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Chair

The Honourable Robert Nault

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● (1545)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.)): Colleagues, I think we'll bring this meeting to order. We are running a little late and I want to apologize to our witnesses. It seems like Tuesdays are going to be like this. The House leadership has decided to have votes every Tuesday. It's a good thing in some ways and not very helpful in others.

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to welcome General Vance of the Department of National Defence.

General, I think it would be to our benefit if you would introduce your colleagues, and I understand that you'll be making a presentation as well.

We are also welcoming Chief Superintendent Barbara Fleury of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

General Vance, I'll turn the floor over to you for your remarks and we'll get into the questions after.

General Jonathan Vance (Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm joined here today by Lieutenant-General Christine Whitecross, who is the chief of military personnel command for the Canadian Armed Forces. Mr. Greg Smolynec is one of our defence scientists. He is intimately involved in all things to do with gender-based analysis and the work we're doing to advance our issues in the Canadian Armed Forces.

With your permission, I'll carry on with my remarks.

[Translation]

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today and to take part in this important discussion.

Fifteen years ago, the UN Security Council adopted its first resolution on women, peace and security. Even then, Canada was at the forefront of the integration of women in the Canadian Armed Forces. Since then, we have made further progress. Today, I would like to share with you exactly what the Canadian Armed Forces are doing to implement this resolution.

Over the course of my career as a soldier and now as Chief of Defence Staff, I have seen first-hand how wars, conflicts and crises affect women, men, girls and boys in different ways.

It was in Afghanistan that I saw how the war was affecting Afghan women and girls in particular.

[English]

It was also in Afghanistan that I saw how having women within our ranks could dramatically improve the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Armed Forces.

In order to clearly identify all the various concerns, we had to engage with different segments of the population, including women and children. In addition to performing their main occupational role, our female members provided an essential perspective. Having women in our ranks opened doors for us and allowed us to interact with this segment of the population, which was critical to our operational planning and success. Their work was indispensable to our understanding of the dangers and concerns that were relevant to this group.

Last summer, shortly after I was appointed chief of the defence staff, I realized we could do more to systematically implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security. Doing so is important for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that this will enhance the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Forces. This is why I ordered the development of a plan to fully integrate gender perspectives into Canadian Armed Forces planning and operations, our training and education system, and doctrine.

This is also why I directed that a team of gender advisers be established to provide me with advice on the topic of women, peace, and security. Finally, this is why I created gender adviser positions at Canadian joint operations command and Canadian special operations forces command, and I will be adding gender advisers to deployed task forces in the very near future.

● (1550)

[Translation]

Ensuring that we fully implement UN Security Council resolutions, or UNSCRs, on women, peace and security is a priority for me.

On January 29 of this year, I issued my orders for integrating UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions into Canadian forces operations and planning. I have brought copies of the directive for the committee today.

Our mission is to fully integrate these requirements and direction on gender-based analysis plus, GBA+, into Canadian Armed Forces planning and operations by August 31, 2017, and into the wider institution by March 31, 2019.

The directive formally communicates the tasks to be accomplished on a strict timeline to Canadian Armed Forces commanders and staffs.

I am happy to report that progress on these tasks is proceeding on schedule.

[English]

My military gender advisers and those for Canadian joint operations command and Canadian special operations forces command will be in place this summer as per the plan and, at this point in time, I am considering establishing a senior Canadian Armed Forces gender adviser in the weeks to come in my office. A staffing process for civilian gender advisers is under way and on schedule, as are other activities such as the review and development of training and professional military education programs.

As we plan new armed forces operations, we are making sure that gender-based analysis plus is undertaken to improve our operational effectiveness and our understanding of the situation.

We are also active internationally on this front. During last year's major NATO exercise Trident Juncture 2015, the Canadian Armed Forces assigned a gender adviser to the Canadian commander. We are currently looking to do the same for the major U.S.-led rim of the Pacific exercise this year.

We have developed and are looking to strengthen our relationship with the Nordic Centre for Gender and Military Operations located in Sweden, which is the NATO centre of excellence in gender and military operations.

Independent of our work on women, peace, and security, there are many other areas that complement our efforts contributing to a culture of respect, operational excellence, and diversity in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Shortly after being named CDS last summer, I issued the Operation Honour directive, that is aimed at eliminating sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces. Because sexual misconduct of any kind is not and will not be tolerated within the Canadian Armed Forces, I also recently directed my staff to use retention and recruiting efforts to increase the number of women in the Canadian Armed Forces. My orders to the armed forces and to General Whitecross specifically are to increase the percentage of women within our ranks by 1% per year until we reach our target of 25%.

Concurrently, we are developing a diversity strategy to address broader issues of diversity in the armed forces. This strategy will aim to generate an institution that is reflective of the greater Canadian population by raising awareness among targeted communities on the many opportunities available within the Canadian Armed Forces. Indeed, we have come to the point when we need them in our ranks.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, as you can see, while there remains some work to do, we are making real progress in the area of women, peace and security. This new way of looking at operations will translate into enhanced operational excellence for the Canadian military. And this is something we can all benefit from.

[English]

Thank you very much for your attention, sir. That ends my comments.

The Chair: Thank you very much, General.

I'll now go to Barbara Fleury. She is the RCMP chief superintendent, police advisor for the Canada permanent mission to the United Nations. The floor is yours.

•(1555)

Chief Superintendent Barbara Fleury (Chief Superintendent, Police Advisor, Canada's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

[Translation]

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security.

[English]

To begin, I would like to take some time to provide the broader context within which the RCMP's activities relating to women, peace, and security are taking place.

The RCMP administers and implements Canada's international police peacekeeping and peace operations program in partnership with Public Safety Canada and Global Affairs Canada. Police officers deployed through the program come from the RCMP and municipal and provincial police agencies from across Canada. Currently, this includes Canadian police officers from approximately 25 different agencies and the RCMP. Since 1989, over 3,800 Canadian police officers have been deployed to more than 60 peace operations around the world, working with key partners such as the United Nations.

As a result of our long-standing contribution, Canada is recognized as a world leader in police professionalism and is known for deploying highly skilled, bilingual, or multilingual officers to build capacity, peace, and security with other partners in the international community.

In 2000, when United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 was announced, the RCMP began incorporating women, peace, and security elements into its peace operations related work. For instance, in December 2000, the RCMP began to examine how we could support the involvement of women in Canadian peace operations. Since Canada's action plan for the implementation of the United Nations resolutions on women, peace, and security was announced in 2010, the RCMP's efforts to incorporate women, peace, and security elements have greatly expanded. Today the women, peace, and security agenda is an integral component of our peace operations related work, such as when deciding on missions or projects to undertake.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few areas of the RCMP's implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security.

First, the RCMP has worked to increase the deployment of Canadian female police to peace operations. This is in keeping with the United Nations' findings that female police increase the effectiveness of missions, help to build trust with populations, and act as role models.

To this end, the RCMP, together with its domestic police partners, has undertaken initiatives to increase the proportion of Canadian women police officers deployed to peace operations. For instance, all job bulletins for peace operations encourage women to apply, and female candidates have been selected when equally qualified men and women are competing for a position.

In addition, women's participation has been promoted through communications and participation in events such as the International Association of Women Police conferences.

I am pleased to report that in 2014-15, Canada first surpassed the United Nations' call for member states to deploy 20% women police officers to peace operations, and that at present, approximately 25% of Canadian police deployed through the international police peacekeeping and peace operations program are women.

In addition to ensuring a higher proportion of women deployed, the RCMP recognizes the importance of ensuring that women work in all types of positions and capacities within peace operations, and in particular, senior and leadership positions. Canada has deployed senior women police officers to various missions in recent years, including to Haiti, Afghanistan, Ukraine, the West Bank, and the United Nations headquarters. Currently, the contingent commander in Haiti, who oversees the entire contingent of Canadian police officers, is a woman.

A second area where we have focused our efforts is in the investment of comprehensive training. The RCMP recognizes that training plays a critical role in furthering all elements of the women, peace, and security agenda.

The RCMP, together with the Canadian Police Knowledge Network, developed online training modules that are mandatory for all police being deployed to UN peace operations prior to attending their pre-deployment training in Ottawa. These modules cover various topics, including women, peace, and security, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

During pre-deployment training here in Ottawa, the RCMP also provides an in-class mission-specific session on the differential impact of conflict on women and girls and on sexual and gender-based violence, in addition to covering cultural awareness and code of conduct and ethics issues. This training reinforces Canada's commitment to upholding the highest standards of police conduct in missions; Canada's commitment to being transparent and accountable for the actions of deployed police; and the fact that Canada takes all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse or other misconduct within peace operations extremely seriously.

● (1600)

The RCMP is continuously seeking to improve its women, peace, and security training. To this end, the RCMP recently worked with Canadian civil society to develop and implement a one-day women, peace, and security workshop for Canadian police officers deploying to Haiti. The workshop covered various topics, including understanding gender and women, peace, and security; normative and legal frameworks; and practical exercises. This training partnership represents a concrete step in building an effective and ongoing relationship between the RCMP and Canadian civil society.

Finally, I would like to highlight how Canadian police officers are supporting the women, peace and security agenda through their deployment to peace operations.

Canadian police officers are highly regarded for promoting women's rights and gender equality. Several Canadian police officers have worked directly in women, peace and security-related roles through positions such as gender advisers or human rights mentors in various missions, including Haiti, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.

Canadian police officers have also directly supported efforts to prevent, address, and investigate sexual and gender-based violence. For instance, since 2011, Canadian police have worked with Norway to provide training to improve the investigatory capacity of the Haitian National Police on cases of sexual and gender-based violence. Similarly, in 2015, three female Canadian police officers who were trained specifically on investigating sexual and gender-based violence offences were deployed to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. They assisted in investigating crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide allegedly committed between 1975 and 1979 during the Khmer Rouge regime, and brought extensive value related to sexual and gender-based violence cases.

Canada is also one of the few countries that can say they have contributed to all of the United Nations Police Division's initiatives on women, peace, and security in recent years. For instance, in 2014, Canada worked with the United Nations in several developing countries, including Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Benin, Niger, and Togo, pioneering a training project aimed at increasing the number of women police officers deployed to peace operations from other countries. Canada also participated in the launch of the United Nations Police Division's gender tool kit.

Now that I have covered some ways in which the RCMP and Canadian police officers are integrating the women, peace and security agenda into peace operations related activities, I would like to highlight how we are planning to continue to support this initiative.

Ensuring women are prioritized as a core part of maintaining peace and security, including through the deployment of women police officers in peace operations, requires the ongoing attention and support of the United Nations and its police-contributing countries, including Canada.

The RCMP plans to continue related initiatives, for instance, through the administration of a nationwide survey on female police to see what barriers, if any, exist regarding female police participation in peace operations. The RCMP also plans to ensure greater female participation in senior leadership positions within missions.

[Translation]

Both male and female Canadian police officers deployed to peace operations will continue to play a critical role in implementing the women, peace and security agenda through contributing to the development of professional and effective law enforcement institutions that respect the human rights of women and girls, protect women and girls from violence, including sexual violence, and meet the needs of the entire local population.

A key step going forward is the renewal and provision of Canada's national action plan to implement UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, which is being led by Global Affairs Canada. It will provide a solid framework to guide the implementation of those resolutions and a tool for the meaningful measurement of progress and accountability. The RCMP will work closely with Global Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence to ensure that the revised action plan incorporates lessons learned, ongoing and emerging women, peace and security priorities, as well as the perspectives of Canadian civil society.

[English]

Thank you for your time. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that the committee may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Superintendent.

We will go right to the questions. We'll start with Mr. Kent for the first round.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for your appearance and your testimony before us today.

My first question, for General Vance and General Whitecross, deals with the External Review Authority's recommendations by Madame Deschamps regarding inappropriate sexual behaviour within the forces. One of the recommendations was for the Canadian Forces strategic response team on sexual misconduct to conduct a detailed study of other domestic and foreign organizations to see how they are able to investigate without triggering a formal complaint, which is very often a critical point for a victim of sexual misconduct coming forward. I am wondering what we have learned

in the year since the report was issued. What have you learned, and how is it being applied?

• (1605)

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thank you, sir. I'll start, and then General Whitecross can get into some of the details.

We are taking an approach that looks at best practices globally among our allies and within those organizations in Canada that would have some experience in this.

Key to this is a victim-centred approach. Not only do we have to trigger a complaint on the part of the potential victim or the survivor, but we also have to be mindful of the fact that due process must occur.

I think we are good on that. The National Investigation Service has done a lot of work on this. We're developing more and more expertise in the area of investigating sexual crime, and making certain that, first and foremost, the victim or the survivor of the event is reassured, taken care of, and in fact has an element of control in how the investigation proceeds, including, in some cases, not to launch an investigation but simply to find out information. At the same time, to ensure that person is safe and does not suffer any more, oftentimes it requires the removal of the other party, which we have done. We have had some success in this regard.

I would end by saying that on the matter of sexual harassment, there's also a challenge in that there are many definitions of sexual harassment. One of Madame Deschamps' recommendations and a lot of her work talked about the challenges around definitions. We have to define them, and we have to be able to follow up.

While we work with Treasury Board and others on the exact definitions and get consistent definitions, I've asked our centre, and the executive director of the centre—and they are at arm's length to me, of course—to consider developing a working definition and developing the expertise to investigate or supervise the investigation, so even that becomes somewhat at arm's length to the armed forces. They would recommend how we might proceed after the investigation is done.

I'll turn it over now to General Whitecross.

Lieutenant-General Christine Whitecross (Commander, Military Personnel Command, Department of National Defence): Thank you, sir.

In reference to Madame Deschamps' recommendation, certainly the CDS has spoken about the centre and the work we've done in order to incorporate that.

When we met with our Australian and American colleagues, we found out they were able to do restricted and unrestricted reporting as they were coming forward. As the general said, if they approach the centre and have not mentioned the misconduct to anybody else, the centre will go ahead and give them the support they need, because they're not necessarily bound by the National Defence Act in that anyone that understands or hears about a misconduct happening has to do something about it.

That's our legislative framework. The complexity we're dealing with is how we create the environment where we allow people to come forward and get the support they need without triggering an official response.

The Americans and Australians have been able to do that through restricted and unrestricted reporting. We're looking at that measure. A restricted reporting would be when the alleged victim comes forward and says, "I don't want to go any further than this. I just want to seek the support I need in order to get better." In the treatment, they carry on and do that.

In addition to that, they still do some chain of evidence required, in terms of whether it's rape kits, or interviews and the like for sexual assault, and they hold that in abeyance.

The Americans have found in about a quarter of those instances, almost 25%, that if people are given the opportunity to come forward and just seek the support they need, they will go from restricted to unrestricted, which means they will open up the ability to start an investigation at a point a little later.

Our hope is that we can mirror that legislation. We need to get through the chain of evidence, and we're working with our military police colleagues in order to be able to facilitate that.

• (1610)

Hon. Peter Kent: I have a question for the chief superintendent, with regard to the article that shook, to a certain extent, the foundations of the United Nations.

Former UN Assistant Secretary-General Banbury had a litany of complaints about problems within the United Nations, but particularly with regard to peacekeeping, including the Central African Republic incident, where peacekeepers engaged in the systemic rape and abuse of women and civilians they were assigned to protect, and the slow response of the centre and the bureaucracy to address those issues.

The Secretary-General has committed to reform and to update and improve practices. I'm wondering what insight you can share with us from your position within the UN.

C/Supt Barbara Fleury: Thank you for that question on that very important issue.

As you all know, Canada is very committed to ensuring that our officers are not only pre-screened, selected, but that they also go through a tremendous amount of training, etc., to ensure that we are not one of those cases. We are working with the UN to try to improve vetting processes, to try to encourage better training and better awareness, and also to ensure openness and accountability mechanisms.

From the policing side of the house, we certainly work alongside the conduct and discipline units of the UN in trying to ensure that more can be done to reduce.... Obviously, one case is always one too many, but I think we have to continue reporting. It's a sustained effort. I think the measures that have been taking place now, by increased reporting from member states and naming member states and the actions they're taking, are examples of measures that are going to continue to happen and that we should be supporting and encouraging.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, everyone, for being here today.

General Vance and General Whitecross, I have a question on GBA +, gender-based analysis plus. It's a very interesting approach. I'm wondering about your thoughts on the importance of it as a framework and the challenges of implementing it.

Beyond that, it strikes me in looking at this policy and the decision to pursue it that things have evolved a great deal. Our operations have evolved a great deal since the time of the Balkans. Tell me about that experience and some of the challenges in getting to this point and where we might be going in the future.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thank you for your question.

It covers a massive body of knowledge and work, but I'll try and boil it down for you.

As we contemplate operations, as we contemplate engaging in an operational area of any type, there are a number of military objectives at stake. Gender-based analysis plus essentially ensures that we consider all aspects of the vulnerable population as we contemplate those military objectives.

In other words, if we don't peer through the lens and assess the military challenge ahead of us without looking at the population that's often hidden from us, particularly in a counterinsurgency environment or an environment where we are trying to set the conditions for the re-establishment of governance, the capacity for development to occur.... Essentially, what we try to do is set the conditions for the re-establishment of the social, political and economic fabric. It's one of the principal tasks of the military. If you conduct your operations such that you jeopardize that to occur, you could not only harm vulnerable populations, but you also may not be addressing some of the very factors that are causing society to have been torn apart or be suffering through an insurgency.

We learned this first-hand in Afghanistan. In nations like that, you typically only deal with one part of the population, namely, the male part, and oftentimes, only a narrow band of males who speak English. If you go into a country that is having a nationwide crisis, that has been at war for 30 years, that is suffering immensely, and sits at the bottom of any United Nations indices on human growth and development, and you only speak to the male English speakers, you're probably not speaking to the most virtuous and needy part of society.

To be able to be a positive factor in helping to solve the military crisis in a counterinsurgency or anything that involves the population, we learned very quickly that you have to take account of civil society and all of the things that are represented by some of these vulnerable populations.

On my sense of the way ahead, I'll give you a particular case in point.

We contemplate what will happen in Iraq in the months and years to come as the coalition turns its mind towards the operations necessary to liberate Mosul from ISIL. Mosul is a city of 750,000 people, which has been invested by ISIL, in terms of its defence, for 14 to 17 months. It will potentially require a significant effort for Iraqi security forces to free that town.

Through our train, advise, and assist function, one of the things I think we can do in the assist role is provide aid. We don't have total knowledge, which is one of the reasons that indigenous forces are best used to take care of the business themselves. They have to look at that city, how to free it, liberate it, and ultimately how to help it sustain whatever goes on through the lens of everybody involved, including the vulnerable populations. I think that will be incredibly important. This will manifest itself in the military operations of the coalition in terms of how to handle a massive exodus of non-combatants and refugees.

What is the best way to do that? How do we anticipate what might happen to them at the hands of ISIL as they try to leave, as human shields try to depart, and so on? How do you contemplate an operation where there's a vulnerable population that may be subject to considerable use of chemical weapons as long as the last stand holds? I'm painting a picture for you of what could come to pass.

All that is to say we understand better now—we've had a fair bit of practice at it through our UN experiences in Afghanistan and now in Iraq—these conflicts that don't lend themselves to an end, because two militaries clash and the fighting is won by one side or the other, and then they sort of get on with rebuilding things. It doesn't work that way anymore. You are in among the population. The population is in jeopardy.

• (1615)

Finally, as we look at how Canada will engage in operations in the future, we find that one of the things we can bring to bear, as we are doing in Iraq, is to enable efforts as countries try to maintain stability or re-establish stability, whether under the auspices of the UN Security Council resolution or not. If we are called in to support or help, we have enablers. Our best enablers, of course, are Canadians who understand not only conflict but also best practices.

Equipment is good, but people are really good. If we have Canadian Armed Forces members equipped to help, whether they're conducting UN operations or conducting security operations or even operations such as those the Iraqi security forces are doing in Iraq, and, among the other things we do, we aid them in this domain and assist them in the planning and contemplation of vulnerable populations while operations are being done, then I think we will achieve greater success in the end. It's not necessarily a function of making the military solution happen quickly and easily; it's hard, and what you leave behind is actually more important. Something better has to occur as a result of the military operation. So this is one way of making sure that happens.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Laverdière.

[Translation]

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

Many thanks to our speakers for their very interesting presentations.

I was interested to note that you all mentioned the importance of the participation of women, not only as a general principle, but also as an effective measure that produces results. That is much appreciated.

General Vance, in other meetings, we have heard you talk about your efforts and we consider you a leader in this area within your own organization.

Could you tell me whether anyone from the RCMP is playing the same role, and if not, whether it would be desirable for someone to do that?

C/Supt Barbara Fleury: Thank you for your question.

I must point out that I came here to talk specifically about the international aspect of women's participation in peace missions.

In our organization, we are all leaders in this area. Some people work closely with the RCMP commissioner, who is the overall leader, to make sure that we have the means in place to encourage more women to join the RCMP. We want more of them to be in leadership positions and to work in very diversified areas.

This is not my area of responsibility. So I cannot say anymore about it.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Kent mentioned that United Nations missions in some countries have been rocked by scandals. The Secretary-General himself has admitted that the organization did not respond to situations of that kind with the attention and speed required.

Can Canada do anything specific to help improve the overall situation?

You can all feel free to answer.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Yes, absolutely. We can provide extensive training and support to the contingents of the troop-contributing nations in United Nations missions.

We can suggest new ideas on ways to conduct activities in peacekeeping missions in order to prevent and eliminate the times when things go wrong.

We can also provide mentorship. It is possible for us to be on the ground, with the United Nations contingents, to reduce incidents of sexual misconduct to zero. That can be done.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: You are aware that this committee intends to make suggestions to Global Affairs Canada as it drafts the new national action plan on this matter.

Given that your two organizations are actively involved in this debate, would you like the committee—I am certain that you will also be consulted directly—to emphasize specific aspects that, in your opinion, should be strengthened in the Canadian action plan?

Gen Jonathan Vance: I can answer that for you.

I believe that good leadership is important in all organizations. It is also essential that the employees are fully satisfied with their working conditions.

[English]

I know it may sound somewhat odd that the military would think about workplace safety and satisfaction given what we do for a living, but I'm convinced that in terms of the success on operations, even though that may be hard and lead to your injury or death, we are successful as teams that respect each other, that understand that every person is valued. In the value proposition, as we contemplate operations into the future, and I think this would exist in any domain in government that contemplates operations, the essentialness of women and diversity is beyond what had once upon a time been seen as important to do because it was just the right thing to do. It's now important to do because not only is it the right thing to do, but it also makes you better on operations.

Once you have completely and utterly understood that, and I have, I think, and my senior leadership has, then it liberates you to get on with the job. It does need leading just like any other part of anybody's institutions. I think that's where we have to go. Action plans have to be more than simply aspirational language; they have to lead to something.

My sense is that it needs to really speak to the function of the organization. It's a necessity. It's not an action plan just to make you feel good; it's an action plan that makes certain that you are good.

• (1625)

C/Supt Barbara Fleury: I think one of the strengths of Canada's national action plan is the contributing partners who all work collaboratively together so we can prioritize. There has been a review, as you know, and there were some recommendations in that review. We've adopted, as an example, one of those, which was to engage more with civil society in order to do our training, and we've brought in expertise and we've amended our training. Obviously, that's an important piece and we need to continue to do that in terms of contemporary issues that come up. I think that this is part of the way forward.

Saying more of the same may sound a bit blasé, but really we need to increase the number of women we deploy, so we need to continue looking at innovative strategies, our communication strategies to go out there and do that, so that we ensure they are in leadership positions and prepare them. That's part of our contribution, and it's part of our plan moving forward, ensuring that as we deploy internationally this component still continues to be maintained.

We have to continue to look at our training and make sure that it's constantly evolving to the new needs and demands of these increasingly complex missions and the work that our people need to do out there.

The Chair: Mr. Miller, please.

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs, Lib.): General Vance, Chief Superintendent Fleury, I appreciate your input and your presentations. They are very insightful.

I had the honour to serve in the armed forces. I taught a platoon that comprised six women in an infantry role, both basic training and

basic infantry training. That experience for a number of the members blew away a number of the myths that exist with respect to women in that role. Those are despicable myths and they lead to and result in a sexualized culture and indeed crimes and the despicable behaviour that's outlined in the Deschamps report. That colours the comments I'm about to make.

General Vance, you took accountability and I think one of the first bubbles in the report is your statement that it stops here, or words to that effect. I applaud that. My question is, are we going far enough? I'd like to hear your specific thoughts on attaining a 50% goal of women in the armed forces, both in combat and non-combat roles.

Chief Superintendent Fleury, I understand you're speaking for the RCMP, and if it's not your authority, feel free not to comment, but I'd like to hear that with respect to the RCMP as well.

These two institutions are basically the flag bearers of Canada. They shape our national identity and indeed our own personal identities. I fear that this culture, the behaviour, and indeed the crimes that are outlined in these reports, won't cease to exist until we attain a much more representative threshold than simply 25%, but I'd love to hear your thoughts on it.

General Vance.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thank you for your question. Thank you for your service. Thanks for training that platoon. It's good. I'll check and see how you did. I'll let you know.

Our objective, as the senior leadership of the armed forces, is to increase by 1% per year over the next 10 years from our current rate of 15%. I think we were out in front of most of our allies in terms of the percentage of women in the armed forces, back when it started to become a big issue.

Efforts have been made to attract and retain women, but they haven't necessarily gone far enough. In fact, I've issued an order to make it 1% per year for 10 years to get us to 25%.

In and of itself, I think that is fairly draconian because of the steps necessary to make that happen. I think over 1,400 women will need to be recruited into the armed forces.

We'll have that candidate pool available to us, I believe. It's a question then of how we value potential recruits. As we progress in the years and decades ahead, as warfare evolves and the types of jobs that need to be done evolve, the value proposition will be less and less. It will make it more obvious why you could get to more parity.

You mention a goal of 50%. I don't know if you misunderstood me that we're going to 25%. I wouldn't deliberately stop it at 25%. If it goes beyond that, that's fine.

I believe I have bitten off a lot. In fact, I have asked a lot of my chief of military personnel command to get us to 25%, just given where we've been, where we are, and the fact that we want to evolve at a much faster pace than we've evolved at before, but we also want to make certain that we learn lessons along the way to ensure we're successful.

The worst thing we could do would be to conduct this evolution in such a way as to make it difficult for the next 25%. I have been encouraged by some, as we have spoken about our targets, which have always been 25%, to reduce my target goal in order, at 15%, to appear to be closer to it. I reject that out of hand. We're actually going to try to get to 25%.

However, it's going to take a great deal of effort. It's going to take resources and a different approach to recruiting. It's going to take a retention strategy that understands there are many ways to serve, many different career paths, and that the standard template we have used and understood—and some of those templates have existed since the 1950s and 1960s—will no longer work. They're underpinned by policies that underpin many of the policies that affect resources and how we compensate people and so on.

Much of it is in my hands. Some of it will be in the hands of my colleagues in government. However, I do assure you that we will try and I think we'll succeed.

Your first question was on whether we have gone far enough, and you introduced the question with the terrible things that have happened around sexual assault and harassment. I thought I heard you say—

• (1630)

Mr. Marc Miller: I asked whether 25% was far enough.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Okay, because I'm all about reducing harassment in the armed forces to zero.

C/Supt Barbara Fleury: Thank you for the question.

We often have this discussion in the world I live in, the international community, because we talk about the UN's desire to have more women police. My colleagues in the international police world say the same thing, "If only we had more at home, domestically, to provide to the UN". As a matter of fact, I believe the Secretary-General of the UN, when he was in Canada recently, said we need more women police, and the commissioner said, "Well, so do I".

The RCMP's objective is 30% at this point. As of 2015, the percentage and composition of regular member police in the RCMP was 21%. In the most senior ranks, women represent about one-third of the commissioner's senior executive committee. Female officers lead five out of 15 of the RCMP divisions.

Do we strive to achieve more? Absolutely. When I look at the start of my career, one of our goals was to get to 20%, and we really didn't think that was realistic. We've passed that. It takes time, but it takes consistent energy to try to recruit more people and to retain them.

Sometimes we focus a lot on the numbers. We also need to focus on the positions and the roles and importance of what those people actually do.

• (1635)

Mr. Marc Miller: Thank you.

The Chair: We have a few minutes, so we'll go to the second round, and we'll go to Mr. Levitt.

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Thank you, first of all, for coming here today and for adding your voice and your

perspective to what has been an absolutely challenging and fascinating area of study that we've been addressing over the last month. It's been a real eye-opener for many of us who didn't have as clear a perspective on this issue. Again, the range of speakers, including yourselves, has been fantastic.

General Vance, can you talk about accountability for the CDS directive on integrating gender perspectives into military planning and operations? How do you assign responsibility for achieving results, and do you think it can be used as an example for similar accountability measures in non-military organizations?

Gen Jonathan Vance: The accountability rests with the commander, ultimately with me, regardless of what sector or domain of the operation we undertake. One of the strongest parts of our culture is the concept of accountability by commanders for every decision taken and for the results of the operations.

We have a planning mindset. It's deep in our DNA. We plan and we execute with the same people with whom we plan. As we put gender-based analysis plus into the mix, we will treat it the same way we treat the management of fires, manoeuvres, and protection against all perils. It will become a combat function, an action, one of the principal factors.

When we'd look at the intelligence picture of a place we were going to operate, we'd look at the ground, the topography, the infrastructure, and we'd understand the enemy. In Afghanistan, we learned to understand a wider range, the civilians, so we didn't just understand the red side of the equation; we started to understand other actors in that space. Friendly forces that aren't yours, that are from another country: civilians, civil society, NGOs, the list goes on. The commander, and I was one in Afghanistan, has to take all that into account as he or she considers prosecuting an operation. You're not just enemy-centric; you need to firmly understand what you're going to do as a result of a military action, and what you are going to leave as a result. What did you try to improve? If it's just a matter of destroying some part of the enemy, that's fine, but you can't do that in an irresponsible way that would somehow lead to civilian casualties or make it impossible for the civilian population to recover after the fact, so we hold our commanders accountable for the tasks we give them in operations. We are very good at assessing, because we plan, we execute, and we also have a strong assessment function: did you achieve what we asked you to achieve?

There's another whole body of work around running the armed forces as an institution. Being an institution within Canada and a respected one, the accountabilities still rest with people like General Whitecross and me, the leadership of the armed forces, to not only be able to conduct operations correctly in that chain of command, but also to run our institution wisely and correctly, and to take into account all aspects of gender-based analysis and the spirit behind the action plan for peace and security to make certain that we have an institution that's a good place for everybody to come to work. Holding ourselves accountable and being held accountable to that, I think, is and must be on a par with all the other objectives that we are to achieve in this institution, so it can't be buried. It can't be seen as a side bolt on part of what we do. It has to be fundamental to how we are held accountable.

The Chair: Thank you.

For the last question, we'll go to Mr. Clement.

● (1640)

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): General Vance, what's the biggest thing you think we can learn in this area from other jurisdictions, and what's the biggest thing that we should avoid looking at in other jurisdictions, given your familiarity with them?

Gen Jonathan Vance: Other military jurisdictions?

Hon. Tony Clement: Yes.

Gen Jonathan Vance: I think I'll ask General Whitecross to pitch in here, because she's been around the world and talked to other jurisdictions in other countries.

It seems to me that as we're dealing with the specifics of gender-based analysis plus, we have to see it from the perspective of the intent and the ability to operationalize it. We can't use it as whitewash. It's not just something you do after the fact. It's not "add women and stir". It has to become an essential part of what you do.

I won't name where I think this is the case, but I think the record out there is a bit spotty as we look across our allies and across NATO. Those who have incorporated this deep into the essence of military planning and the execution of operations understood the nature of warfare today and how to prosecute warfare today. I think those are the allies from whom we can take the greatest direction, counsel, and collaboration.

Before I hand it over to General Whitecross, I would just say that it's important to share the lessons learned and to work with those other jurisdictions to see what works and what doesn't. We can't claim to be alone in this. As we undertake coalition operations, sometimes we're only held up as good as the lowest common denominator in the coalition.

It's to our benefit, certainly with our principal allies and partners, to make certain the nature of conflict as it relates to vulnerable populations and how we can do things better needs to pervade and be shared. Some of our allies are great at sharing, and they put a great deal of effort into sharing knowledge. NATO is a great place to share knowledge.

Where it seems to work is when you put the necessary effort and resources behind it. It does take resources. It does take a concerted effort, and then it becomes second nature.

LGen Christine Whitecross: Thanks, sir.

In our deliberations with our major military allies, it's really about that culture change at the grassroots level. Everything that General Vance is talking about in terms of putting in the policies and all that kind of stuff has to come out of this genesis of ensuring every person of your military force agrees with the premise of due dignity and respect for all. Our main military allies agree with that in terms of the difficulty they're getting into moving the yardstick forward.

I would say that our policies in general are a bit more open than those of some of our allies in terms of unconscious bias and a couple of other things. We do have a lot of work to do, but it's creating the

environment where there is a general understanding and deep respect for dignity for all in the culturalized sense.

The Chair: Colleagues, we're going to have to wrap it up there.

General Vance and Chief Superintendent Fleury, we want to thank you very much, with your colleagues, for this presentation and for speaking with us on what we have come to believe is a very important study we're working on. We hope to make some solid, comprehensive recommendations to the government on how to make this that much better out there than you see in the rest of the world.

I thank you for your presentations. Keep in mind we may come back at a later date to ask for more information as we work our way through this study.

Thank you very much.

Colleagues, we'll take a five-minute break. They're going to set up for video conferencing, and then we'll go from there.

● (1640)

(Pause)

● (1645)

The Chair: We are resuming our study on women, peace, and security.

On video conferencing, we have UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme. We have with us Nahla Valji.

We also have Randi Davis with us.

I didn't ask the obvious question. Who's starting first with a presentation?

Ms. Randi Davis (Director, Gender Team, United Nations Development Programme): Nahla, you go ahead.

The Chair: That will be UN Women.

Go ahead with your presentations, one following the other, and then we'll get into questions. Thank you very much for appearing.

Ms. Nahla Valji (Deputy Chief, Peace and Security Section, UN Women): Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for inviting us here to testify in front of you today.

My statement to you is going to be informed by my role as the head of the secretariat to the global study on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, which was undertaken last year for the 15-year anniversary of Resolution 1325, as well as my current role as deputy chief of the peace and security section at UN Women.

I want to begin by saying that as a Canadian and as UN Women's lead in relation to our Security Council work, I had a tremendous sense of pride to be in the audience a few weeks ago at the UN when Prime Minister Trudeau was there at the Commission on the Status of Women and announced Canada's bid for a seat on the Security Council in five years.

Of course, Canada was last on the Security Council in 2000 when Resolution 1325 was passed. At the time, it was a historic first for the world's highest body on peace and security to recognize the integral role of women but also gender equality in relation to international peace and security.

Over the past 16 years, Canada has led the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security in New York through their mission there, and for the past two years at our request led the Group of Friends of the Global Study on Resolution 1325, something which I was incredibly grateful for.

There were three peace and security reviews that were undertaken by the UN last year: one on peace operations, one on the peace-building architecture, and the third on the 15-year review of women, peace, and security. Ours was the only one of the three reviews that did not receive staffing and resources, so the support of member states and Canada's leadership were particularly important to the process.

For the review of the current national action plan and the plans for the next NAP that will be undertaken, these consultations and Canada's announcement could not come at a more opportune moment. Globally, we are facing a depth and a complexity of challenges that are unique in recent history in terms of peace and security.

The number of civil wars has tripled in the past 10 years alone. Around the world, more people are displaced than at any time since the end of World War II. Humanitarian needs, many of them caused or exacerbated by conflict, have reached \$20 billion. These factors are all exacerbated by climate change, rising violent extremism, and global health pandemics with security dimensions.

It is no coincidence, as I mentioned, that last year the UN undertook three reviews on peace and security, of which the 15-year review on women, peace, and security was one. There's a clear sense that our institutions and traditional responses are ill-equipped for the current context, but the moment is also opportune, as Canada has been a leading figure on an agenda that is gaining recognition as a credible tool to strengthen our peace and security efforts.

Last year, to inform the global study, we consolidated over a decade of research and practice and added to it through global consultations and new commissioned research. The clear finding and message to emerge from the review process was that we now have an unquestionable evidence base that women's meaningful participation is critical to our operational effectiveness in building sustainable peace and inclusive security.

We know that where we have greater numbers of female peacekeepers among UN troops it increases the credibility of our peacekeeping missions on the ground. It increases the level of reporting of sexual and gender-based crimes. It increases our ability to access the communities that we are intending to protect. It in fact decreases the incidences of peacekeeper sexual exploitation and abuse.

When we prioritize gender equality in our humanitarian assistance, it leads to more effective humanitarian assistance, not only for women and girls, but for women, men, boys, and girls, for entire communities. When we target women for post-conflict economic recovery, we see that it has knock-on impacts on families and communities and accelerates economic growth and stability.

Coming out of last year, we now have both a quantitative and a qualitative evidence base with regard to women's meaningful participation in peace processes and transition. Quantitatively, we

now know that women's meaningful participation in these processes increases the sustainability of peace by 30% over 15 years. Across 40 processes that were examined, we see that the meaningful participation of women leads to the conclusion of talks, the implementation of agreements, and the sustainability of peace.

● (1650)

We drilled down to look at why this might be the case. Once we began to look at different case studies, it became quite evident. If we use the example of South Sudan, where we primarily have two actors sitting at a table discussing issues such as immediate ceasefires, security arrangements, territory, access to oil wealth, and government positions, we have an agreement that meets the needs of the two main actors. What we are not bringing to the table is the broader constituencies, the communities that have been affected by the conflict and need to protect peace agreements in the long term.

Bringing women's meaningful participation to these processes brings a broader constituency, shifts the dynamics at the peace table, and ensures, as I mentioned, the conclusion of talks and the implementation of agreements.

Fifteen years after the passage of Resolution 1325, however, we still know that the number of female peacekeepers at the UN remains at only 3%. Moreover, research conducted for the global study by the OECD found that less than 2% of funds to fragile contexts goes to furthering women's rights and needs. Only a fraction of this 2% goes to the women's organizations that are on the front lines of response in these countries.

Despite the disjuncture between what we know and what we seem to practise, the 15-year anniversary of Resolution 1325 last year provided us with some important tools to begin to fill the gap, many of them captured in Security Council Resolution 2242, which was the eighth resolution on women, peace, and security passed.

On the funding front—and I'm just going to mention a few of them—we now have the global acceleration instrument on women, peace, and security and humanitarian engagement. This is a pooled UN trust fund that has been established with donors, the UN and civil society in particular, to conduit funding to crisis contexts and directly to women's organizations on the ground.

In the Security Council, we now have a new mechanism, the informal expert group on women, peace, and security. This group had its first meeting in February, focused on Mali, at which the deputy special representative of the Secretary-General in Bamako joined us by VTC for 90 minutes to tell the council what the situation was in relation to women in Bamako, the peace agreement implementation, concrete gender conflict analysis, and what the mission was doing to increase women's participation, as well as protection from sexual violence crimes.

We also have a concrete focus in Resolution 2242 on countering and preventing violent extremism and some concrete recommendations within that. One of them, echoing the Secretary-General's report on women, peace, and security in October, calls for increased funding for gender equality and women's empowerment within our counterterrorism efforts. Specifically, the Secretary-General's report called for a 15% target for the UN system, which is something that UN Women is now taking forward and encouraging member states to adopt as well.

In revising the national action plan, I would encourage that Canada look at the best practices and lessons learned captured in the chapter on national action plans in the global study. This includes, in particular, the importance of widespread consultations, the role of civil society, dedicated funding allocations, and proper monitoring and evaluation included in the design.

It is important that the new national action plan reflect the current realities globally. In this regard, I would encourage Canada to take the lead, in particular on the issue of preventing encountering violent extremism, as echoed in Resolution 2242.

There is perhaps no form of conflict that has made the gendered underpinnings of insecurity and violence more clear than the rise of violent extremism that we are currently witnessing. These groups target women's and girls' basic rights to exist, to health, education, public life, and rights over their own bodies, but they equally use gender stereotypes for their own ends in their radicalization and recruitment efforts as well as in their use of young girls as suicide bombers, as we are increasingly seeing by Boko Haram.

In Mali, our office recently found evidence of social media targeting urban youth in the north with anti-gender equality and anti-women's rights messaging and language in order to lay the foundations for radicalization and recruitment, something that was then conveyed to the Security Council during the first informal expert group meeting that focused on Mali.

• (1655)

In looking forward across the next five years, I would encourage Canada to make women, peace, and security the centrepiece of their campaign for the Security Council. A resolution that was barely accepted by the council 16 years ago has grown beyond a rights agenda to be perhaps one of the most significant tools we have to meet the peace and security challenges of today. Canada, as a founding member of that agenda, is well placed to lead in realizing its full potential.

Thank you.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go right to Randi Davis.

Ms. Randi Davis: Thank you very much.

I can only echo my colleague's statement in appreciating the opportunity to be here in front of you today. I would also mention how much of a pleasure it was to have the Prime Minister here, showing so much leadership on the issue. We both happen to be Canadians before you, so we have a bit of a dual allegiance here.

Let me begin my remarks with some background on the work of UNDP, because my remarks will be contextualized in the type of work we do. I will give you a bit of a global overview of what we're seeing going on in the field.

UNDP is the main development arm of the United Nations. We work in nearly 170 countries and territories around the world. Our mandate spans the full range of development challenges, from those related to sustainable growth and development, to those related to governance and peace-building, and to those that relate to climate and disaster resilience. We also are the main arm of the United Nations when it comes to recovery from conflict or disaster.

We're engaged around the world helping countries to conduct free and fair elections, undertake constitutional political processes as well as legal reforms, and we're quite engaged in working with other parts of the UN, including UN Women, to strengthen the rule of law and build judicial institutions in crisis and in non-crisis countries.

Putting that in context, when we look at what we do on gender equality and women's empowerment, these are very central features of all the work we do. By and large the strongest aspect of our work related to the women, peace, and security agenda relates to the participation pillar of the agenda, and specifically to efforts to promote women's participation in post-crisis and transitional governance processes. This means ensuring that women participate in constitution-making, in elections, and in public administration.

We know that post-conflict transitions provide unique opportunities to jump-start women's progress on women's political participation. We have seen this realized in countries across the world. I would argue that if we look at the Resolution 1325 agenda, this is the area where we've seen some progress—not enough, but progress.

Unfortunately, as Nahla was pointing out, there has been less progress when we look at women's role in formal peace processes. I won't go into the statistics, which we already heard. We do see a little bit of progress in recent peace processes in Colombia and the Philippines, but this is really an area where I think global attention needs to be focused going forward.

Canada, along with other member states, can use a number of diplomatic channels, including bilateral and multilateral channels, and play an important role in urging parties to negotiations to include women in their delegations, identifying and supporting women leaders, and demanding that internationally sponsored negotiations create and finance processes for women's engagement.

I'd like to address the issue of sexual violence in conflict. Today we do have a much more comprehensive normative and international legal framework for addressing sexual violence. Organizations like the United Nations are certainly doing more to provide comprehensive services for victims and to build the structures we need to end impunity, including training police and military in countries, supporting investigations, and supporting transitional justice mechanisms. However, despite the increased global attention, prosecutions are way outpaced by violations. The wheels of justice are taking decades instead of years.

What I really want to call for is that we redouble our efforts and invest more in preventative action. While a prevention agenda requires greater investments in early warning systems and preventative diplomacy, above all else we require greater investments in addressing the structural and underlying inequalities that are the root causes that drive conflict. This demands intensified investments in basic gender equality programming in not only fragile and conflict-affected contexts but in stable contexts as well.

● (1705)

We know that when women are educated, when they have access to resources and opportunities, and when their political, economic, and social rights are secured, they are less vulnerable to violence in all its forms.

There is a growing body of research showing that the security of women is one of the most reliable indicators of the peacefulness of a state. We have heard that already; it's a view included in the global study. Therefore, a key component of conflict prevention itself is greater investment in women's and girl's empowerment. We have to see that link as essential.

These are areas in which Canada has some of the best global expertise to offer, working on bread-and-butter gender equality work around the world, on reproductive health and rights, on education, on economic and political empowerment. This type of bread-and-butter gender equality support is still underfunded. We continue to see a lack of investments in women's empowerment in all areas.

I would now like to reflect upon some of these new contextual challenges, which my colleague mentioned, that have really come to the fore in recent years.

First, crises, whether resulting from conflict or climate-related events, are causing profound and lasting displacements and migration trends that threaten to stall and even reverse progress for women and girls in communities. If we take the Syrian crisis, for example, we see early marriage rising from 12%, I believe the estimates were, in 2011, until by 2014 the number was as high as 32%. We can safely assume the rate has gone up and that their number is probably underestimated.

We know that more than two million Syrian children are out of school and that in many host countries, Syrian women and girls do not have papers to access services or employment. Ensuring that these women and girls are educated, employed, and able to participate in the decisions that affect their daily lives is vital to building their resilience and reducing their vulnerabilities to violence.

We need to look at violence from the point of view not only of protection and response, but of how we reduce the vulnerabilities. It is also vital to invest in these women and girls if we are going to have future leaders or a future society upon which to build a future Syria. If we want to bridge the humanitarian nexus, which is the focus of the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit, we must focus on investing in what I call development in humanitarian contexts. This is not what is going on at the moment. Other challenges that must be addressed include the rise and spread of violent extremism, which was mentioned, the proliferation of non-state actors to conflict, and the protracted nature of conflict and recovery.

We must recognize that groups such as ISIS, Boko Haram, and others use sexual violence as deliberate and central tactics to repress populations and destroy the social foundations upon which any recovery must be built. It is hard when we look at these conflicts to envisage how long it's going to take, even if we have a cessation of violence. The progression from conflict to cessation of hostilities to peacemaking and peace-building is not at all linear any more, if it ever was. We need to recognize that preventing sexual violence must be a fundamental and priority component of countering violent extremism and conflict prevention.

What can Canada do? Canada can use the development of its next national action plan to think broadly about conflict prevention in this new context and put gender equality at the centre of strategies. The broader agenda on conflict prevention must be centred around the question of how we build inclusive societies based on social, political, economic, and cultural rights. Canada is a great example of an inclusive society.

When I asked actors on the ground what they would like me to convey to you today, they told me time and again that Canada's leadership is needed more than ever to provide alternatives to what are now primarily militarized responses to bring about peaceful societies. People are looking to Canada to speak up, to engage in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy through formal and informal channels, to promote a human security and human dignity agenda that is backed by investments in the full range of human rights. They are looking for governments like Canada's to find a way to halt the alarming trend of violations against human rights defenders, who are being silenced via actual or threatened violence.

● (1710)

We have seen high-profile murders in countries like Libya and Honduras recently. It is not only this, but women face violence when they try to run for office or when they try to expose corruption in their communities. This is a real issue that is silencing the ability of local actors to bring about change in their communities.

Finally, let me underscore that advancing this sort of agenda requires supporting and partnering with civil society organizations working on the ground. These are the organizations at the front line of countering radicalization and providing alternatives for youth and vulnerable groups in identifying and capacitating the leaders who we want to engage in decision-making.

Whenever we have seen women participate effectively in democratic processes, it's because of these civil society groups. Yet, as we heard earlier, the funding is way insufficient for them to really operate and have any meaningful impact.

Let me conclude by saying that I'm not sure if from Ottawa you can see the change that the Government of Canada recently has had in terms of setting a tone with a new gender-balanced government, with the participation of the Prime Minister in the CSW. There's tremendous enthusiasm around the world. People everywhere are looking towards our country to play a leadership role on an agenda for women, peace, and security, and gender equality more broadly.

I think this new action plan is a fantastic opportunity for Canada to meet these expectations, to put the commitments into action, but it requires an integration of an approach towards women, peace, and security that brings this together with the development and foreign policy agenda of the government.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation and your recommendations that are included in your presentation.

Colleagues, we're going to go straight to questions now. I understand that Mr. Genuis is going to start.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. I'm going to try to get in a couple of different questions.

First of all, I would just say parenthetically that I appreciated hearing Ms. Valji's comments about the value of a Security Council bid, and I think all of us here would hope to see Canada play that role. Our hope in particular though is that Canada, in the process of trying to achieve that seat, does not sacrifice our values in the pursuit of that role, that we don't end up, let's say, doing too much to cozy up to regimes that don't respect our values and don't respect human rights.

I want to ask Ms. Valji one question that interests me.

We hear often in the west narratives of helplessness and rescue when it comes to women in conflict zones, and sometimes we mistakenly buy into this idea that women in some of these situations are totally helpless and that we in the west need to jump in and fix the situation for them. But there's a lot of evidence in many conflict zones, of course, that there are networks of strong women that are resisting oppression on their own, sometimes with clandestine networks, and it's just the importance of identifying and working with those networks.

I was reading something recently by Elahé Rostami-Povey about the situation in Afghanistan. I just want to read this quote because I think it's interesting:

As we have seen, a great many women school and university teachers were engaged in teaching girls, young women, and some boys in their neighbourhoods.

This is describing the situation under the Taliban.

The homes of these women and others with specific skills became community homes, financed and managed entirely by women, mainly for girls and women, but also for boys. It was by word of mouth that women and girls spread the news about the secret schools to other women and girls. They hid their books, notebooks, pens and pencils under their borge, risked their lives and went to the secret schools everyday.

I found that interesting as a description of what was happening under the Taliban. I would be curious to hear your comments about how we in the west avoid this narrative of helplessness and instead can identify and work with and empower these networks of women working in potentially very oppressive situations to make sure that we're using all the resources that are available.

Ms. Nahla Valji: I'll begin with that comment about the Security Council bid, and I fully see that perspective about being weary. I would reiterate that if the theme of women, peace, and security is at the heart of Canada's bid, walking the talk on those values will be incredibly important, and will actually set a tone. We're at a point at the moment where we see a lot of lip service being paid to this agenda, but too few are actually walking the talk.

In October of last year, during the 15-year anniversary at the Security Council resolution, it was actually the largest open debate in the Security Council's history, not just the largest of debates on women, peace, and security, but the largest of any debate that ever took place in the Security Council. There were 112 registered speakers. Everyone was lining up to say how important this agenda is, but very few of them carry it through in terms of implementation. There is a real opportunity here to set that agenda and set that standard.

In terms of the role of women, I could not agree with you more. As UN Women, our focus has strongly been on women's participation and leadership and how we can support that, recognizing that there are important components of protection that do underpin that. The kind of insecurity and violence that women continue to face, both during conflict and post-conflict, undermines and weakens their ability to participate in economic recovery, post-conflict elections, etc., as Randi mentioned. Therefore, there are important elements of protection that do underpin participation, and the entire agenda does need to fit together when we look at that.

However, I do think far more attention needs to be paid to the role of women in securing peace and security. Just to mention Mali again, one of things that was mentioned to the Security Council during that informal expert group meeting on women, peace, and security was recent research that was undertaken in the north of Mali on the gender influences on demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. What the research found was a very stark gender division in influences on ex-combatants. They were asked who it was that influenced them to take up arms, to continue fighting, and to come back and sustainably reintegrate. In just one of those areas, to come back and sustainably reintegrate and stay in their communities, the distinction was that 40% had been influenced by their mothers to come back. We miss the influence, the role that women can play in those kinds of societies.

We also miss the fact that women in communities are the first to notice the signs of radicalization in their families, and are at the front line of conflict prevention. We do need to be supporting that.

I just want to give you one final example. In Burundi, UN Women and the peace-building fund have been supporting a network of 500-plus women mediators in communities across Burundi. Given the incredibly tense situation there at the moment, these women have addressed some 3,000-plus community-level conflicts over the past 18 months. Some were social, some family, and some political. They prevented them from spilling over. They addressed rumours that were leading to population flights between communities. They defused tensions. They negotiated with government for the release of detainees. This is a group of 500 women who've been able to contain the tensions in many of their communities, so I think far more needs to go, in particular, to supporting women's organizations on the ground.

That is something we're trying to do with the new pooled funding mechanism. The global acceleration instrument, GAI, on women, peace, and security and humanitarian engagement is meant to be a funding mechanism of the international community to conduit that money directly where it's needed. In fact, the GAI is now supporting those women in Burundi to scale up those efforts.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Thank you so much for presenting to our committee. I'm very thrilled that two Canadians are serving on the world stage. I thank you for that as well.

How does UN Women support justice and security institutions that protect women and girls from violence and discrimination? Could you give us a couple of concrete examples of how it works?

Ms. Nahla Valji: Absolutely.

I'm going to give you a couple of examples and then I'm going to hand it over to Randi, because the UNDP actually is the broader development rule of law justice focus.

The UN system in the past few years has actually undertaken an institutional arrangement of UNDP and DPKO being collocated in an arrangement called the global focal point for police, justice, and corrections. They are meant to be the point people on justice in conflict settings.

UN Women has seconded somebody to this team in order to ensure that gender is being mainstreamed into everything that the UN is doing in rule of law post-conflict: ensuring that women's access to justice issues is being addressed, that sexual gender-based crimes are being addressed, and that we are ideally earmarking a minimum of 15% funding for rule of law initiatives to support gender equality and women's empowerment. That's one way in which we're supporting. We have a global program on transitional justice, so we support truth commissions and reparations programs from Mali to South Sudan to Colombia as they get set up on their process there.

I think one of the most important initiatives for UN Women over the past few years has actually been a collaboration with Canada, a collaboration with the Justice Rapid Response, an intergovernmental justice mechanism that was created by Canada and the international community for the international community. In the past five years, UN Women has partnered with JRR to create a dedicated sub-roster of sexual and gender-based crimes investigators. This roster has been incredibly important, because it's allowed UN Women to second SGBV, sexual gender-based violence, justice experts to all UN commissions of inquiry and all fact-finding missions that the UN undertakes.

The documentation of crimes that we've been hearing about coming out of Syria over the past four years is due to this initiative. The evidence base we have on crimes by Boko Haram in Libya and Iraq from their fact-finding missions is due to this initiative and to our partnership with JRR.

Last year, we supported the International Criminal Court, and that led to the first confirmation in the Ntaganda case, a confirmation of all sexual violence charges. The chief prosecutor mentioned that it was a direct result of us having an investigator there. That partnership has been an incredibly important one. A Canadian initiative, a Canadian partnership, started it, and that Canadian partnership has allowed us to work, in particular, in the Middle East region, in Jordan and Iraq, supporting and mentoring first responders to identify sexual violence crimes and to respond to them.

• (1720)

Ms. Randi Davis: I won't add much, because that was a very comprehensive response.

I'll just say that a large part of our work is related to working with security institutions in countries in crisis or in post-crisis and trying to train them on international standards and norms and to introduce gender equality human rights into the training of police and the military. We are also working to build the capacity of the court systems to meet international standards.

We're also introducing different modalities to improve access to justice so that poor women and women in rural or difficult remote areas have access to justice through a range of very innovative, different types of court systems, courts that are open on Saturdays, for example, to clear out backlogs of cases. There's a very broad range that varies from country to country.

I could cite many different cases of work with the justice sectors around the world, but what we're seeing is that no matter how much we're investing in building up the justice institutions, the focus still needs to shift over to prevention, because we just can't keep up. We need radical change in our approaches to really focus on changing stereotypes and the concepts of masculinities that prevail in many countries around the world.

We're trying to really unpack the prevalence rates and what the drivers are so we can get at the preventive side of the equation.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Madame Laverdière.

● (1725)

[Translation]

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

I assume that you have access to the simultaneous translation. Thank you very much for your very interesting presentations.

Ms. Valji, I was very interested by what you said, in particular when you were talking about the role of the women, peace and security program in preventing violent extremism. In reply to another question, you gave some more details when you spoke about the influence of mothers and the fact that women are often the first to notice radicalization.

Are there other aspects that you wanted to point out in this specific area?

[English]

Ms. Nahla Valji: Absolutely, and thank you for the opportunity.

The first thing to mention is the intersection between gender equality and violent extremism. What is common to these groups is an agenda that is against women's rights and against gender equality. What we also find is that, as a result, violent extremism seems to take root more easily in communities in the context where there is gender inequality.

It is much easier to radicalize and recruit in a context where what's core to your agenda is a push back on women's rights. It's easier to radicalize and recruit in a context where we don't have models of women as political leaders, educated mothers, sisters, community leaders, etc. The direct nexus between gender inequality and radicalization and recruitment is important to look at.

The second thing to look at is the fact that when these groups spread, their first targets are often women and girls. The push-back on women's clothing, where they go, how they dress, their education, their health, etc., is an early warning indicator in itself we need to be paying attention to.

Then, of course, there is the role in prevention. Having said that, we do also need to be very careful we do not turn women into a securitized institution either, but that we are protecting their spaces and protecting women themselves. In particular, there have been cases where we're connecting early warning mechanisms directly to criminal justice responses, which may not be appropriate when you're asking women to hand over their sons through a criminal justice response because they're seeing radicalization. We need to also be protecting women. We cannot be criminalizing their spaces. We cannot be securitizing their spaces.

I think that's why it's so important that women, peace, and security be applied to our countering and preventing violent extremism efforts. The reason for that is that at the heart of WPS, it is a rights agenda, an equality agenda, and it is a demilitarization and prevention agenda. These are exactly the qualities we need to bring to our efforts to prevent the spread of violent extremism.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much. It's very interesting.

I have another question for you.

I would like to understand better what the organizational links are between UN Women and the DPKO. How does that work?

Ms. Nahla Valji: How do we fit together?

UN Women chairs a UN standing committee on women, peace, and security. UNDP, DPKO, and OHCHR, all the major entities, are on that standing committee. We all coordinate our efforts. We work very closely with DPKO, in particular, on two initiatives.

Training peacekeepers on the prevention of sexual violence is something we initiated a few years ago and piloted in 18 countries. DPKO is now rolling out pre-deployment for all of their training and has been successful.

We have now initiated a new effort, which is training female military officers. We've piloted this in three countries and now have trained 120 women. DPKO told us last week that 75% of them are pipelined for deployment quite soon. This means we're able to increase the number of female military peacekeepers within the UN system.

At the country level, it differs in each context. Where we have peacekeeping missions, the relationship between the UN country team and the mission varies in each context. In some contexts, it's a very positive one, and in others there may be some gaps, tensions, and challenges as a result of mandates on the ground, but I think that's also about issues of capacity.

We have complementary mandates on the ground in terms of women, peace, and security and the peacekeeping missions. We do work closely with DPKO on the ground as well.

● (1730)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fragiskatos, go ahead.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you to both of you for taking the time. We really appreciate it.

In undertaking this study, we have heard from many witnesses about the importance of including women in the peace process. Indeed, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that when women are included, there is a much greater chance that the peace will be sustainable.

The question is for both of you. What advice would you give to the Government of Canada on this issue? How can we put this on the table and make sure that women are included in the peace process?

My follow-up question is slightly related. One of the emerging themes that has come up in recent weeks in these committee proceedings is the importance of working with local civil society. Here again, today, we have heard from both of you how crucial that is. What advice would you give to Canadian policy-makers and to the Government of Canada in this regard? How can governments such as Canada forge the ties that are necessary to build links with civil society organizations in order for lasting peace to be possible?

Ms. Nahla Valji: Randi, you go first.

Ms. Randi Davis: I think, globally, there are now enough civil society organizations that network local institutions into either regional or global networks, so it is easy to identify local civil society organizations with capacity and credibility on the ground through international partners, either through us, at the UN—we have linkages with different countries on the ground—or through your own embassies, which have linkages. There are also a host of women, peace, and security organizations that work internationally, which you could tap into and support directly to channel support to actors on the ground. While you would not necessarily know how to reach a woman in Pakistan who is doing deradicalization work, those networks can reach that woman rather easily nowadays. There are a number of international organizations that could channel those resources or that support, as could we.

I think that if there is any take-away from my contribution here, that would be it. Fundamentally, we hear around the world that the democratic space is closing on civil society, and women's civil society specifically is stretched, and yet we know that if we can support them to do the work they do anyway in their homes and communities, the bang for the buck is tremendous. I want to stress that very loudly.

The second question, on the peace process, is a really tricky one. My colleague will answer more because she is more directly engaged with some of the peace processes. It is a difficult one because of the way peace processes shape up in different contexts. There are many different things you can do. One is capacitation of actors who can engage in peace processes, not just negotiators, to contribute mediators to international peace processes. You can train local women in countries that are entering into negotiations to participate in those negotiations. You can support initiatives. We have numerous initiatives that are being undertaken to bring women's voices around the table or to build a collective women's agenda in a given country context that would bring the gender issues or the issues that women of that country would want to bring to negotiation. You could support those sorts of initiatives that would enable women to engage more meaningfully and enable us to better identify the leadership that is needed to engage in peace processes.

Finally, I think there is a real role for bilateral diplomacy, when you have your own relationships with parties who are in peace processes, to nudge them through all of the bilateral means you have—economic and other bilateral diplomacy—and tell them that it is an important priority for the Government of Canada to ensure that they are bringing women into peace negotiations. There are many things that can be done.

• (1735)

Ms. Nahla Valji: I would add a couple of things to that.

One of the really important things that can be done is to use Canada's voice to shift the narrative. In the past, there was often this excuse that there weren't any capacitated women, or there weren't any women who were ready to be at the table. We can give you so many examples of that.

To give you one example, going back to Mali, when the violence spread there in the north in 2012, the deputy mayor of Gao was negotiating with the armed rebels to get humanitarian assistance into the camps and to her people. When we as the international

community went in there to tap people on the shoulder to be at the peace table, even though she was a political leader and had been doing hands-on negotiations and was respected by her community, she was not one of the ones who was tapped to sit at the table. As a result, we had entirely men sitting at the table for those talks. That happens again and again.

We saw this with Syria as well. It was the women in the communities who were negotiating with the armed actors to get humanitarian assistance to their families and to their communities. It has taken us until these last few months to secure any role for women in the Syrian process, yet once it begins, we see the way in which it has traction.

Special Envoy de Mistura started this most recent round of talks a few weeks ago. I thought it was very interesting that in the first press statements he gave in Geneva, he was telling the press corps, "I had my first meeting." Then it was, "I will be having a meeting in 45 minutes with government." Then he stopped himself and said, "Actually, that's not the first meeting of these talks. The first meeting of these talks was with whom it should have been, and that's my women's advisory board. I met with them yesterday afternoon. Here is the intelligence that they gave me. Here is what they're telling me are the conditions on the ground and in the camps and what would motivate and incentivize people to go home to Syria, etc."

I think that once we get traction and we get women's voices to these processes, it's a self-reinforcing cycle.

We also need to be looking at supporting track two processes, though, and not only focused on the formal processes. Again, we need to continue to focus on and support civil society, women's organizations in communities who are doing this work, and then linking them to the formal processes so that we're building a constituency and following through.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I appreciate that.

One of the reasons I asked the question is that it can be a bit tricky for governments, as you can imagine, with regard to this question of helping civil society. Which civil society organizations should we help?

What you've sketched out is very instructive and it clarifies a lot. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you, Peter.

Colleagues, that wraps up our time with our witnesses.

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank you very much for your well-thought-out presentations and recommendations to our committee. We look forward to more advice and/or an opportunity to speak to you at the UN. We're looking forward to visiting sometime in the not too distant future, and maybe we'll get a chance to talk face to face.

Ms. Randi Davis: We'd be happy to meet you in person.

Ms. Nahla Valji: Absolutely.

The Chair: On behalf of the committee, we'd like to say thank you. We'll see you soon.

Thank you, colleagues.

We will now go to the final part of our business.

As I understand, we have a notice of motion by our colleague from the NDP.

I will give the floor to Hélène to present her motion, and then we will have a discussion, debate, and a vote to conclude it.

[Translation]

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

I feel that setting up this subcommittee is absolutely essential. With the sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia so much in the news, we have seen that, in general, Canadians are very interested in the issue. I feel that it is our responsibility to be, if you will, the ears, the eyes and the voice of Canadians. The media coverage clearly demonstrates this interest.

[English]

The Chair: Before you start with the debate, could we have the motion presented first for the record?

Either you can read it for us or someone else will, but I think it would be useful to have the motion on the floor.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: So here is my notice of motion, Mr. Chair.

That, pursuant to Standing Orders 108(1) and 108(2), a Subcommittee on Arms Control to be chaired by a member elected by the subcommittee, be established to inquire into matters relating to Canadian arms exports and arms export permits;

That the subcommittee be composed of seven (7) members or associate members of which four (4) shall be government members, two (2) shall be Conservative Party members, and one (1) from the New Democratic Party, to be named following the usual consultations with the whips;

That the subcommittee be empowered to send for persons, papers and records, to receive evidence, to sit during a time when the committee is not sitting in Ottawa, to sit when the committee is sitting outside the Parliamentary Precinct and to sit during periods when the House stands adjourned; and

That the Chair of the subcommittee meet with the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the committee at their mutual discretion.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. Now, the motion is before you. Would you like to start with debate?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: As I pointed out, I believe this is very important.

Yesterday, there was an interesting report on Radio-Canada. It was from the area around London. People were saying that they would like to understand this entire issue better.

This subcommittee could study major trends, processes, and, if required, specific cases. The subcommittee could also deal with the legislative work on the ratification of the arms trade treaty.

There should be one bill, or more, introduced to Parliament so that Canada can ratify the treaty. The committee could even study the overall issue of the treaty. So I believe that this is extremely important.

Some people have suggested that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I do not share that opinion at all. First of all, the issue goes far beyond the simple question of human rights. Industry, defence, foreign affairs, and even international development are also considerations. This really is much wider. We must not forget that the Subcommittee on International Human Rights determines its agenda itself.

At the moment, the text of the motion we have before us seeks to create a subcommittee on arms control. I am really afraid that any attempt to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights is actually an attempt to bury it. The Prime Minister promised us more openness and transparency in the future. I appreciate that commitment very much.

[English]

I hope that members on the other side in particular will walk the talk now.

The Chair: Is there is any further debate or discussion?

Mr. Clement.

[Translation]

Hon. Tony Clement: I would like to say that it is important for us to be transparent and to be able to study these matters.

So I support the motion.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Miller.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Miller: There are two aspects to this motion: the form and the substance.

Let us first deal with the one that is less important, the form. The idea of a subcommittee implies a lot of things, including establishing the committee, of course. That requires considering the busy schedules of the people responsible for studying the matter. There is also the idea of assigning everything important for our foreign policy to subcommittees. So there are various reasons not to agree with the need for a subcommittee.

Still on the subject of the form, our committee has operated on a model of consensus and collaboration, which unfortunately seems to be coming to an end today. Let us first realize that your motion on women, peace and security is the first study we have decided to undertake. The study is really interesting; it is important for the future of Canada, whether nationally or internationally.

We considered and approved Mr. Allison's motion on one of the studies coming up. I would like this committee to continue along the same lines. Unfortunately, there was a certain lack of courtesy in the way in which this motion was introduced, through the media first. I feel that you spent more time discussing it in the media than with us individually. I received an email that was not very personal. We have not discussed it with you to any extent, and I would like us to have done so more.

Be that as it may, this motion is too important for us to dwell on the form. We really must consider the substance as the priority. Human rights and arms sales are very important matters for all states, developed and underdeveloped. In that sense, I have no objection.

I would like to read you a passage from Minister Dion's mandate letter. It reads as follows:

Reenergize Canadian diplomacy and leadership on key international issues and in multilateral institutions. This would include:

Working with the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, to champion the values of inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity, and human rights including the rights of women and refugees;

Acceding to the Arms Trade Treaty.

Personally, I would like to give him a chance. I feel it is too soon to think about a committee, let alone a subcommittee. Even in terms of the substance, it is a little too soon. Let us give the Prime Minister and Minister Dion a chance to do what they have to do. If not, we can look at the motion again or put it in a different form in August or next spring.

I sit on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, and I would welcome the motion in that forum. We look forward to it. At the moment, unfortunately, despite all the respect I have for you and your motion, I am going to vote against this one.

● (1745)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Genuis first, and then over to Madame Laverdière.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I'll just say in response to some of the comments that have already been made that I think this is far too important an issue to make the decision on the basis of the person who has brought it forward, or even the style in which they brought it forward. Of course, we're already studying an issue brought forward by Ms. Laverdière, but I don't think we should penalize this topic just because she happens to be a very active member of the committee. On the contrary, I think we should appreciate that.

I didn't find the style of bringing this forward discourteous. I certainly appreciated the fact that even I, not a formal member of this committee, received a direct email about this issue as well, so I'm a bit perplexed by that line of argumentation.

On the substantive side, in regard to saying that this is too early, the discussion is ongoing right now about Canada's approach to arms exports. I don't know how one would advance an argument that it's too early when these issues are ongoing.

I would remind members that as a committee, we are to be the masters of our own direction, and we are to study issues that we regard as important. We're not to be beholden to the timelines of the ministers' mandate letters, right? It's our job as a committee to independently identify issues that are a priority for Canadians and that are important in our foreign policy, and to respond to and advance those issues.

I certainly think that Ms. Laverdière has demonstrated the importance of this issue. Of course, different parties will have

different perspectives on specific approaches to arms control and perhaps on arms sales to particular countries, but it's hard to argue that it's not a subject of great consequence and a subject that touches a range of different areas, including human rights, but many other areas as well. The creation of a subcommittee would allow us to delve into those issues effectively, and as deeply as is required.

● (1750)

The Chair: Madame Laverdière.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: As a quick note, I will add that I submitted this motion in February, so I feel that everyone has had the opportunity to read it and to ask me questions. The media asked me for my opinion because they came to ask me what I intended to do with this motion. The motion has been on the table for more than two months and I advised you of my intention to have it put to a vote today.

So, even though we do not agree on everything, I certainly hope that this committee will continue to work on all its topics by consensus. I would like to thank my colleague Garnett Genuis, who brought up some very good arguments in favour of establishing the subcommittee immediately.

[English]

The Chair: Is there any further discussion before I put the question?

On the question, we are now going to vote on the motion as presented.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: May I have a recorded vote, please.

The Chair: Yes. We'll have a recorded vote.

(Motion negated: nays 5; yeas 4)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, if I may comment on the recent vote, I will say that I'm rather distressed that this motion was not accepted. Our Prime Minister has promised more openness and transparency. I would have expected members to walk the talk. I don't see any good reason to have rejected that motion. I'm wondering what members are afraid of and why they refuse a very important public debate.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you. I'm sure that will be discussed in the press by myself and others. We'll have a chance to formally explain that to you in the press, but not here, as I understand it.

One of the difficulties I'm finding in this committee, and I'll just wrap up with this, is that we're having discussions in subcommittee in camera, which are not intended to be discussed here, to talk about our schedule and the work ahead of us. I don't want to leave an impression with the public who are listening that we do not have an agenda. We have a full agenda. In fact, it is so full that we would have to drop one of our studies to do this if we were to move on this file right away.

Setting up a subcommittee and then saying we don't have anything for it to do for the next six months really moves to some relevancy as to why we would set it up at this time, based on what Mr. Miller is saying.

All I'm saying is that it's a very difficult process for me as the chair when we have discussions in the subcommittee, we agree as a subcommittee, and then someone comes back and suggests that basically there's no work for us to do, that we could just carry on.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: I don't think anybody has suggested that. In fact, we could transmit to that subcommittee some of the work that will fall on us, like the legislative process on ATT.

We just decide to create it, and that would be it. That wouldn't add to our work. On the contrary, it would liberate us, because indeed we have a lot of work. We know that we already have mandates for next fall. We will have to do the legislative process around ATT ourselves.

I've never suggested that we don't have work; on the contrary. That's another reason that the subcommittee would have been so useful.

●(1755)

The Chair: I'll go back to one last comment, and then we'll wrap it up.

Who was the member suggesting would be on the subcommittee, if it wasn't us? Those of us around this committee would be part of the subcommittee. Do you have any other suggestions of who we might put on the subcommittee?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: As for the human rights subcommittee, it can be associate members. I know I don't sit on the human rights subcommittee. It doesn't automatically have to be members of the committee.

The Chair: Okay. We've heard it.

Thank you very much. We'll see you on Thursday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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