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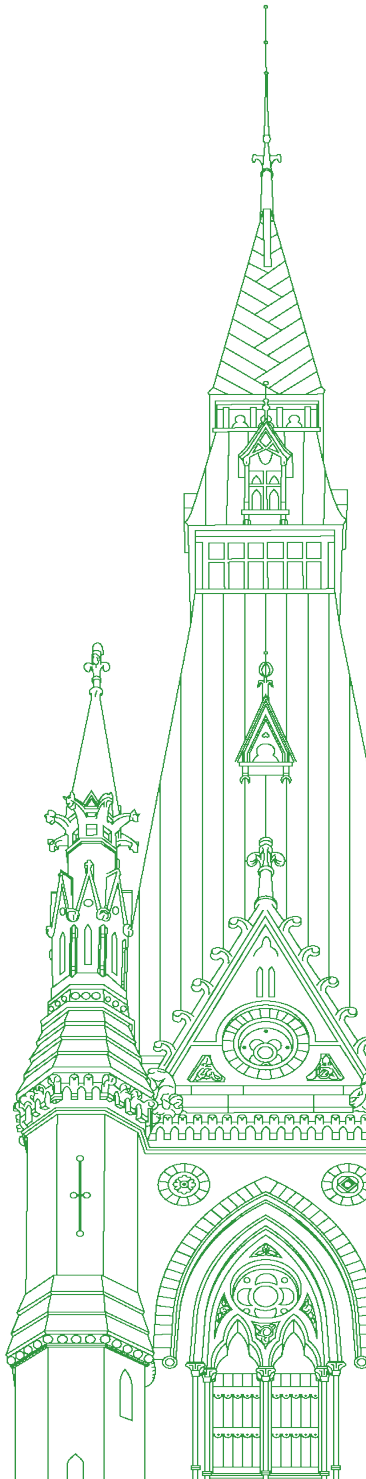

Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Monday, April 29, 2024

● (1550)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): I'd like to call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 104 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Before we begin, I'd like to remind all members and our witnesses of the following important preventive measures.

To prevent disruptive and potentially harmful audio feedback incidents that can cause injuries, all in-person participants are reminded to keep their earpieces away from microphones at all times. As indicated in the communiqué from the Speaker to all members on April 29, the following measures have been taken to help prevent audio feedback incidents.

First, all earpieces have been replaced by a model that greatly reduces the probability of audio feedback. The new earpieces are black in colour, whereas the former earpieces were gray. Please only use an approved black earpiece.

Second, by default, all unused earpieces will be unplugged at the start of a meeting.

Third, when you are not using your earpiece, please place it face down on the middle of the sticker that you will find on the table for this purpose. You will all find a sticker right before you. Please consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback.

Last, the room layout has been adjusted to increase the distance between microphones and reduce the chance of feedback from an ambient earpiece.

These measures are in place so we can conduct our business without interruption and protect the health and safety of all participants, including, of course, the interpreters.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of members and witnesses.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. For members in the room, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function. The committee clerk and I will do our very best to maintain a consolidated speaking order.

You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available. You have the choice of floor, English or French. If interpretation is lost, please inform me immediately. I'll remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

In accordance with the committee's routine motion concerning connection tests for witnesses, I have been informed by the clerk that all witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of our meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, January 29, 2024, the committee will now resume its study of Canada's approach to Africa.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses.

We have Mr. Alessandro Arduino, who is an affiliate lecturer at the Lau China Institute at King's College London.

We're grateful to have here with us today, in person, Professor Walter Dorn of the Royal Military College of Canada, department of defence studies.

We also have Mr. Mamoudou Gazibo, who is a professor of political science at the Université de Montréal.

You will each have five minutes for your opening remarks. I would ask that you each look up at the screen because once we're approaching the five minutes, I will hold up my cellphone. I would ask that when you see it, you conclude your remarks within 15 seconds. That's not only for the purposes of your opening remarks, but also for responses to members.

All of that having been explained, we will now start off with Mr. Arduino.

You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Dr. Alessandro Arduino (Affiliate Lecturer, Lau China Institute, King's College London, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Chair.

I want to start by thanking the chair and committee members for giving me this opportunity to testify today. The views I will be presenting today are solely my own and do not represent any organization that I am affiliated with.

In mapping out Canada's strategic approach to Africa, in my personal opinion, it's imperative to take into consideration a core security variable. This variable is the rising influence of mercenaries or armed proxies that are aligned with external interests, such as the Russian Wagner Group.

While Canada's engagement in Africa is rooted in shared objectives and is very importantly informed by homegrown solutions, several key initiatives in the area, particularly if we look at west Africa and the Sahel region, are facing a significant challenge from mercenaries and quasi-PMCs, or private military companies. For example, a substantial portion of Canadian investment in Africa is concentrated in the mining sector. This has notably become a focal point for mercenaries, especially the Wagner Group, which are able to exploit local natural resources in exchange for the protection of the local regime.

If we move to the economy and security, another issue definitely arises from the fact that the role of mercenaries is progressively sidelining very important programs, like those for women, peace and security. These mercenaries are providing training to local militia, disregarding not only women, peace and security principles, but also fundamental human rights.

The meaningful decision to include women in peacekeeping efforts is pivotal, especially in Africa, where setbacks in this regard are jeopardizing the prospect for peace. Therefore, Canada's commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment as a pillar of international assistance programs in Africa is now under threat.

Another issue, which is also a security issue, relates to the fact that Africa's security landscape is evolving extremely quickly, and there is a rise in the menace of terrorism and military coups. Therefore, Canada's role in local institutions and regional institutions, like the African Union and the United Nations body dedicated to peacebuilding and peacekeeping, needs to take into consideration the fact that actions taken by quasi-PMCs like the Wagner Group aim to undermine western-led counterterrorism efforts, which Canada has actively supported.

Mercenaries have been a fixture in Africa since the second half of the 20th century, and they are used to protect incumbent leaders or install new ones in conflict zones. Their offerings that we were used to—guns for hire—which remained unchanged for decades, are changing right now. They have recently evolved with new roles that include technical advisers for sophisticated weapons systems, propaganda, disinformation outfits and the usual frontline combatants. In this regard, Africa is a very fertile environment for mercenaries. There is a prevalence of low-intensity conflict, meaning the region reduces the risks to the lives of mercenaries.

The continent has abundant natural resources and presents opportunities for exploitation. Also, there is a pervasive instability across many African nations that enables mercenaries to operate with, let's say, relative impunity, amplifying their appeal to state and non-state actors, which can engage and hire them. This is thanks to plausible deniability.

Allow me to conclude by stressing that mercenaries, when they align their interests with local military junta, infiltrate every facet of society. They drain resources from crucial projects, like projects aimed at combatting poverty, at food security and at migration, and especially the ones related to gender inequality and even climate change. These all suffer as a result of mercenaries' activities.

● (1555)

I think my time is spot on. Thank you for your attention. I'm looking forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Arduino. I understand that you're joining us from Rome, so it must be pretty late. Thank you for taking the time to join us this week.

We next go to Professor Dorn.

It's a great pleasure to have you here. Thank you for being here in person. You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Walter Dorn (Full Professor, Royal Military College of Canada, Department of Defence Studies, As an Individual): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank you for your invitation and the committee for its interest in Africa.

[*English*]

Africa is a much neglected continent that in previous centuries was subject to great abuse by western countries. Even now there are external forces that prey upon the vulnerabilities of the continent. There is a one-sided race for Africa, but we in Canada seem to be oblivious to it. It echoes the scramble for Africa that took place in the second half of the 19th century.

China, using its powerful business and financial clout, is seeking to control Africa's vast mineral resources, and as we have just heard, Russia is preying upon Africa's democratic deficit by supporting coup plotters, dictators and naive leaders. I have seen firsthand the Wagner forces, which provide close protection to the president of the Central African Republic. I've seen Chinese soldiers building roads in the DR Congo, and I've seen Chinese-built stadiums in various African cities as part of China's hearts and minds campaign.

As an operational professor who tries to get to field operations frequently, I focus on what must be done to improve peace and security. One of the key solutions is a Canadian invention: the peacekeeping forces first proposed by Lester B. Pearson. UN missions, despite all of their flaws, are still the best way to provide a benevolent presence over a wide area to give Africans more security. The positive record, though unsung, is impressive, including stopping the breakup of the Congo in the 1960s; Namibia's gaining independence in 1989; fostering the election of Nelson Mandela in 1994; helping end civil wars in Mozambique, Liberia and Sierra Leone; moving Angola towards democracy; and restoring democracy, including by using force, in Côte d'Ivoire. Also, I was delighted to witness first-hand former dictator Charles Taylor being tried in the UN special court for Sierra Leone.

Even peacekeeping's failures in Africa highlight its importance. The UN's mission in Rwanda, led by your former colleague, parliamentarian Roméo Dallaire, managed to save 20,000 to 30,000 lives with a reduced force of just 300 peacekeepers.

By learning from the past, Canada can do much more to help the cause of peacekeeping in Africa. For example, it could provide the long-promised quick reaction force to the UN's mission in the Central African Republic. It could respond to the call from the Congolese people for protection, helping neutralize once again the M23. Canada could increase its support for the UN mission in South Sudan, the world's newest country. So many other places will need UN peacekeeping forces, including Sudan, Cameroon and Libya.

Canada was once the master of working within the UN system for human security in Africa and around the world. Canada was the leading peacekeeping nation for decades. We had nine leaders of UN forces in the 1990s. Four of them were in Africa, but we've had none since then.

Canada has zero troops or units deployed in UN peace operations in Africa, and in the handout that I have provided, you will see that the number of deployed military personnel on UN peacekeeping operations is only 17, and the number of Canadian women military personnel deployed to Africa under the UN is two, despite the Elsie initiative.

Africa matters, and resolving Africa's conflicts is important. These conflicts are open wounds on the world body. They hemorrhage blood, they spread disease, they create child soldiers, they diminish democracy, they promote dictatorship and they cause major refugee flows.

At the same time, Africa has much to offer. It has natural resources that will help power the future. It has human resources that can help solve the problems of aging western populations. Africans have shown courage in the face of adversity, happiness in the midst of poverty and steadfast hope despite the blows to their body politic, but they need help.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

Canada can do much more for African peace and security.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Dorn.

We now go to Professor Gazibo.

You have five minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mamoudou Gazibo (Full Professor of Political Science, Université de Montréal, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about a topic as important as relations between Canada and Africa.

Since I'm not an expert on Canadian foreign or African policy, I would like to begin by raising four points that I believe are crucial in order to better understand the context of Canada's engagement in Africa.

The first point relates to Africa's rapidly changing domestic context and its international implications. This is reflected in the citizens' engagement in international issues, for example, which didn't happen before. In Africa, citizens are increasingly developing new forms of what we might call veto points over relations between their country and the outside world, particularly western countries. This is made possible by a number of overlooked factors, such as rapid urbanization; the narrowing of the digital divide; the widespread use of social media, including WhatsApp; and the development of local applications that use local languages and that are easy to access, even for people who didn't attend school. These changes are also supported by the emergence of a middle class and an educated diaspora with a growing connection to the continent.

The second point concerns the challenges posed to Canada and other western countries in Africa by emerging countries, with China leading the way. As China institutionalizes strong relations with Africa, and different emerging powers such as Turkey, India, Brazil and others follow its example, Africa is gaining political, economic and strategic leverage. As a result, it's less vulnerable than before in relation to the European Union, Canada or the United States. To illustrate this situation, my colleagues already provided the example of France, a major power in the region. France has now been almost completely expelled from the Sahel region, particularly from Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Another well-known example is the recent vote by African countries at the UN during the adoption of resolutions condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This shows that African countries are aligning themselves less and less with western positions.

The third point concerns security challenges and the resulting political upheaval in a number of regions, such as the Sahel, the Horn of Africa or Central Africa. This situation can be seen either as an opportunity for stronger engagement that aligns with African expectations, or as a reason for disengagement. Here too, as my colleagues pointed out, certain countries such as Russia or Turkey are betting on going along with events. They hope that this will open up opportunities to gain influence, even if it isn't necessarily in the interest of African people. I notice that other countries, particularly in the west, generally tend to shy away from this situation and let their competitors take the stage. I think that Canada should define its policy in these types of circumstances.

The last point is related to the previous one. This point concerns what Christopher Hill, an author specializing in relations between the European Union and Africa, termed the capability-expectations gap. An Italian colleague and I explored this issue in depth in a collective book on relations between the European Union and Africa. However, I think that it's even more applicable to Canada, as my colleague reminded us earlier. The capability-expectations gap refers to the fact that Canada's resources, instruments, procedures and values often aren't strong or adapted enough to give Canada the opportunity to implement ambitious policies on the African continent.

To conclude, I would like to put forward three main ideas. First, given the context just described, the approaches of Africa's traditional partners are undeniably outdated in relation to the continent's current political and social dynamics. Second, any policy aimed at Africa must be adjusted to reflect its domestic and international dynamics. Third, respect and consultation must play a key role in policies aimed at Africa. Africa is changing and is increasingly seeking sovereignty and greater autonomy.

● (1605)

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Gazibo.

Now we will go to members for questions. For the first round, each member will receive five minutes. We will start off with MP Hoback.

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

I thank the witnesses for being here this afternoon.

I'm going to start off with you, Mr. Arduino. You talked about mercenaries and the Wagner Group showing up more and more in different countries within the region. How does Canada interact in countries where those mercenaries and the Wagner Group are already present? How should we be involving ourselves with those governments, and what advice do we give to Canadian businesses, like those in the mining sector, in regions where these people have a foothold?

Dr. Alessandro Arduino: That's a great question.

First, in the area where the Wagner Group is present—and we are seeing that it has an expanding footprint, which started with Mali and Mozambique and is moving faster to Burkina Faso, to Niger and, probably soon enough, to Chad—there is no possibility to compete when providing security to local workers and foreign workers. As an example, there is a Canadian mine that, due to the insurgence in CAR, not far from Bangui, they momentarily left. The Wagner Group possesses it now, with a value that the U.S. Treasury estimates is between $1 billion and $2.8 billion U.S.

The problem that the Canadian mining sector is facing is not unique to Canada. It also affects other countries that operate in partnership with African countries in the sector, even China. It's quite paradoxical, but even China, having a no-limits friendship with Russia, is on a competing foot with Russia, especially with the Wagner Group and mercenaries. Mercenaries are there to prey on chaos and to promote more chaos in order to exploit natural resources, while normal mining operations work only when there is security.

● (1610)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Dorn, you talked about peacekeepers and the role of peacekeepers. How do peacekeepers operate in an environment where nobody wants peace? How do they operate in an environment where both sides would rather not have peace, would rather have chaos?

What are they willing or able to do? What has to change at the UN so that peacekeepers on the ground actually have the tools and directions to do what they need to do to provide peace?

Dr. Walter Dorn: In all the countries I have examined, the people of those countries want peace. Parties, like the mercenaries and Wagner, that prey upon the local populations and that use war as a means to enrich themselves are the ones that are resistant to peace. The peacekeepers should be there for the protection of civilians. Every multi-dimensional mission of the UN since Canada passed the UN Security Council resolution—when we were last on the UN Security Council for the protection of civilians—has had a mandate for the protection of civilians. It's really important that the UN can be there to win hearts and minds.

However, to your second question, the tools are not there for the UN to do that work because there aren't enough countries willing to provide their men and women in uniform to take robust action, as we had promised with the quick reaction force, which was precisely for that. The Portuguese have done a wonderful job in the Central African Republic to protect civilians and to take on some of the preying gangs. We need other countries to follow that example and provide units that can do a good job.

There's a variety of tools to bring parties to the negotiating table. One of them is showing them that they're better off in a society that is under the rule of law, rather than in one in which they themselves can be victims of the chaos.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I don't disagree with you, but the reality is that if you don't have the ability, the force or the direction to do that and you can't intercede and protect civilians, it works against you. Is that not fair to say? When people expect this from the peacekeepers and don't get what's expected, doesn't that just leave civilians looking for other alternatives?

Dr. Walter Dorn: Yes, there is disappointment from the local population. However, having some presence is much better than having no presence, so we need to support the peacekeepers who are there.

The peacekeepers need adequate equipment, including non-lethal weapons, because most of the time you can solve problems without killing people. You need tear gas, tasers and the other types of weapons that are necessary for most of the jobs. The UN runs on a shoestring. It's understaffed, underequipped and under-resourced.

Mr. Randy Hoback: It's funny, because some people would say the UN is maybe not properly deploying the resources they have in the way they should be. Is that a fair comment?

Dr. Walter Dorn: It's at least five to 10 times cheaper than a U.S. operation. If you do the accounting, it's extremely reasonable to do UN peacekeeping. Also, for countries like Canada and other countries, the UN reimburses some of the cost. However, we have the problem that a lot of the very capable countries, like Canada and those in Europe, are not providing the forces necessary to get to the level of capability necessary to have really well-equipped troops.

When I first started studying this in the early 1990s, it was about 50% developed and developing world. Now it's 80% developing world and just 20% developed world. Europeans are in places like Lebanon—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Dorn. We'll have to go to the next questioner.

Dr. Walter Dorn: We need to get that balance back.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll next go to MP Zuberi.

You have five minutes.

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

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us today.

Mr. Gazibo told us earlier that we had to respect Africa, its sovereignty and autonomy.

[*English*]

We heard a similar theme in previous testimony from Mr. Akuffo. When I spoke with him outside of a committee meeting, he said that we needed to deal with Africa in its own right and not respond to Russia and China necessarily. Obviously, we need to have an awareness of them and other actors, but we need to deal with Africa in its own right, similar to the testimony we just heard.

Mr. Dorn, I know you're a Royal Military College professor. I was in the reserves once upon a time, so I appreciate the space that you're operating in. You spoke about Roméo Dallaire and others who have led peacekeeping missions in the past. Oftentimes when we have these sorts of interventions or involvements, we're not using the principle that was just mentioned here at committee and by others.

How do we address our involvements in the future—if we choose to have them as a country—so that while we are maintaining peace and security, we're doing so with respect for the sovereignty, autonomy and agency of the African countries and regions where we're intervening?

● (1615)

Dr. Walter Dorn: You can do so because the first principle of UN peacekeeping is consent. You have to have the consent of the host state and the major parties in the conflict. The second is impartiality, and the third is minimum use of force in defence and defence of mandate.

We can better strengthen this partnership with African countries by really viewing it as a partnership. Peacekeeping forces are not there as an imposition. They're there to work with the local forces. It's part of a transition process so that as the peacekeeping forces are reduced, the local forces take on more capacity.

The problem is that when some countries, like Mali, become dictatorships, they don't want oversight. The leaders don't want the oversight the UN provides. When you have all those people on the ground, you have a huge amount of clout. The UN has all that clout from having peacekeepers deployed in northern Mali, middle Mali and southern Mali. The leaders resent the fact that the UN puts pressure on them.

I think it's really important to have peacekeeping and to view it as a partnership, but it does get really difficult when the leaders themselves want to commit human rights violations, because the UN has a human rights due diligence policy.

That's probably too long of an answer.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: The great thing about Canada is that we have people from everywhere, from all around the world, who are Canadian and are being educated and fully contributing to Canadian society in multiple ways, including in professional capacities as we grow as a country. We have many who are from different heritages, including countries within Africa.

How important do you think it is to make sure that in our missions and our presence, be they diplomatic or otherwise, we have a strong presence of Canadians with roots from the countries or regions we're dealing with, be that in the military or diplomatic context?

Dr. Walter Dorn: I strongly support your idea. As a multicultural country, we have that as a strong resource. Bilingualism, particularly in francophone Africa, is a strong component of what we can contribute to peacekeeping in those countries.

We can also be an example. You can have people whose ancestors came from Africa and were deployed in missions, and they can say, “Look, we can integrate into the Canadian Forces.” Then you view this as oneness, not division.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: We have 40 seconds.

Do you feel strongly that cultural competency is key to respecting the agency of Africa?

Dr. Walter Dorn: Absolutely. You have to respect them as individuals. You have to respect their cultures and you have to help integrate culture into your policies.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Would you say it's important that we have personnel from those backgrounds not only in the implementation at the ground level, but also in the decision-making whenever possible?

Dr. Walter Dorn: Sure. An example is Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the UN. He gave tremendous pride to Africans. It was an important part of having a good understanding of Africa.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Within Canada, we should try to find pathways and promotions that are merit-based, or sometimes accelerate them, to have those types of cultural competencies on the ground on both the diplomatic side and the military side. Is that right?

Dr. Walter Dorn: Yes.

The Chair: You have another 10 seconds if you'd like to elaborate.

Dr. Walter Dorn: Yes, you should be able to get those people deployed.

I have some people coming to my office saying they've been trying to deploy on peace operations, but they can't because there are so few opportunities. We have so few posts in peacekeeping.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for coming and for providing insight through their comments and responses.

Professor Gazibo, since you have been overlooked by our colleagues so far, I'll turn to you. You have carried out a whole series of work, with a particular focus on democracy, but also on China's increasing power. I would like to perhaps draw a link between the two issues.

I agree with my colleague, Mr. Zuberi, that we must show an interest in Africa for Africa's sake, and not in response to the involvement of other powers. However, we must face the fact that other powers are now occupying an area that, as you pointed out, was left vacant by a number of western countries, including Canada. These other powers include China and Russia, for example.

I want to draw a link between democracy and the increasing power of China and Russia. As we know, these countries want to show that democracy isn't a good system. Do you think that these two countries are disrupting the development of democracy in Africa?

● (1620)

Mr. Mamoudou Gazibo: Thank you for the question.

I worked on China. I went to Beijing a few years ago to conduct research on this issue. According to diplomats and researchers, China is actually quite different from Russia. Right now, Russia is certainly trying to disrupt democracy, freedom and security. However, China is basically interested in stability. Of course, China won't promote democracy. However, if a democratic regime works with China, it won't try to overthrow the government or corrupt the democratic system.

We must understand that we're dealing with emerging powers that differ greatly, that sometimes compete with each other and that compete with western countries. This competition takes place on different levels. It can be political, as in the case of Russia. That country has a real political agenda, as also demonstrated by its foray into certain countries such as the Sahelian countries, the Central African Republic and others. In contrast, China mainly competes at the economic level. There are also other players that we don't hear much about, such as Turkey, Brazil and the United Arab Emirates. The context is highly complex.

Those are my thoughts on the matter.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: In your opinion, the new silk roads aren't the result of Communist China's political ambitions.

Mr. Mamoudou Gazibo: There are certainly both economic and strategic objectives underlying these new silk roads. These new silk roads are accompanied by the construction of naval bases, in particular in Djibouti and Walvis Bay in Namibia. There's also a technological aspect to them. That said, we can't say that the aim is to transform African regimes to mirror the Chinese model. I think that China can live with the regimes and systems as they stand. Take the example of Niger, which recently experienced a coup d'état. There was a period of observation. However, once things settled down, it was back to business as usual, even though China had been on good terms with the ousted regime.

It's important to differentiate between the powers. They don't have the same intentions, especially with regard to the African continent.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Italy recently announced a €5.5 billion investment in Africa in education, training, agriculture, health, water and energy. To date, a number of projects have been developed as a result of Italian investments.

Given that Canada and Italy have a comparable gross domestic product, clearly Canada lags far behind Italy in terms of investment in Africa. Is the Italian example worth following?

Mr. Mamoudou Gazibo: Yes. I was talking earlier about the capability-expectations gap. This means that Canada isn't investing the necessary resources. I'm not an expert on Canada's policy. However, if we go back 20 years, clearly its policy of concentration has led it to abandon many countries.

As my colleague said earlier, Canada isn't investing in security issues in Africa. Canada doesn't invest enough. It focuses much more on the mining industry. Yet other countries, such as Turkey, which have a significantly lower gross domestic product, continue to invest much more than Canada.

Apart from the northern European countries, Canada is actually one of the western countries with the most to offer on the African continent. It doesn't have a colonial past and it isn't seen as dominating. It has none of the arrogance sometimes attributed to France or the United States. It has a history of peacekeeping and building schools. Canada is also viewed as a welcoming country, where even foreigners can achieve their full potential. Canada has a lot going for it, but the methods that it uses—

● (1625)

[*English*]

The Chair: Professor Gazibo, I'm terribly sorry, but I'll have to cut you off. We've gone a minute over.

We next go to MP McPherson.

You have five minutes.

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

Thank you very much for all of this interesting testimony. It's been very enlightening.

I would like to talk a bit about peacekeeping. Obviously, we have not lived up to our obligations with regard to peacekeeping in any framework. We know that the current government promised a huge bump in peacekeepers, and that has not materialized.

I'm very disappointed to see that there are only two women peacekeepers—military personnel—in Africa, particularly considering our feminist international assistance policy. One of the six pillars is “peace and security”, with a focus on ensuring that women are part of the solutions, knowing that peace when women are involved is, of course, a much more lasting peace.

Dr. Dorn, what is stopping Canada from having more peacekeepers? What is stopping Canada from having more women wanting to play a role in peacekeeping in the African continent?

Dr. Walter Dorn: I know many women military officers who want to deploy and have complained that they've tried for more than half a decade. There is a large group. Women make up approximately 16% of our military, so I don't think it's a question of resources.

I've spoken with almost every CDS in the last 20 years to ask why and to push for more peacekeeping. What I generally get is risk aversion. They don't want to deploy in some areas. I spoke with CDS Vance, and he didn't want to put women north of South Sudan because it is so dangerous there. That's what he said to me.

It's very much a sense of where it is in their military priorities. I've been scratching my head for 20 years. I came back to Canada from the United States because I wanted to contribute to Canadian peacekeeping because it had been such an important factor. The disappointment of seeing Canada be reduced from number one to now number 67 has hit me. I'm always trying to understand that. I'm thinking of writing a book about it. The primary factor is that there is a reluctance from the Canadian Armed Forces. There's more risk aversion, and there isn't the political will to push to make sure that it happens.

I know I can get in trouble for saying this, but it is my best assessment after a decade of trying to figure out this problem.

Ms. Heather McPherson: One of my colleagues asked whether money is being spent properly, whether this is the best way to do this. In my mind, I always think of the cost of peacekeeping compared to the cost of conflict. Of course, the cost of conflict is vastly higher.

I'd like you to comment on the African continent now. The African Union plays a larger role. What are the implications for Canada's trade relationships, diplomatic relationships and relationships around the world when we don't live up to our peacekeeping obligations? What costs do Canadian pay when we're not present?

Dr. Walter Dorn: I think there is a big cost, but I'll answer by speaking in the positive.

I have met so many military officers who've said they went to the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. That existed from 1994 until 2013. We don't have that anymore. We don't have a place in Canada where you can train military, police and civilians all together in peacekeeping. We used to bring in people from around the world.

I worked at the Canadian Forces College. We have students from over 20 countries. That really helps our reputation.

Without a contribution in peacekeeping, we still have the laurels from those early contributions, when we added for 40 years a thousand peacekeepers. That reputation dies over time, and then we can't use it.

● (1630)

Ms. Heather McPherson: One thing I think about when I'm thinking about peacekeeping in the region is that we're all seized with the conflict we're seeing in Sudan. Just last week, I met with members of the Tutsi community in the DRC. What they are describing is that a genocide is potentially unfolding, similar to what we saw in Rwanda 30 years ago.

Of course, Canada played an important role with Roméo Dallaire at the time. We didn't play enough of a role; there was an incredible loss of life. However, if we are looking at the same situation unfolding in the region, does Canada have a role to play? Can you talk about what the implications could be on that region if Canada stepped up?

Dr. Walter Dorn: Absolutely.

Canada was the only country that reinforced its presence in Rwanda during the 100-day genocide of 1994. That was a very proud moment. I knew some of the soldiers who risked their lives to do that and suffered from PTSD afterwards.

For Sudan, when the Pentagon asked me to look at the draft resolution being considered for the Security Council, I said that the UN mission there was a special political mission and not a peacekeeping operation, that it was inadequate and that they needed to have peacekeeping forces. We really need a stronger UN presence. That mission has left Sudan in the face of the war between the two generals.

There's a huge need to have peacekeepers there, to have a presence, to have people who can negotiate some sense between two people who have personal animosities and have created institutions that have institutional animosities.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to the second round. The first two members have three minutes.

Next on the list is Mr. Epp.

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

I'm going to pick up where my colleague left off.

I have a quote from Senator Dallaire. He stated that in UN peacekeeping circles, Canada is known as a “big talker, little doer”. It doesn't take on the long-term missions. I had assumed it was because of our lack of recruitment or lack of bodies.

Am I hearing correctly that it is not so much that? We do have individuals who are willing to assume peacekeeping roles, and it is a matter of political will that we're missing.

Dr. Walter Dorn: I agree with that, yes.

If you look at what we deployed in Afghanistan, you can see it was 3,000 for 10 years. I think it's quite possible to triple or quadruple our numbers in peacekeeping very easily. There isn't a personnel shortage that would make you go from the current 44 peacekeepers around the world to double or triple that number.

Mr. Dave Epp: Your comment earlier was that General Dallaire had accomplished a great deal, even with a reduced amount of 300, yet by your own numbers, we're at 36, barely 10% over that amount. Is the political will exclusively residing in the upper echelons of our military, or is the military under pressure?

Dr. Walter Dorn: The military takes instructions from political leaders. When I asked Justin Trudeau why we aren't doing more on peacekeeping, he simply said that they're working on it. It's been paralysis through analysis.

Which mission do we go to? There have been so many studies about where we could place troops, but not the political will to say yes, go do it. The UN was ready to give us the position of force commander in Mali, but cabinet didn't push that through. The UN even waited two months for us to come forward with a name for the force commander in Mali.

They're just cases where Canada is not taking the initiative to get the military to do this work.

Mr. Dave Epp: Speaking of Mali, my understanding is that we were asked to leave by the Government of Mali. Is it a matter of us not fulfilling our obligations there? Is that why we were asked to leave?

Dr. Walter Dorn: No. In Mali, it was purely that there was a coup—actually two coups—and the leaders didn't want the UN there, so the MINUSMA mission left.

I'm talking about 2017, when we could have gotten the position.

Mr. Dave Epp: We have a number of strategic assets in Mali. What can Canada do now?

Dr. Walter Dorn: It's so difficult. The Iamgold Corporation has large mines there. We have interests in and a long history of supporting Mali.

Mali was such an example of democracy for so many decades. It was what African countries could look up to. Now that the Wagner Group has a solidified presence, we have to work with allies to push back against the Wagner Group. The fight against Russia isn't just in Ukraine. It's in Africa too.

● (1635)

Mr. Dave Epp: You're saying we've lost—

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

We next go to Mr. Oliphant.

You have three minutes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses.

We're not the defence committee, but I am interested in the peacekeeping issue.

I'm glad you mentioned the Canadian Forces College. That reminds me that perhaps peacekeeping is different in 2024 in Africa than it would have been in the 1990s. We go when we're asked. We don't engage and we don't attempt to bring sense to Africans, because they have their own sense. I'm quoting you on that.

I just want to be very clear about your understanding of what the needs are in the spectrum of peacebuilding, peacemaking and peacekeeping, and what Canada's role could be. If Africa has provided soldiers, what can Canada provide that may be different, as an added value, from in the 1990s, when we put boots on the ground in a very different world?

Dr. Walter Dorn: The African missions today need peace enforcement in many cases, as in South Sudan, in DRC and in the Central African Republic. That requires combat-capable troops. Peace enforcement is only done when all other means have failed. As a last resort you use peacekeepers to do combat.

In many of these countries, it's absolutely necessary. The locals are pleading for peacekeepers to do something. They see them in their armoured personnel carriers moving around but not taking on the gangs. It's very important that the UN be more robust and provide a robust capability.

Canada can provide training. Some African peacekeeping training centres are using a simulation that I developed, a video game. You don't play a war fighter; you play a peacekeeper. The UN is considering adopting that.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I want to ask Professor Arduino a question with respect to China.

It's hard to get foreign direct investment numbers. It's apples and oranges in how you bring those together. However, European investments still vastly outweigh Chinese investments in the continent. We see a difference in the nature of western investment and China's investment, in the way we invest and how we invest.

Can you talk about what Canada's role could be in helping countries choose the best investments?

The Chair: If you can, answer in less than 30 seconds, please.

Dr. Alessandro Arduino: That's a great question.

If we look at the numbers, Chinese investment in Africa less than 20 years ago was less than $70 million U.S. In 2021, it amounted to more than $5 billion U.S. We see that China, as my colleague Professor Gazibo mentioned correctly earlier, is looking at economic development as the tip of the spear of its foreign policy in Africa. It resonated extremely well—

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I believe that in 2021, they went to $5 billion, but they dropped to $2 billion in 2022. I don't want to have a high-water mark. That's the only thing.

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

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you.

Dr. Alessandro Arduino: One last thing is that, essentially, it resonated well with the global south and multilateral development, especially with BRICS, which we are seeing now in Africa.

The issue is that the economic side needs security. This is something China is not able to provide as we speak, and we can see the difference with the Russian approach.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have a minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

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

This comment on the different approaches taken by Russia and China is quite intriguing.

Mr. Gazibo, I would like to discuss another topic of importance to you, which is the francophonie.

Africa is likely the next economic El Dorado. Africa is also the reason that French will be one of the languages—if not the language—with the greatest growth over the next 50 years. Does Canada know this, and is it taking the necessary steps to take these factors into account?

● (1640)

Mr. Mamoudou Gazibo: I agree with you.

Some countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are the reservoirs of current and future French speakers. Does Canada know this? I believe so. However, Canada too often lets France take the lead. I saw this a long time ago when I took part in a number of francophonie meetings, including the meetings on preparing the Bamako declaration.

There seems to be some backlash. These days, clearly France is facing serious challenges in its area, for a number of reasons. These reasons include colonialism and neo-colonialism, currency and foreign intervention. As I said earlier, the context has changed, but not the practices.

If Canada doesn't take on a more leading role through Quebec, by better aligning the objectives of the francophonie with the vision shared by the African countries, French may be seen mainly through the lens of France. That said, I have nothing against France. I'm simply pointing out that, right now, any policy that goes through France is more—

[*English*]

The Chair: Professor Gazibo, I'm afraid we're a minute over. We'll have to go to the next question.

MP McPherson, you have the last minute and a half.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

Professor Dorn, I'm going to ask one more question of you.

There were some comments made about whether or not peacekeeping today in 2024 is fit for purpose. I'm looking through the document “A New Agenda for Peace”, which came out of the United Nations last summer, about a year ago. It says, “To keep peacekeeping fit for purpose, a serious and broad-based reflection on its future is required, with a view to moving towards nimble adaptable models with appropriate, forward-looking transition and exit strategies.”

What's the best way we can ensure that Canada is engaged in that conversation? Where are the tools we need from here?

Dr. Walter Dorn: The best way to help the evolution of peacekeeping is by participating in it and getting the expertise we once had. One of our military advisers in New York at the Canadian permanent mission said, after I arrived at the Canadian Forces College, that we were the best peacekeepers in the world. I believed it then. We can be once again, but we have not been playing the game.

We don't know how to work within the UN system to get the best positions so that we can have the most effect in the UN. We contributed to every single peacekeeping operation for 50 years, from 1950 to 1996. That was an example of where we were present and really knew the system, but we've lost that capability.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much. That's a great way to end.

The Chair: That concludes our first panel.

Mr. Arduino, again, thank you for joining us from Italy at a very late time in the evening.

Professor Dorn, thank you for being with us and sharing your insights and expertise.

Professor Gazibo, thank you immeasurably for having been with us. As soon as this report is prepared, we will make sure to send you a copy.

We will now suspend for three minutes for the next panel.

● (1640)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1650)

The Chair: We'll resume our meeting.

Welcome back, everyone. We now have a new panel of witnesses.

We're grateful to have with us today, from Queen's University, Professor Andrew Grant. From Climate Refugees, we have Ms. Amali Tower, who is the founder and executive director. Last but certainly not least, from Partenariat international, we have Mr. Jean-Louis Roy, who is the president.

Each of you will be provided five minutes for your opening remarks, after which we will follow up with questions from members. I would just ask that you look over when I put up my cellphone. That means you have to wrap up within 10 seconds or so. We would be grateful if you pay attention to that so we don't fall behind.

All of that having been explained, we will start off with Professor Grant.

The floor is yours. You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Mr. J. Andrew Grant (Associate Professor of Political Studies, Queen’s University, As an Individual): Thank you, Chair and committee members.

My remarks are based on the field work visits I've conducted across Africa for more than 20 years, which have included interviews with government officials, mining company personnel, civil society organizations, and small-scale artisanal miners and minerals traders, as well as participant observations in remote mining areas far from national capitals.

Like Canada, many countries in Africa are richly endowed with mineral resources. Unlike Canada, however, many of these countries lack the capacity to implement good governance practices in their mineral resource sectors.

On the world stage, Canada is a powerful actor when it comes to the mineral sector. Canadian mining companies are among the largest in the world. Significant numbers of Canadian engineers and managers populate mining companies of all sizes operating in all corners of the globe. Canadian scientists and engineers are at the forefront of innovation in mining technologies, rechargeable batteries and various clean energy technologies. For more than two decades, Canada has been a leader of global initiatives to improve human security in mineral sectors, such as the Kimberley process on conflict diamonds and the voluntary principles on security and human rights.

As other witnesses underscored in their testimony to the committee, Canada has a long legacy of co-operation with Africa, though uneven in terms of length of commitment. The establishment of a dedicated mission and permanent observer to the African Union is the latest example of the promise of this co-operation.

Canada can leverage its prominence as a mining power to further strengthen and advance its economic co-operation with Africa via diplomatic efforts that support increased trade and investment with African partners in Africa's mineral sectors. For African countries, partnering with Canada is attractive because of its reputation as an honest broker and follower of rules-based trade and investment, support for human security and the rule of law, and the promotion of sustainable development, all of which aim to further African countries' economic development goals.

There are many reasons for close economic co-operation between Canada and Africa in the context of the continent's mineral resource sector. I will focus on one of these reasons: the geopolitical imperative of critical mineral supply chains brought on by the just energy transition in response to the rapid acceleration of climate change.

Critical minerals and controlling their supply chains represent the new frontier of geopolitics, something that China recognized with foresight some three decades ago. These much-sought-after mineral resources are vital to the manufacturing of aerospace, defence, magnet, electronic and clean energy components.

Canada's closest allies and trade partners—the United States, the United Kingdom, members of the European Union, Japan and Australia—have all realized that it is in their national interests to avoid critical mineral dependence on a singular country that is also a chief competitor on the world stage, whether the supply chain is upstream, such as with raw or processed minerals, or downstream, such as with manufactured goods like EVs and military and defence technology.

Friendshoring should also inform Canada's approach to critical mineral supply chains. Canada and many African countries are home to significant reserves of critical minerals and could therefore greatly benefit from the mining and processing of such minerals. To actualize these benefits, however, they need to strengthen the quality of supply chain governance and acquire insights into how to navigate the contours of a complex geopolitical environment that includes dependence on a singular country.

Canada can use its position as a mining power to promote best practices for inclusive, transparent and environmentally responsible critical mineral supply chains within African Union member states, thereby offering an attractive alternative to China's influence across the continent. Increasing the number of Canadian trade commissions across Africa is an important component of promoting these best practices and establishing strong partnerships with African countries and African entrepreneurs.

Thank you once again, Chair. I will be happy to elaborate on any of these points during our session today.

● (1655)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Grant.

We next go to Ms. Tower.

You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Ms. Amali Tower (Founder and Executive Director, Climate Refugees): Good afternoon, and thank you to committee members for the kind invitation to be part of this important discussion on Canada's approach to Africa.

I founded Climate Refugees 10 years ago after working with refugees all around the world, especially in Africa. That work made clear that climate change is increasingly impacting mobility all around the world. Communities in Africa are seeing increasing poverty, mounting losses and damages, development setbacks and human rights eroded as a result of climate change. Forced migration is just one such harm, but it is inextricably linked to human security, where conflicts are being exacerbated.

Although Africa has contributed less than 4% to carbon emissions, it is on the front lines of climate impacts, with the least capacity and international support to respond. This fundamental climate injustice must be a key component of any strategy regarding the African continent.

These losses are setbacks to gains once made under the UN sustainable development goals, a key priority of Canada's international assistance program. In Kenya, people told me how rainfall has submerged local schools and clinics, a clear threat to the UN goals on achieving quality education and good health for all. In an isolated island community battling lake rise and wildlife encroachment, one woman I spoke to faced childbirth in a flimsy boat surrounded by crocodiles. It is not difficult to see why some people may feel they simply have no choice but to move elsewhere, while others lack the resources to move so remain trapped in place.

Climate Refugees's discussions with communities in Kenya, Somalia and the Lake Chad basin confirm climate is driving insecurity. Scientists have confirmed that Africa is warming faster than the rest of the world, driving drought and resource scarcity. Last month, the International Organization for Migration and the African Union confirmed that conflict and insecurity in Africa are increasingly exacerbated by climate change.

The Horn of Africa has been dealing with the worst drought it has ever seen. I spoke to pastoralists in Kenya and Somalia who have lost their livestock—their livelihood—and families are now facing starvation or acute food insecurity. In some cases, conflicts between groups have become deadly.

I found a similar situation around the Lake Chad basin, where at least 40 million people reside and where temperatures have risen nearly 2°C since the 1960s and rainfall has become increasingly erratic. The start of the conflict with Boko Haram in 2009 forced many out of the region, though in many cases people were first displaced within the region due to climate change. In my discussions with residents, some reported being first displaced as far back as 1973.

What role does Canada have in all of this? On one hand, Canada has a reputation of generous foreign assistance and of being quite welcoming to refugees. On the other hand, domestic challenges in Canada have stalled welcoming immigration policies.

I would remind this committee that nobody wants to be forced to leave their home, yet that is increasingly happening all around the world today, in Africa and elsewhere. Globally, over 114 million people have been forcibly displaced, and that was before Gaza.

While conflict and violence continue to be the main drivers of migration and displacement in sub-Saharan Africa, they are being increased by climate shocks, bringing to light the linkages between migration drivers and poverty, livelihood loss and political instability. Canada's efforts in Africa can be strengthened through robust climate finance made accessible at community levels, commensurate with its own historical and current global emissions and in line with its climate pledges and UN commitments to the global south. This includes rapidly and urgently increasing its grant-based climate adaptation finance and its contributions to the newly established loss and damage fund.

Let's remember that much of the displacement in Africa is happening within the continent, and while African states have stepped up to co-operate across borders, global north countries have not met the need and responsibilities at the same scale and level. Canada has an opportunity to help Africans adapt in place to climate change wherever possible; to support and facilitate voluntary migration to improved situations when moving becomes a necessary adaptation to climate change; and to compensate communities that have faced undue losses due to the irreversible effects of climate change. Canada also has an opportunity and duty to continue its commitment to international human rights law and its migration, asylum and border management programs with the U.S., ensuring protection of migrants and asylum seekers who arrive at its borders.

● (1700)

Canada should explore ways in which it can offer protection to those displaced in the context of climate change, sharing that responsibility with Africa. For example, Canadian asylum policy could incorporate the UN human rights committee's ruling to not deport individuals who face climate change conditions that threaten their right to life. Canada could also leverage its popular sponsorship program by introducing a climate migration class that can offer protection to someone facing climate risks to their life. These options have been highlighted by the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers.

Ultimately, these suggestions go beyond Canada's approach to Africa. If they're implemented in partnership with impacted countries and communities, Canada can be an example of global co-operation and a beacon of hope in the climate crisis.

Thank you.

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

We now go to Mr. Roy.

You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy (President, Partenariat International): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Members of Parliament, I would like to greet you all. I almost feel like remaining silent.

[*English*]

There are so many things to say about the new Africa, which Member Oliphant mentioned. We're not in 2000. We're in 2024, and we'll be in 2030, 2034 and 2040.

[*Translation*]

It will soon be 2045. Every 10 years, Africa's population will grow by the equivalent of the United States' population. The number of Africans will increase by 400 million in the next 10 years, by 800 million in the next 20 years and by 1.2 billion in the next 30 years. We're talking about very urgent matters. I would also like to point out that 150 million young people under the age of 25 will be entering the African job market by 2035.

[*English*]

That's in 10 years—not in 50 years, but 10 years.

Eventually, Africa will make up a quarter of humanity. India will make up 15%. China will make up 12%. The European Union will make up 4.5%. The U.S. will make up 4%. We're talking about 25% of the human communities.

[*Translation*]

There's an urgent matter. Since there may be some criticism, I would like to begin by applauding the work being done by Canadians in Africa. There are many wonderful things that—

● (1705)

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. I'm sorry.

One of our witnesses isn't able to hear interpretation. It's not working.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll look into it. I apologize.

Is that fine?

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: No. She can't hear it.

Ms. Amali Tower: I can't get it working.

The Chair: Mr. Roy, you can proceed if you like.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: I was applauding the work being done by Canadians in Africa.

Professor Grant said earlier that he has been going to Africa for 20 years. I have been going for 21 years, if not 30. I have seen the development of Canada's presence. I went to Africa many times during my 12 years as the secretary general of the francophonie and then my seven years as president of Rights and Democracy. I think that I know Africa, as much as a person can know another society. It isn't easy, even if the person has been there many times. I see Canadians working. I see them trying to make their mark on the changes taking place on the continent. However, they are operating in an environment where Canada's profile and visibility have significantly declined in recent years.

[*English*]

Some 15 years ago, Canada was a great signature in Africa. It is not a great signature anymore. A lot of things are made by Canadians—great things in Africa—but something is missing.

[*Translation*]

What's the goal? What's the vision? What are the target areas? Is the goal to work in energy? People are familiar with energy. I'm looking at a member from Alberta here on the committee. Quebec is also familiar with the energy sector. Is the goal to work in this sector, or in agriculture or education? You can't work in every sector. However, right now, it seems that people are working in just about every sector, a little bit here, a little bit there.

Interestingly enough, Canada's signature is nowhere to be seen on the African continent. I'm sorry to say it, and I miss it. I was listening to the people who spoke earlier about the Pearson peacekeeping centre. I remember when this centre existed. I also remember the Rights and Democracy organization and the co-operation of the Supreme Court of Canada and parliamentarians, which no longer exists. That's all more or less gone now. Canada no longer has the instruments that it once had, instruments of the highest quality.

As part of the ensuing discussion, I would like to be asked about the focus, methods and goals that Canada should have for the African continent, including the Sahel region, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now go to MP Chong for four minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to talk about Africa's economic situation, particularly as it relates to energy. Africa's sovereign debt has risen quite substantially in the last number of years. According to the data I have, the debt load has increased about 183% since 2019, far faster than the increase in GDP in Africa. We've had African growth on the entire continent essentially stall out since the great financial crisis of 2008.

Presently, Africa uses four million barrels of oil a day for a population of 1.4 billion people. To put that in perspective, we in Canada use 2.5 million barrels of oil a day for a population of 40 million people. What will likely happen over the next number of years, as African growth gets back on track, is you'll see a substantial jump in energy consumption on the continent. Most developing countries have three times the oil consumption per capita that Africa has, at roughly three barrels of oil per day per capita. That would mean that in the entire African continent, we would be going from four million barrels a day in oil consumption to 12 million barrels of oil a day.

I just wanted to put those numbers on the table and seek your comment on that.

● (1710)

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I know that you're familiar with these issues. However, certain parts of Africa, especially west Africa, are becoming energy suppliers. For example, Nigeria supplies energy for Egypt and Morocco and Niger supplies energy for other parts of the continent. Let's not forget new energy technologies, which are highly developed in some countries. In Morocco, for example, new energies such as solar power are highly developed. Morocco will undoubtedly turn to new energies.

Hon. Michael Chong: Africa currently produces seven million barrels of oil every day. It uses three to four million barrels a day, and exports three million barrels of oil a day. However, in 10 or 20 years, if Africa consumes 12 million barrels a day, it must obtain this oil from another continent.

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Yes. This is also the case for China.

Hon. Michael Chong: This oil could perhaps come from Canada or Africa.

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: It may come from Alberta.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Chong: What is the implication of that for Africa if it goes from a net exporter of energy, as it is now, to a net importer?

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Do you remember China in 1990? It was one of the poorest countries in the world and the most populated country in the world. Look at it today. Why? It's because people like us have invested. The Americans, the Europeans, the Japanese, the Chinese in other parts of the world outside of China have invested immensely in China. The machine started to produce by itself, and now they are selling us a lot of things. We also consider China a market.

We have to do exactly the same thing with Africa. We have to invest in Africa. Canada has to invest more in Africa than we do. We invest in mines and that's okay; we're maybe number one in mines—

The Chair: Mr. Roy, I'm afraid I have to go to the next member.

We now go to MP Chatel for four minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to welcome the witnesses here today.

Ms. Tower, I'll ask you a series of questions, and then you can choose how to answer them.

I saw the results of your research on the Lake Chad basin, which were presented at COP 26. What aspects should we integrate into our strategy for Africa in order to take climate change into account? In your opening remarks, you touched on some aspects. We heard many witnesses talk about Canada's expertise in climate resilience, particularly in the agriculture and green energy sectors. Should we be integrating this aspect? What role could Canada play in helping Africa achieve its climate security objectives?

As you rightly pointed out, vulnerable populations in Africa, for example, are disproportionately affected by climate change. How could Canada better support the United Nations' green climate fund, which seeks to help these populations?

[*English*]

Ms. Amali Tower: Thank you for those questions. Let me start with the last one.

In 2009, the international community came together and pledged—it wasn't committed to, but pledged—that the global north would start providing $100 billion every year to the global south to help it adapt to climate change. When we speak about resilience, you have to ask yourself, has that money materialized from 2009 to 2024? It has not materialized, even for one year. The most we have ever given is a little over $80 billion, and that's a highly contested number. That's by the OECD. Of that, over 60% tends to be for loans. This is supposed to be grant-based financing.

I heard another gentleman ask about what I would say is a rising debt crisis in Africa. If you are not supporting countries to adapt and build their resilience—let's really think about what these terms means—and if you provide financing in the manner of loans, is it any different from what we saw in the 1990s with the structural adjustment programs that came under development? We already know that they didn't work, and the ill effects of them are already being felt. African states had to privatize education. They had to privatize water. These are not systems that are sustainable in the era of the climate crisis, so that's the biggest problem.

We are now in the era of the Paris Agreement, which says the global north has a responsibility to avert, minimize and address loss and damage. By not providing financing, we missed our opportunity to address and minimize. For a lot of countries in Africa, we're in the era of loss and damage, and we're going to be in a situation where we need to address loss and damage, but still help these countries adapt. That has to come in both types of financing. The loss and damage fund was established at the last COP, and that needs to be grant-based financing.

● (1715)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Tower.

We next go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have four minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

In the first part of this meeting, I had the opportunity to talk about how Africa was becoming a continent of the future. I spoke, of course, of economic and French language growth.

Mr. Roy, you spoke about the growth of the population, which will double over the next 25 years. You emphasized the young age of Africa's population, with 70% of people under the age of 30. There are major opportunities for Canada and Quebec.

For a number of years, you have been emphasizing the need to forge partnerships with Africa, rather than focusing on development assistance. The Global Affairs Canada officials who appeared before this committee also emphasized the importance of partnerships in their testimony. That said, they seemed to be flying blind, unsure of where they were headed or what route to take. There was talk of an African strategy. This became a type of African policy, which turned into a framework for Africa. Now, according to the officials involved, people no longer know what to call it.

How should the Canadian government turn things around?

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: By renegotiating the free trade agreement in recent years, Canada has sorted out its relationship with the United States and North America. It sorted out its relationship with Europe by establishing a free trade agreement. It's now seeking to sort out—and rightly so—its relationship with the Indo-Pacific region through Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy.

Canada needs something equivalent for Africa. What does Canada really want to do in Africa? Where is Canada prepared to commit its resources and best talent? I spoke about this earlier. Is it in energy, agriculture or education?

I would like to speak briefly about education. Over 600 million children will be entering the African school systems. I don't know what this entails, but it's a huge number of children. Could Canada take the lead in a global coalition to ensure that African children attend school? African countries have made a significant effort. Around 85% of children attend primary school and 40% attend secondary school. However, fewer girls than boys attend secondary school, which is a major rights issue.

What happens when, suddenly, 30 or 40 million children a year enter the system? We need to think about this situation. Actually, instead of thinking, it's time to take action. Education systems must be created and teachers must be trained for large groups. Otherwise, the Islamic schools will do the job, if you know what I mean. These independent and private schools, which operate outside any form of oversight, are the type of nonsense increasingly seen on the African continent.

I would like to get back to your question. Do I have another minute?

● (1720)

The Chair: You have 20 seconds left.

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Mr. Bergeron, you asked a question earlier about the future of French in Africa. I won't have time to answer it in 20 seconds. However, I do want to make a comment.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: We'll have only a minute and a half in the next round. You can start, and we'll continue later.

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Yet you're elected for five years, right?

[*English*]

The Chair: We now go to MP McPherson.

You have four minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

Like you, Mr. Roy, I have so many things to say that I don't know where to begin. This is a very broad panel.

Thank you very much to you all for your testimony.

Professor Grant, I feel that we've left you out, so I'm going to ask you a quick question.

I was in Tanzania just this February and met with members of a rural community, a Masai community. A Canadian mining company was trying to negotiate and work within the community. You will know that sometimes we don't have a stellar reputation around the world, and in fact, we don't have a good mechanism to hold Canadian companies accountable for human rights abuses and environmental abuses that Canadian companies do abroad.

What is the risk for Canada to have mining companies go into communities and conceivably produce ill will? I ask because they are poisoning water and interfering with the communities themselves. Often the victims of many of the crimes that happen by these mining companies are women and girls, and we don't have a mechanism in place that holds those companies to account.

How do we balance that? Of course we want to trade in Africa. We want to have Canadian mining companies that are good actors there. However, we have a lot of bad actors, and we have no mechanisms to hold them to account.

Mr. J. Andrew Grant: Canadian mining firms are not saints. Previous testimony has pointed out that there's a need for balance on that front. However, if we are thinking about mining companies more generally, it's all in relative terms. When it comes to issues, if there's a human rights complaint or some other issue, Canadian mining firms will take it seriously.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Some will.

Mr. J. Andrew Grant: They will take it seriously, but other mining companies won't necessarily do so. People on the ground know that. Again, be mindful that they're not saints.

On the topic of mechanisms, there have been bills before Parliament over the last several years that didn't quite pass but focused on exactly that. There have been initiatives in different ways, and there have been different attempts. As a political scientist, you watch these make their way through but not quite get past the threshold.

We have the ombudsperson's office as well. Again, it does a lot of good, but it is subject to criticism. Has that been a fruitful alternative? It doesn't get a lot of focus, but that has had resources in recent years.

I think even within Parliament there is an appetite for some form of legislative oversight of Canadian mining firms more generally, because it's seen as something desirable. I think Canadians want that. We're almost there. It might just take another bill to be put forward to see it pass the threshold.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I will be very clear that I have tabled a bill that the government is more than welcome to implement at any time. We would be happy to help them pass it.

Ms. Tower, you made comments on structural adjustment programs and repeating the same mistakes we've made in the past. This was my career before I was in politics; I worked in international development. We still see a debt burden being borne by countries in the global south because of some of the misguided policies we put in place.

Is that what we're seeing again? Could you expand on that? I don't have a lot of time, but in 30 seconds could you expand on why this echoes exactly what we've already done wrong before?

Ms. Amali Tower: Yes.

Climate finance is just a fancy way of keeping in place an already not-fit-for-purpose international financial system that has always been disproportionately supportive of the global north, which has extractive states that have developed on the backs of states that have been victimized by colonial legacies. All of those things are part of the climate crisis today. Looking at climate change as just an environmental factor was already a massive failure, because we lost about 30 years. I think we often focus on the fact that we had a lot of deniers or naysayers who didn't grab the science. We also didn't grab people who understood intersectionality or people who understood this as a human issue, a justice issue and a human rights issue.

If we're going to talk about solutions, we have to talk about solutions that are fit for purpose. How do you actually deal with the climate crisis? How do you deal with the fact that you can't continue to provide loans to people who...? As I said, Africa as a whole gets less than 4% for 54 states. Is it a matter of justice to now ask Africa to go into further debt?

I'll also say, because of some of the things—

● (1725)

The Chair: I'm afraid I'll have to cut you off, Ms. Tower. You're 45 seconds over.

Ms. Amali Tower: Okay.

The Chair: I was trying to indicate it to you. I'm sorry about that. Hopefully you will get to expand on that in the next questions.

We will go to the next round of three minutes.

Mr. Aboultaif, you will go first.

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

Mr. Roy, the new Africa is looking for sovereignty and autonomy. It's growing by population in all directions. It's not the same Africa we know.

Do we still have a business case for Canada to play a role, or would you advise that we should probably be more focused on certain areas where we still have a chance to do business?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: I believe that Canada really can't be in every sector. Canada isn't the European Union, the United States or China. It doesn't have the same resources. You must know which sector you want to invest in.

I hope that the report on Africa's future expected from one of your colleagues, who is here today, will identify Canada's areas for action. For each sector, what are Canada's real objectives? Is the goal to support education, or to have another two million children in school in five years? This isn't the same thing at all. Supporting education means taking part in symposiums and theoretical discussions. It's a bit like the environment. You can keep meeting and debating the issue, just as you can keep talking about the responsibility of mining companies, for example. However, at some point, you must decide what you want. You must say, for example, that you want to send more children to school and that you want to see technical and vocational training.

You must determine which sector, which area and which coalition you want to be involved in. You're in all types of coalitions right now. You give small amounts. However, in the Africa of the future with a population of 2.4 billion, people will need results.

They need real schools. Every city in Africa will double in population over the next 30 years. There will be a major need for security, housing, education and health care. Where can Canada put its signature?

For example, the Koreans decided that they would work on the 31 stock exchanges on the African continent. They have just created a common platform for all these stock exchanges with the African Development Bank. It used to be almost impossible for an investor from South Africa to invest in Egypt. Everything is now done on the same platform. This signature will last forever. Norway has worked to ensure that Africa's 46 currencies can be exchanged in Africa, rather than in Paris or London. This means that you can exchange currencies between two neighbouring countries, rather than paying commissions to the Europeans.

These are two examples of signatures and things that last. Canada must determine where it wants to make its mark on the continent.

● (1730)

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to MP Alghabra.

You have three minutes.

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

Professor Grant, I want to direct my question to you. You, like some previous witnesses, emphasized the importance of making sure that economic diplomacy is an integral part of our approach to Africa. You, as Mr. Roy did, talked about how Canadian businesses and Canadian expertise can offer significant value to the needs that Africa has right now.

You mentioned briefly the Office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise. My question to you is twofold. First, can it be used as an important instrument to help Canadian businesses acquire even more business in Africa? Second, what else can we do? What is your recommendation to the government to further equip this office to become the tool that it can be?

Mr. J. Andrew Grant: The office has evolved over the years. Often we invigorate it with high expectations. There's always the challenge of resources. Is the office fully resourced? That is debatable. They have keen, sharp individuals who work in the office, but again, resources are finite.

On that front, I think with an investment of resources, the output would be quite significant. You can truly invigorate the office by expanding it and giving it more resources. It's already made good inroads over the time that it's been in practice. It flies under the radar, but it does a lot of good already. It can be improved. It's something that should not be cast aside.

Even within Global Affairs Canada, Natural Resources Canada and a number of government agencies, you have sharp, clever individuals who can improve on the recommendations that I've been talking about and those of other witnesses as well. It is a matter of political will matching funding. We've heard from other witnesses about the challenges they face. They have to be empowered. They have to have the resources to make those networks and connections.

Going back to the office of trade commissioners, again, there's a great need. They are already doing quite well with limited resources, but so much more could be done with more resources or political will.

It's not beyond the scope if we think of budgets. They're political documents. Those forms of financial support can be allocated to these enterprises with, again, extremely positive benefits.

If you think of the critical mineral sector, going back to my colleague's comments a moment ago, that is an area where you can see Canada have global leadership. It's done in related areas, and this is another one where it could be done.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Grant.

We now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have a minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Roy, you have the floor for a minute and a half.

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: For three years now, people have been floating around the rather astonishing idea that, by the middle of this century, there may be 500, 600 or even 700 million French speakers as a result of Africa. I don't agree. The growth of the world's French-speaking population won't take place in America or Europe, of course. The European Union currently operates in English 98% of the time. French-language instruction in Europe has fallen by 10% in the past two years.

Africa will drive significant growth in the number of French speakers, but only if the continent provides schools that teach in French. However, for French schools to exist, they must be created and funded. Canada, France, Belgium and Mauritius—in other words, francophone countries with real resources—must look at how they are and aren't supporting education in French-speaking Africa.

Let's not forget the growth of African languages. Africans have languages that can be spoken by up to 100 million people. These languages are found on the Internet and in translation engines. The African Development Bank now releases its reports in the African languages and then translates them into French and English, for example. My point is that African languages are gaining ground.

The number of French speakers could indeed grow significantly. Will there be another 100 million, or 150 million? It's hard to say. However, to achieve this growth, children must have the opportunity to attend schools where the French language is taught. That's the bottom line. However, I find that the current efforts are completely inadequate.

If I may, I would like to come back to a very important question about investment—

● (1735)

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm afraid we're out of time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

For the last minute and a half, we go to MP McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: A minute and a half goes very fast.

I want to quickly point out that the problem with the CORE, from my perspective, is that the CORE does not have the ability to compel testimony or witnesses. It's not about resources; it's that we were promised a CORE that could do that, and this particular office cannot.

I want to go back to you, Ms. Tower, because we stopped our conversation. You talked about intersectionality. We have a feminist international assistance policy. We have, we've been told, though nobody has seen it, a feminist foreign policy. Can you talk about the way that women and girls are particularly impacted when we talk about these issues around development?

Ms. Amali Tower: Absolutely.

Unfortunately, we don't have enough statistics. That shows you how little attention women and girls as a group are given. It seems that, by and large, they are actually at a higher risk of displacement than any other group, but we don't quite know.

We've heard a lot about education at this committee. I can tell you that the schools might exist, but girls are having to forgo school in order to fetch water. When you talk to the families, you realize that the girls used to go to school, but they don't anymore. They've been in a drought, the worst that has ever struck the region, and the girls have to fetch water. In comes GBV. In comes all the conflict and insecurity that comes with that.

That's how you really need to look at this. You can't just look at this as migration or international finance. Earlier someone asked me about finance. Only a quarter of the 8% that's going to adaptation goes to Africa. It's just not a priority, whether it's the sectors of populations or the continent as a whole.

African states constantly ask within the UN, at the UNFCCC or even in the Security Council, for the global north to invest in renewables, in technology and in the transfer of technology, and it doesn't happen. I hear a lot in here about investment. People are asking for information and knowledge, for that kind of global cooperative sharing. There are opportunities.

I would also look at the climate security conversations happening in the UN Security Council and what African states ask for, because this is a very young, mobile and nimble population.

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

That concludes our questions.

At this point, I want to take the opportunity to thank all three of you. Ms. Tower, Professor Grant and Mr. Roy, thank you for your time, your experience and your perspectives. We're very grateful indeed.

Friends, before I adjourn, you will recall that last week a news release was circulated to all members. It was for Canada's diplomatic capacity report, which I tabled today.

Is everyone in favour of adopting the news release that was sent to you?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

This meeting stands adjourned.