaks of malaria. We're looking at the destruction of homes and schools and the displacement of refugees. To our understanding, it's going to take much longer. Coupled with inflation, rising fuel costs and the rising cost of food, it's becoming increasingly difficult, even for aid organizations, to be able to source food for some of our programs.

That's really where our community of civil society organizations has come together to say that the least Canada could do is put together a fund of at least \$50 million. That's backed by a lot of international reports.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: As my colleague Mr. Genuis mentioned a few moments ago, the IDRF was effectively excluded from the Canadian government's decision to match donations made to the Humanitarian Coalition, to which you don't belong, to a limit of \$7.5 million.

Are you certain that, in spite of everything, the Canadian government will use you as an intermediary in disbursing part of the funding announced to date?

[*English*]

Ms. Zeina Osman: From what I understand about whether or not we'd be a part or be able to access the funds that were announced today, as it stands currently, no, we won't. Although we do work in conjunction with the government for other sorts of projects, when it comes to the disaster relief for flooding in Pakistan, we are not part of that coalition to which funds are being disbursed, much like a lot of our peers.

That's really the heart of our concerns. It just means that fewer people are being helped, essentially.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Apart from that Canadian government program to match donations made by the public, other amounts will be disbursed directly by the government.

Is your organization in receipt of part of that funding to assist the people of Pakistan?

[*English*]

Ms. Zeina Osman: No. Part of this comes with the crisis being current, which means that accessing those types of funds that are outside of the matching funds would mean putting together a proposal that may take a while to process through government assessment, which we simply can't afford. For the work that we do, luckily, with the community support we had, we decided to move a lot quicker with our current means of using private funding to be able to address the current needs of the people of Pakistan.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

We will now go to Ms. McPherson for four minutes.

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

This has been very interesting testimony. Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

I'll follow up on the last question. In terms of the development dollars you have received from the Government of Canada to do work in Pakistan, have you been able to get some mobility with your funding? Has Global Affairs Canada allowed you flexibility, knowing that one of the priorities of our development work is to address the needs of the most vulnerable?

Ms. Zeina Osman: I think that question would be for me. We currently do not receive funding from the government for the Pakistan floods.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Oh, sorry. I misunderstood.

Ms. Zeina Osman: Exactly. We do work with Global Affairs on other portfolios, but not the disaster relief in Pakistan.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Then no, I didn't misunderstand that. Can you divert funds that you use for development projects in Pakistan to projects that would support victims who are struggling with the flooding? Are you able to do that?

Ms. Zeina Osman: No, we are not able to do that.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Have you asked?

Ms. Zeina Osman: We have not, but under the agreements in place it would also take away from other projects that have taken a long time to put together.

Ms. Heather McPherson: That's true, yes. That's a good point.

This is one of my concerns when I hear about the matching program. We do want Global Affairs to be flexible. We do want them to be responsive, particularly when we see things of the kind that are happening in Pakistan.

Of course, these are not things that can be predicted to any degree of reliability. We do know that they are responses to the climate crisis and we do know that they will happen again. Where they will happen and with what frequency are of course unknown.

The Government of Canada has also put forward \$5.3 billion for climate financing. When you speak about the match and the negative impacts that has had, I look at this \$5.3 billion and see that the vast majority of it is going to large multilateral organizations. It is not going to Canadian or local organizations. Do you think that the way that the \$5.3 billion is disbursed should also be reviewed and corrected to include more actors within Pakistan and other countries?

Ms. Zeina Osman: You hit the nail on the head exactly.

We do feel that a more collaborative and integrated approach would probably be the best-case scenario for the government, because they could see the work being done in multiple areas through several different civil society organizations. It would mean that we could reach some of the goals of the international climate financing a lot quicker.

Yes, I would say that our hope is that there is a review of all of these types of policies that would allow, essentially, more work to be done. Ultimately, that's our goal at the International Development and Relief Foundation. It's to be able to help more people.

Ms. Heather McPherson: My career prior to being in politics was in international development. I know that the work on the ground by Canadian and local organizations is so important. It's grounded in solidarity with the community and it's just so impor-

tant. I do worry when that development pie is not divided equitably to include organizations.

I'll finish by asking you this: What are the impacts on your organization when Canada's Global Affairs efforts focus on multilaterals to the exclusion of Canadian organizations? Obviously, multilateral organizations do great work.

• (1810)

Ms. Zeina Osman: Exactly. I don't want to take away from the agencies that are doing fantastic work or from our current partnerships with the government. It just means that we could be doing more. I think, like everyone else in this room, we're just asking the government to work with us to be able to do more.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

Ms. Zeina Osman: You're welcome.

The Chair: We now go to Mr. Aboultaif. We have three minutes, Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

It's good to see you both, Zeina and Rema, if I may call you by your first names.

Rema, you mentioned the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Do you have the current numbers of refugees, registered and non-registered?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: Certainly. I gave those numbers in response to your colleague as well. I'm happy to repeat them.

There are 1.3 million registered with UNHCR or the Government of Pakistan. There are 840,000 who carry a card that identifies them as Afghan citizens. A further 800,000 is an estimate of the undocumented Afghans currently residing in Pakistan.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: The ones who are registered are registered with UNHCR?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: Yes, and with the Government of Pakistan.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Okay.

Geographically, are they located in the flood area?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: Indeed they are. Two-thirds, or close to 70%, are currently residing in what the government has declared "calamity-hit" districts.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: What happened to these people? Where have they been relocated?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: I'm sorry?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Am I correct that they've been relocated to different areas within the country?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: What's happened is that we, along with our humanitarian partners, have established relief sites. They are places where people can sleep. We've converted other installations or facilities into temporary shelters. We have also distributed forms of temporary shelter such as tents, and other more substantial structures called "refugee housing units", which we use more for programming than for residing in. We're providing things of that nature to help people with temporary shelter until we can rehabilitate their homes and the infrastructure that's been damaged.

This is all, I should say, under the direct leadership of the Government of Pakistan. The humanitarian organizations working in the country are doing so under the coordination and leadership of the government.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: This current situation of the Afghani refugees within Pakistan during this crisis must affect the Canadian approach also as far as Afghanistan is concerned. As far as financial resources and other resources are concerned, how did that impact Canadian policy on Afghanistan?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: I'm not sure I understand the question. Are you asking me whether Canada has allocated additional funding for the Afghan response or...?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: I'm asking about the take-away from this current situation and the Afghan mission as far as Canada's perspective is concerned.

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: Certainly Canada has come forward as a donor and contributed to the emergency relief efforts in Pakistan. Canada continues to be a humanitarian donor for the operation in Afghanistan. We treat those as two separate emergencies. They are very different in nature and also in terms of those who are impacted. Canada remains a donor to UNHCR and other UN agencies and humanitarian partners who are operating in both countries.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Have you seen any—

I'm sorry. Thank you.

The Chair: We now go to Mr. Sarai.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Thank you.

I want to thank you both for all of your efforts in the flood-ridden areas of Pakistan.

My question is more with respect to women and girls. We know that in disaster-hit areas, women and girls are disproportionately affected and statistically more likely to die than their counterparts.

How many women and girls have been affected by the extreme flooding in Pakistan?

This is to either one of you.

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: My figures say that two-thirds of those impacted are women and children.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Is that in terms of deaths or in terms of disproportionately more injuries or malnourishment or other issues?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: We anticipated that women and children would be disproportionately impacted. It's a cycle and a pattern we see repeated in other emergencies. For that reason, we took

preventive measures at the outset to deploy female staff to areas so that they can hear directly from women about needs that may not be communicated through other channels.

We've also made sure that the facilities we've constructed for water and sanitation are gender-segregated to protect women and that we have lighting at water points. We are very well aware of the risks to women and children in these kinds of emergencies, as they are repeated elsewhere around the globe. As a matter of course, we take preventive measures at the outset in our response to ensure that we mitigate those risks to the extent possible.

• (1815)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Are you prioritizing that approach in other responses around the world?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: Absolutely.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: I want to go on to the Afghan refugees who are there. You've outlined how many are there. What support networks are they receiving? I mean, they are refugees already, and on top of that they're dealing with floods and other things.

Are they still being prioritized equally, or are they put behind in the humanitarian efforts to those who are of Pakistani origin?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: From the perspective of UNHCR, we are prioritizing both Pakistani nationals and refugees. Our agency is mandated to provide protection and support to refugees, so our response efforts have been concentrated in areas with high population numbers of refugees.

Because they've been there for over four decades, we know where they are and we have established networks and have been providing services and support for over 40 years. That has continued throughout this process.

Of course, the only thing that limits us is the amount of resources and funding available to respond to those needs, so the more we have, the more people we can assist.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Very quickly, earlier we heard from the Minister of International Development, who stated that it didn't get the limelight or "the attention" that it needed. Can you speak to that in terms of Pakistan? Did they get the attention that they deserved in this catastrophe?

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: I think initial indications were strong signs of solidarity and support, but with any emergency, the more protracted it becomes and the more crises you see globally, the harder it is to sustain that kind of attention. That's why we continue to issue these calls for support and solidarity, particularly with a country that has generously hosted a large refugee population for several decades.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sarai.

We now go to Mr. Bergeron for a minute and a half, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: In its additional appeal for funding of the response to the floods in Pakistan, the UN Refugee Agency, the UNHCR, noted that Pakistan was emerging as a "climate hotspot". The UNHCR is "seeking to bolster prevention and preparedness measures to avert and minimize the effects of extreme weather events."

What kind of measures do you think should be taken to limit the effects of extreme weather events in a country like Pakistan?

What assistance can Canada provide to that end?

[*English*]

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: I think you're referring to the comments of Secretary-General António Guterres following his visit to the country in late September.

As I outlined in my remarks, really it's about doing business a little bit differently. It's about creating climate-resistant structures. It's about building back better.

The UN, the EU, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank just a few days ago issued their initial post-disaster needs assessment. One of the main calls is to ensure that as we build back and we reconstruct—this is quite a substantial endeavour—we do so with climate-resistant technologies and with climate-resistant principles in mind.

As you heard from my colleague on the panel, we know this is going to happen again. These areas that were hit by floods only last year were suffering from mild to severe drought. We know that climate unpredictability and extreme weather events are going to continue, so part of our response—a substantial portion, I would say—has to include ensuring that whatever we build back is as climate-resistant as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to Ms. McPherson, please, for a minute and a half.

Ms. Heather McPherson: That's quite a short amount of time.

I would also like to ask Ms. Imseis from the UNHCR some questions. I'm sorry. I have probably pronounced your name incorrectly.

Knowing that climate financing is so vital and knowing that climate emergencies are increasing and that climate financing is increasingly going to be one of the key ways to respond with regard to development, with regard to humanitarian aid, there has been some criticism on the use of debt and equity financing as opposed to grant financing.

Can you comment on that, please?

• (1820)

Ms. Rema Jamous Imseis: Certainly we're moving in the direction of relying more and more on international financial institutions and development actors to help support these efforts. Immediate humanitarian needs are something my organization deals with, but when it becomes medium- to longer-term reconstruction and rehabilitation initiatives of this sort, we rely on actors such as the World Bank, the IMF and other institutions to come in. Questions on longer-term development models of financing, whether through loans or grants, are I think better answered by officials who work in this space.

Certainly in a situation of such colossal damage, we would certainly be in support of anything we can do to avoid further entrenching debt and poverty and more hardship as a country tries to emerge from a disaster like this.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Typically, those countries that do struggle, that are more vulnerable to climate emergencies, are countries that have a higher debt and struggle under debt repayment already. This complicates that situation even more.

One of the things that you picked up on that I think is very, very important—and I've said it many times here—is that development is a long-term game. It's having predictable funding. It is knowing the funding is there and having predictable partnerships and predictable funding that are so very vital to be effective.

Is that a correct statement from your perspective?

The Chair: I am afraid you're out of time, Ms. McPherson, and considerably so.

We now go to the last two questions.

Mr. Hoback, you have under three minutes, please.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Thank you, Chair. Could you let me know when I am in the last 30 seconds of my time?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I want to pick up where the NDP member left off. That's where I struggle.

When I'm talking to some ambassadors, one of the comments they make to me is that when they're in a situation of normalcy, the programs we offer out of Canada are good programs. However, when they get into a situation of the kind we have in Pakistan, the programs still have the same requirements as they do during normalcy.

How do you take a scenario and say, "We're going to do this project", when actually all you need is food, water, medications, the bare essentials, to get these people through the crisis? Why can't you take those funds from existing programs in the short term to immediately respond in that way? What's holding you back?

Ms. Zeina Osman: That's a great question.

In the case of our private funders, we are able to quickly decide, and we do move, based on a needs assessment, to an emergency response immediately. Although we try to have a multiphased response in place, luckily for us we're working in a lot of these regions already, so some of the project work we do is pretty easy to shift and change to make sure we're meeting the needs with regard to food and health and water.

However, when it comes to government funding, it isn't that simple to be able to shift some of the funding to an emergency response. It will have to be a question for the government, really, about some of their funding models in programs and projects.

We certainly are in support of a lot of flexibility to be able to have the autonomy to make the decisions to move funds where necessary, for sure.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I've run out of time. I'm sorry. I'll turn it over to Mr. Genuis.

Ms. Zeina Osman: It's no problem. Thanks.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you for the rest of your time.

As we approach the end of the meeting, Mr. Chair, I want to move a motion that I have on notice. I don't think it's a controversial one. It reads as follows:

That the committee report to the House that it calls on the Government of Canada to fix the barriers that are preventing vital humanitarian aid from getting into Afghanistan, and ask the government to provide the committee with regular written updates on its progress and intended timelines.

This follows some testimony that we've heard as part of this study as well as concerns about the information that we're getting from other sources.

I want to move that motion now. Hopefully, we'll be able to move it forward quickly.

Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I'm looking for clarification from the clerk, because this meeting is on Haiti and Pakistan. I just wonder if it is within scope to bring a motion that I don't believe was circulated to committee members or put on notice. I could be wrong—

• (1825)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It was on notice.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: It is in order?

The Chair: It is in order because 48 hours' notice was provided.

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

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I'd like to amend the motion.

I think the motion is really good and positive. The heart of it is exactly what we should be pursuing. I would just suggest that we remove the reporting portion towards the end of the motion.

Otherwise, this is good. This is where we should be going as a committee.

I move that amendment, which would strike out that last portion as defined.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Just for greater clarity, what are you removing?

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I don't actually have the text of the motion in front of me. It's the last portion, which makes reference to the reporting. Otherwise, keep the whole thing intact as is. The heart of it is what we should be doing.

Essentially it's from the comma onward.

Mr. Randy Hoback: There's no reporting in the statement.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: It talks about "regular written updates".

A voice: Well, that's reasonable.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry. You want to take out "regular written updates"?

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Yes. We would keep, "That the committee report to the House that it calls on the Government of Canada to fix the barriers"—that's excellent—"that are preventing vital humanitarian aid"—I think we can all agree to that—"from getting into Afghanistan", and then we would put a period there.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, just because of the time, if we're able to adopt the amendment to the motion unanimously, I'm willing to accept that. I know that we're up against time.

The Chair: If members agree, just in terms of the valuable time of the two witnesses who have been with us for the last hour, I can think we can release them, so to speak.

Thank you for the incredible work you're doing and thank you for the expertise you've shared with us today. Thank you very much for everything you're doing.

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, in the interest of time, I will accept Mr. Zuberi's amendment if we can adopt the amendment and the motion unanimously.

The amendment, as I understand it, is to remove all of the words after the word "Afghanistan". I'm happy to accept that so that we can bring this to a landing.

The Chair: Just for those members who may not have a copy of the motion as amended, it now reads:

That the committee report to the House that it calls on the Government of Canada to fix the barriers that are preventing vital humanitarian aid from getting into Afghanistan.

Do we want to put it to a vote—

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Yes.

The Chair: —or do we want to unanimously...?

Yes? Okay.

Hon. Hedy Fry: But ask if anybody disagrees.

The Chair: Could we vote on division, please?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Just ask if anyone disagrees. If not, then we have unanimous consent.

The Chair: One of the members asked for a vote, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's been adopted.

If I could just have everyone's attention for approximately two minutes, there are just a couple of housekeeping things.

• (1830)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Now we have to vote on the amended motion, Mr. Chair.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: Thank you. That's been adopted.

Now, if I could just have a couple of minutes of your time, there are a few pressing issues we have to deal with.

The first is drafting instructions.

A voice: That has to be in camera.

The Chair: Yes, I'm sorry. Yes. If we could, I will adjourn for 10 seconds.

Some hon. members: Suspend. Suspend.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, I'm just wondering. It is now past 6:30, and if we are going to move in camera, which we know takes 10 minutes, then it will be....

The Chair: Is it going to take 10 minutes?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Can we not do drafting instructions in public? I mean, the testimony's been public.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, it is the end of our scheduled meeting. I don't—

The Chair: Yes, but as you know, we need to....

Sure. If you guys want, we will adjourn this meeting, but....

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is it appropriate to send various suggestions regarding drafting instructions by email?

The Chair: Yes, it is, actually. That would be very much welcome.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. Then we can each send thoughts to the clerk on drafting, and the clerk can provide those to the analysts to incorporate.

Is that agreeable? Does that work?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

What do you want us to discuss in camera?

[*English*]

The Chair: It's the drafting instructions for the report on the flooding in Pakistan, just so that the analysts will know and can move this forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Do the analysts already have any ideas or a plan?

[*English*]

The Chair: Well, we did want to hear from the analysts, who could provide us with options, but it seems like the members....

A voice: Just do it.

The Chair: Fair enough. We could just proceed with that.

There is one more issue, and we don't necessarily have to do this in camera. I just want to confirm that it is the will of the committee that in the context of Bill S-223, the deadline for the submission of amendments to the clerk of the committee be no later than noon on Thursday, November 10, 2022.

Is everyone in favour? Are you unanimous on that?

Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I get the impression we're being asked for proposed amendments before we've finished our meetings. Am I mistaken?

[*English*]

The Chair: The only reason this issue does arise is that, as you will recall, in the last meeting we adopted the calendar for November, so we're left in this awkward position.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: It's not just strange but also simply wrong for us to presume to know what we're going to hear in order to prepare proposed amendments.

[*English*]

The Chair: Well, Mr. Bergeron, with all due respect, the motion was put before all the members, and members did vote in favour, not having thought of the implications that doing so would have.

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: If it's helpful, I will just make a comment on Bill S-223. I am of the view that this bill can be studied and proceeded with relatively quickly because it's been studied on multiple occasions by committees in the House and the Senate. This committee and the House previously studied this bill and amended it. The form in which we are receiving it from the Senate in this Parliament is identical to the form amended by a previous version of the House foreign affairs committee.

I'm a little biased. It's a bill that I am sponsoring, but this bill has gone through about five different versions and different Parliaments over 15 years. I think the argument for a somewhat more expedited timeline around hearings on this is that there's been extensive testimony and discussion in previous Parliaments.

While I would generally agree with the principle of the argument that Mr. Bergeron is making in the context of a new bill, I think the

process makes sense in the context of a bill that, frankly, every time it's been voted on, everybody has agreed to. It has nonetheless not managed to complete its legislative journey in 15 years.

● (1835)

The Chair: Okay. Do members want to...?

Go ahead, Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I wanted to take note of what Mr. Genuis said about how this has been discussed many times, but my understanding is that this is normally discussed in camera, so I move to adjourn.

The Chair: Thank you.

The meeting stands adjourned.

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