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# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi





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Wednesday, May 22, 2024

• (1705)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 108 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Before we begin, I'd like to ask all members and other in-person participants to consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents.

Please take note of the following preventive measures in place to protect the health and safety of all participants, including, most significantly, the interpreters.

Only use a black, approved earpiece. Keep your earpiece away from all microphones at all times. When you are not using your earpiece, place it face down on the sticker placed on the table for this purpose. The room layout has been adjusted to increase the distance between microphones and to reduce the chance of feedback from an ambient earpiece.

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

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name.

For members in the room, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function.

You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available. You have the choice of floor, English or French.

I'll remind you that all comments should be made through the chair.

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

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

I'd like to welcome our witnesses. I'd like to highlight for all the members that we were scheduled to hear from these witnesses earlier, but because of a vote previously, we were unable to hear from them.

Thank you so much for joining us this evening. I understand it's very late in your local time, so we are doubly grateful that you are kindly connecting with us today.

We have, from the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development, Benjamin Sultan, who is the director of research.

From the International Rescue Committee, we are grateful to have Modou Diaw, who is the regional vice-president for West Africa.

Finally, we're grateful to have with us today Edith Heines, who is the director of program policy and guidance for the United Nations World Food Programme.

Each of you will be provided five minutes for your opening remarks, after which we will open the floor to questions from the members.

Mr. Sultan, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Benjamin Sultan (Director of Research, French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development):** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

I will speak in French, my mother tongue.

I would like to begin by talking to you about Africa and global warming.

Africa is one of the regions of the world that has contributed the least to the historical greenhouse gas emissions that are responsible for human-induced climate change. Per capita emissions are the lowest in the world there. However, the effects of climate change that are being observed there are very significant, and they are likely to get worse in the future.

The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, includes an entire chapter on Africa. It shows that an increase in average and extreme temperatures, more frequent heat waves and prolonged droughts, particularly in southern Africa, have already been observed. Even though there are fewer observations than for other parts of the world, many of those changes can be attributed to the human effect on the climate.

It is projected that global warming will lead to an intensification of these changes, which in turn will have consequences such as more extensive flooding, the risk of worsening drought in some regions, such as southern Africa, northern Africa and the western Sahel, as well as tropical cyclones, which may become more intense. Heat waves are also expected that could expose populations to potentially deadly conditions.

All of these current and future changes pose a serious threat not only to these countries' economies, infrastructure, food security and health, but also to African ecosystems.

I'll give you a few examples.

On the economic front, it is estimated that climate change has led to a reduction in economic growth in Africa and an increase in income inequality, not only among African countries, but also between northern African countries and the rest of the continent.

In terms of food systems, it is estimated that climate change has already led to a decrease in animal productivity, which is likely to intensify in the future.

Climate change has also negatively impacted the health of millions of Africans owing to warming temperatures, extreme weather and the spread of infectious diseases.

In African cities, rapid urbanization and the lack of infrastructure adapted to population growth contribute to increasing the exposure of populations to climate risks, especially in coastal areas. All these risks lead to climate migration, which is a reality today, even though most climate-related migration in Africa occurs within countries, such as rural-to-urban migration, or between neighbouring countries, rather than to higher-income countries.

All these observations really underscore the urgency of implementing adaptation measures on the continent to reduce those risks today. The most effective measures include adaptation approaches that integrate gender, equity, and African indigenous knowledge and local knowledge, as well as the development of early warning systems, agroecology and agricultural planning.

However, Africa has a feasibility problem in terms of adaptation measures. The continent faces numerous technological, institutional, cultural and financial obstacles, as well as obstacles related to certain countries' security. Moreover, if global warming becomes too intense in Africa, adaptation conditions could quickly be exceeded.

Despite the high risk of global warming on the continent, there are ultimately many gaps in our knowledge and research on adaptation effects and strategies in Africa. This lack of knowledge is linked not only to a lack of weather and ecosystem data available in this region, but also to very little funding for African research.

For example, from 1990 to 2020, only 3.8% of global climate-related research funding was allocated to Africa. And yet there are initiatives, in Canada as in France, aimed at research.

In Canada, I'm thinking of the climate adaptation and resilience initiative, or CLARE, a partnership between Canada and the United Kingdom. This initiative aims to promote sustainable and socially

inclusive action to build resilience in Africa, particularly for the populations most vulnerable to climate change.

France has the Institut de recherche pour le développement, an interdisciplinary scientific institute that operates in partnership with the tropical zone and the Mediterranean zone. It is active in many African countries. It focuses on the science of sustainability, serving society stakeholders, and it tries to offer solutions.

This concludes my presentation.

Thank you again for the invitation to appear today. I look forward to your questions.

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Sultan.

[*English*]

Next we go to Mr. Diaw from the International Rescue Committee.

You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Modou Diaw (Regional Vice-President for West Africa, International Rescue Committee):** Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you.

I will try to be brief. A note that provides many details was distributed before the meeting.

I would like to focus my remarks on the humanitarian situation. Mr. Sultan talked a lot about the climate situation, but in addition to that, many African countries are currently facing a political crisis and armed conflicts, as well as an increasingly difficult economic situation. Therefore, we are proud to testify alongside other colleagues on this panel today to emphasize the need for a comprehensive agenda for countries facing the worst humanitarian deterioration across Africa.

The number of people in humanitarian need globally increased fourfold between 2014 and 2023. Their lives are often marked by extreme danger, continuing insecurity, and very high levels of poverty. Eight of the top 10 countries that the International Rescue Committee, or IRC, has assessed as being at greatest risk of new humanitarian emergencies are in Africa. For the second year in a row, an African country—this time, Sudan—tops the list.

At the moment, we are seeing that humanitarian crises are erupting mostly in the most vulnerable countries, mainly owing to factors such as an increase in violent coups, non-compliance with international humanitarian law, vulnerability to climate risks, as well as an increase in public debt. At the same time, there has been a decrease in international aid.

While these crisis spheres used to be separate, they are now part of a Venn diagram with a growing area of intersection. Thirty years ago, 44% of conflicts occurred in climate-vulnerable states. Today, that figure is 67%.

The intensity of conflicts in climate-sensitive contexts in Africa requires clear and decisive action. If the structures and systems put in place to eliminate poverty, build resilience and respond to humanitarian needs do not meet the demand in the most severe emergencies, they are ineffective. This must be rectified or entire regions may be left behind. International humanitarian needs are vastly underfunded, and the situation is getting worse.

The funding gaps between the amounts requested and the commitments in humanitarian assistance have increased from \$4.6 billion in 2013 to \$32.5 billion in 2023. We are particularly grateful for Canada's humanitarian initiatives, including the new commitment of \$350 million for international humanitarian assistance in budget 2024. It is essential that the humanitarian system innovate and do things differently to meet the overwhelming needs. This includes investing in interventions and approaches that can deliver the greatest impact for the most people in need within limited budgets.

One of the most impactful things we can do to scale our services is understand and improve the per unit cost of our programs, and the IRC is a leader in that respect.

The IRC's experience demonstrates that with the right approaches, we can change the lives of communities even in the most complex crises. The following are our six first-order priorities for action.

The IRC's first recommendation is to save lives in fragile and conflict-affected states by investing in climate adaptation, climate resilience and anticipatory action. I think that, today, many funding measures are focused on mitigating climate change, but Africa is already experiencing the consequences of these changes. Therefore, it is urgent and important to invest in adapting to these changes.

The second recommendation is to tackle extreme poverty and economic drivers of rising humanitarian needs. So we need to see an increased investment in social safety nets and cash responses.

The third recommendation is to prioritize gender equality in crisis responses, and shift resources and decision-making power to women-led organizations. This recommendation is very important because we know that, in most countries that are in crisis, it is women who suffer the most.

The IRC's fourth recommendation is to promote shared prosperity by increasing aid and tackling the debt crisis.

• (1715)

The fifth recommendation is to support and protect forcibly displaced people.

Finally, the last recommendation is to stem impunity and reinforce international humanitarian law. With respect to this sixth recommendation, I would like to emphasize that the solutions I have outlined are necessary, but alone they are insufficient if steps are not taken to reduce the impacts of conflict on civilians.

Violations of international humanitarian law are increasingly normalized. We must oppose attacks on hospitals, schools and homes, as well as denial of access to critical life-saving aid, and mass killings with impunity. Without accountability, these trends will continue.

Faith in the international system needs to be restored. The use of people as a human shield and the denial of humanitarian access must be given increased diplomatic attention, alongside other violations of international law.

I'll stop here. I am available to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Diaw.

[English]

Next, we'll go to Ms. Heines, who is from the United Nations World Food Programme.

You have five minutes, Ms. Heines.

• (1720)

**Ms. Edith Heines (Director of Programme, Policy and Guidance, United Nations World Food Programme):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

I'm honoured to appear before you this afternoon to speak about Africa and the role the World Food Programme plays in addressing extensive food insecurity, which continues to impact the continent.

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian organization. We work across many of the world's most fragile settings to save lives during emergencies and to contribute to building sustainable solutions to food insecurity that can help change the lives of the people we serve over the long term.

Unfortunately, hunger is on the rise in Africa, where already more than half of the world's food-insecure people live. This increase in hunger is largely driven by three things: conflict, weather extremes and economic shocks.

We have a large footprint in Africa, which means we witness first-hand the challenges that African countries face, especially when it comes to hunger and malnutrition. Africa is home to more food crises than anywhere else in the world. Three out of WFP's four corporate-level emergencies in 2023 were in Africa: in Sudan and Sudan's neighbours Chad, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In Sudan, the ongoing conflict has decimated the country's ability to feed itself. More than one-third of the country—18 million people—is now acutely food insecure. We know that this will worsen this month as Sudan's lean season begins, and WFP continues to face substantial challenges in gaining cross-border access needed to reach those most affected by the conflict.

This conflict has also impacted neighbouring Chad, which now hosts more than one million Sudanese refugees, making it home to one of the largest and fastest-growing refugee populations in Africa and the world. We assist on average half a million people per month with emergency food rations in Chad alone, in some of the harshest and most remote regions. We are racing against time to pre-position food in the hardest-to-reach areas before the rainy season cuts off our road access in June. This is why we need predictable funding to purchase supplies early and get food staples to rural and remote locations that do not have local food supply routes.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is the third major crisis we are responding to right now on the continent. About one-quarter of the population, or 23.5 million people, is facing emergency levels of hunger. Due to escalating conflict in the eastern part of the country, six million people have had to leave their homes and livelihoods.

The situation is particularly catastrophic for women and girls, especially those living in camps for displaced people. They face a constant threat of sexual violence during their daily activities. When we place food assistance decisions in the hands of women and facilitate a safe environment for income opportunities, they are less likely to be exposed to such risks.

As well as conflict, we can also see increasing damage caused by climate shocks throughout the African continent, which are disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable countries. The southern region is currently experiencing the most severe El Niño impact since the 1980s, resulting in drought and crop failures. The governments of Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi have all officially declared national states of emergency.

We are working with these governments to provide cash transfers to the most vulnerable, facilitate international food procurement and provide logistic support. Also, in anticipation of El Niño, we launched early warning and anticipatory action programs to ensure that people receive cash and other support before the climate shock hits. WFP reached over 230,000 people in southern Africa with \$14 million U.S. in anticipatory cash and support, which helps individuals to prepare and thus increases their resilience in time of crisis.

Additionally, many countries continue to face chronic seasonal food security challenges. In west Africa and the Sahel, the May-to-August lean season has begun.

• (1725)

Due to persistently high food prices and market instability, we predict that there will be about 55 million people who will struggle to feed themselves.

Mr. Chair, during my own 25 years with WFP, I have seen first-hand how food crises have become more complex, more severe and more protracted. Despite the rising needs across Africa and the world, shrinking resources and funding cuts have forced WFP to drastically reduce assistance in almost every country in which we work. In Somalia, for example, we had to reduce the number of people we serve by half. However, we will continue to work on the front lines of hunger and to prioritize the most vulnerable people by addressing their nutritional needs.

In a world of rising needs and limited funds, it's critical that we simultaneously work to change lives while also saving lives, working across the humanitarian, development, peace nexus to reduce—

**The Chair:** Ms. Heines, I'm afraid that you're considerably over your time, so we're going to have to proceed with the questions. I hope you can cover what remains through your responses to the members.

**Ms. Edith Heines:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** First, we'll start off with Mr. Aboultaif.

You have three minutes.

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

Thank you to the witnesses.

Ms. Heines, everything in a big part of Africa is on the rise—the cost of living, the cost of food, the conflicts. How is Canada doing as far as approaching these conflicts and the food insecurity situation?

**Ms. Edith Heines:** Canada has been a very steady donor to the World Food Programme, and this is on the two sides that we support or that are within our mandate: addressing humanitarian needs but also more working towards the longer-term solutions. We know that, while addressing the needs that are very high, we also have to work on reducing the humanitarian needs, and Canada has been helping in that mandate as well.

It can additionally help us with, as I mentioned, humanitarian access, which is becoming more and more difficult. Conflicts are becoming more and more complex, so this is where Canada and our other members can help with political and diplomatic support to influence national partners and national governments and actors in conflict to ensure that we have humanitarian access and a humanitarian space to actually work and provide the assistance that we need to do, so humanitarian diplomacy is a very important part.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you.

In the case of Sudan specifically—and it's a very devastating situation—can we count on the neighbours? Where can Canada be most effective regarding the neighbours of Sudan to be able to get access to areas where food and everything are needed?

**Ms. Edith Heines:** For Sudan specifically, there's a lot of movement of Sudanese who become refugees and move into other countries. Chad, I mentioned, is a big one where we have a big influx. We still have a lot of issues with negotiating cross-border movements so that we can actually move our resources and our support to those refugees. While we do have support from neighbouring countries, as well, because we set up kind of a regional operation—and this is not just WFP but the whole humanitarian community—for the Sudan crisis, so we're working both from the Chad side, as well as from the Sudan side, there are different parties in a conflict and—

**The Chair:** I'm afraid that, again, we're out of time. Thank you for your response.

Next we go to Ms. Vandenberg.

You have three minutes.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Heines, I believe that Canada right now is the fourth-largest global donor to the World Food Programme. Could you confirm that?

Our framework, of course, is around the feminist international assistance policy, FIAP, which guides everything that we do in development. You specifically mentioned the impact of food insecurity and conflict on women and girls. Therefore, I wonder if you could comment on how Canada's contributions are helping, and also on how that feminist framework is making a difference.

● (1730)

**Ms. Edith Heines:** Gender inclusion and gender protection are cross-cutting across all the work we do, but specifically in conflict, we look at how conflict affects women differently. We see that very often they have a higher vulnerability, so we have been including in our humanitarian access an analysis with a gender lens. How are women differently and, very often, more, impacted by limited access? We have conflict analysts in each of our regions to make sure that we have very context-specific analysis that goes into the planning of the operations. On conflict analysis specifically, but also by ensuring different protection in how we provide our assistance, we take women's issues and women's vulnerability into account.

We also do that for other vulnerable groups, which might be, depending on the context, indigenous groups or people with disabilities. Women and girls are extremely vulnerable and we do take that into account in our programming and planning, very much in line with Canada.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Thank you so much.

I do want to direct a quick question to Mr. Diaw, specifically around climate resilience. You mentioned the link between the political and economic crises and the climate crisis. I wonder if, in 30 seconds, you could perhaps elaborate on that.

**Mr. Modou Diaw:** Yes, I will say that most of African countries have been suffering from climate vulnerability for years. We do know that now the conflict.... If I just take a quick concrete example of Mali, we did some surveys in some parts of northern Mali and we found that 67% of community-level conflicts are due to conflicts like land or resource control. What we are seeing is that these countries have been suffering from climate change, but now with the conflict, the situation has been exacerbated. The population, already very vulnerable because of climate vulnerability, is now suffering from conflict in addition to that. This is actually putting more and more people into extreme poverty and extreme vulnerability. That's what I can say in 30 seconds, but I would have developed more.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Very grateful.

We next go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have three minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I would also like to thank the witnesses, especially given the late hour for some of them.

We know that a number of western countries have slowly withdrawn from Africa in recent decades. As a result, others quickly swooped in to fill the vacuum, as politics abhors a vacuum. China and Russia, among other countries, have rushed in. That has led to the known consequences. Canada is one potential investor, and an attempt is being made to convince the Government of Canada that Africa is a land of opportunity and that it must be reinvested in massively.

However, the three witnesses have painted a rather bleak picture of the situation in Africa. We are talking about a reduction in economic growth. We are also talking about an increase in crises potentially stemming from climate change, such as population movements, political crises and food crises.

Mr. Sultan, how can the government be convinced given such a bleak picture?

Then I'll ask Mr. Diaw and Ms. Heines the same question.

● (1735)

**Mr. Benjamin Sultan:** Thank you very much for the question.

I think you have to look at two things. The first, and probably the most important, is that we have a moral duty to help African countries. They are especially vulnerable to global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions, for which developed countries such as Canada and France are responsible.

The second is that there are still huge opportunities in Africa. It is the place in the world where the difference between the maximum yield that could be achieved by farmers and their observed yield is the most significant. That means there could be a huge return on investment.

So I think Africa is also a land of opportunity that can be very important for Canada.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Diaw, do you want to add anything?

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm afraid your time is up.

[Translation]

**Mr. Modou Diaw:** Thank you very much.

[English]

**The Chair:** We're going to have to go to the next question.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Okay.

[English]

**The Chair:** We now go to Ms. McPherson.

You have three minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Thank you very much. I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today and sharing their testimony with us.

I have to take a moment out of the committee time at this point to move a motion that I had brought forward some time ago. It is on a very important issue that I think this committee needs to deal with as urgently as possible.

It is with regard to the sales of arms and goods to Israel. Notice of the motion was first given on April 10. Would the members like me to read the motion, or are they aware of the content of the motion?

**The Chair:** Everyone's aware.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:**

That, given the failure of Global Affairs Canada to produce the documents requested by this committee on February 12, 2024, and the letter to the committee from the Deputy Minister dated March 13, 2024, requesting further instruction, the chair instruct the clerk to publish the letter and annex received from Global Affairs Canada on Canada's arms exports to Israel on the public committee web page; that the committee instruct Global Affairs Canada to:

- a) provide details on all current open export and brokering permits for military goods and technology to Israel, without redaction for commercial confidentiality, as the Committee requested in its motion of February 12, 2024;
- b) provide details on all export or brokering permits for military goods and technology to Israel, whether open or expired, dating back to 2020, not 2006 as the Committee requested in its motion of February 12, 2024;
- c) reissue the annex without redactions for commercial confidentiality, as the committee motion specified;

That these details be provided within 30 days of adoption of this motion; and

That, once received, these documents be made public on the committee website.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to call for a vote on this motion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Oliphant, go ahead.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** We have two amendments that we'd like to make to this. I would normally do them separately, but out of respect for the witnesses, I will try to do them quickly, and if it's agreed, we could vote on them together, perhaps.

The first is that in the first line, the motion be amended by deleting the words "the failure of", and then adding "has yet", after "Global Affairs Canada" and before "to produce", and by adding

"in full" after "produce" and before "the documents". So it would then read "That, given Global Affairs Canada has yet to produce in full the documents requested by this committee". It is just acknowledging that we have not done it yet, but there's no desire not to do it.

The second amendment is, at the end of the motion, to delete the words, "these details"—I have it in writing for the clerk as well, and in French as well—and to insert the words "this information be provided on a continuing basis as it becomes available, with the first batch of information to be provided within 30 days". Instead of just saying "these details", it's to acknowledge that it will come in batches on a continual basis until all of it is given to us.

Finally, at the end of the motion, add the words "and that once the documents outlined in sections a through c"—meaning all of the documents—"of this motion are received, the committee's motion of February 12, 2024, be deemed completed".

The last part of the motion would read, "That this information be provided on a continuing basis as it becomes available, with the first batch of information to be provided within 30 days of adoption of this motion, and that once received these documents be made public on the committee website and that once the documents outlined in sections a through c of this motion are received, the committee's motion of February 12, 2024, be deemed completed."

• (1740)

**The Chair:** Is everyone clear on the three friendly amendments?

If it's okay, we'll do one vote on all three proposed changes.

Go ahead, Mr. Abouttaif.

**Mr. Ziad Abouttaif:** I just want quick clarification on the second amendment.

I don't want to take much time, but on "That these details be provided".... First of all, it says, "as it becomes available, with the first batch of information to be provided within 30 days" of the adoption of this motion.

Which one comes first?

**The Chair:** Mr. Oliphant.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** It means the information that's been requested will be provided on a continuing basis as it becomes available, with the first batch to be received within 30 days. We can't predict exactly, but it will not stop until everything has been received. The first batch will be within 30 days, and it will continue until they're all here.

**Mr. Ziad Abouttaif:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Is that clear?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])



**The Chair:** It's unanimously adopted. Thank you very much.

We will now go back to the witnesses.

I apologize for that.

I'm afraid we have very limited time available. Going forward, each member will only have two minutes, so you essentially just get one minute in. I ask that everyone stick to the time limitations.

We'll start off with MP Epp.

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

Thank you to the witnesses.

I'll go right to Ms. Heines.

The World Food Programme has had some success in Namibia with efforts there. Why? What has been different in Namibia, where they have achieved a higher degree of food self-sufficiency?

**Ms. Edith Heines:** Namibia is an upper-middle-income country. In that way, it is definitely on a different level than a lot of other African countries. If you look at the levels of poverty and the systems that are there.... They are higher. When it comes to food production and self-sustainability, I'm not sure if they're doing so much better. I don't have the figures in my head, but they are very dependent on imports, as well. It's just that it's a more stable system. So far, poverty levels are lower.

The issue they're dealing with is this: There are still gaps between some groups, especially indigenous groups and others. What you need for that is.... Well, governance is an important part—leadership from the government.

To give you an example, I—

**Mr. Dave Epp:** I'm sorry, but my time is so limited. I'm going to thank you for that.

I'm going to ask one final question of Mr. Sultan.

Canada's agricultural systems actually benefit from climate change, but obviously the Sahel parts of Africa do not.

Would you agree that the negative effects of climate change could be more than compensated for with access to crop protection products, fertilizers and irrigation in those countries, for food production and greater resiliency?

• (1745)

**Mr. Benjamin Sultan:** I think the potential for increasing crop yield is probably greater than the negative effects of climate change. Even if it's likely that climate change will decrease, in fact, this increase of crop yield.... We have a greater potential to increase crop yield than we could expect negative impacts of crop yield.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** We next go to Dr. Fry.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

We've been hearing from other witnesses that there are certain trends in Africa where things are getting better—that we need to look at economic development and technological development, etc.

Yet, eight of the top 10 countries on the international rescue emergency watch list are in Africa, including Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

Why is west Africa having these particular problems? Why are they getting worse and it's becoming more abusive, etc.? What is it that we can do? What are the factors causing this in west Africa? What can Canada do to deal with this, especially in countries like Mali, because we are bilingual and can work in countries in Africa that are francophone?

This is for Mr. Diaw.

**Mr. Modou Diaw:** Thank you so much.

Definitely, we have lots of African countries where things are definitely getting better. I'm calling from Senegal, where we've just completed a very successful democratic election and transition. I can name several as examples, but we know that the three Sahelian countries you named were already very vulnerable, as I said earlier, in terms of poverty, economic issues and long-lasting conflict.

During the last year, with this terrorist armed group that's started controlling some parts of this area, the response provided was not adequate. This gave space to this terrorist group to gain more control.

If you add to that the very high level of poverty.... I always say the main cause of this crisis is poverty. For example, if young people do not have jobs, education or professional skills, and there are opportunities to have weapons, they can just join an armed group, and maybe—

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Excuse me. I don't have much time. I just want to ask you one—

**The Chair:** In fact, Dr. Fry, you're over already.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** I don't have any time. Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm terribly sorry about that.

We'll now go to Mr. Bergeron for two minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Diaw, you have two minutes to answer my previous question.

**Mr. Modou Diaw:** I'm sorry, what was your question?

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** My question is about the bleak picture you painted of the situation in Africa. Earlier, I mentioned the fact that an effort was being made to convince Canada that Africa is a land of opportunity and to encourage it to invest massively in Africa again.

What are your comments on that?

**Mr. Modou Diaw:** Africa, of course, is a land of opportunity.

I can give you many examples. I just mentioned the democratic transition in Senegal, southern Africa and eastern Africa. There are some countries, like Kenya, with a lot of good opportunities right now.

If you look at the Sahelian countries, which are facing this crisis, or if you look at Sudan, just to name a few, I think there are still opportunities. An actor like Canada can play a very special role, at least in reconnecting with the international community.

We know for a fact that we live in a world of interdependence. Unfortunately, some of these countries have a historical relationship with certain countries that were former colonizers, if you will, so it is very difficult today for them to talk to one another and to establish a partner relationship on an equal footing.

When I meet with the authorities in all these countries, all they ask for is to have partners who can talk to them in an egalitarian manner and to establish a partnership where everyone wins. I think Canada has a very special and very specific profile, so it can play a role in reconnecting with those countries, at least to open up existing and real economic opportunities.

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

**Mr. Modou Diaw:** Thank you.

[English]

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

Next, we'll go to Madam McPherson. You have two minutes.

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

Thank you for your testimony today. One of the things I'm reflecting on is the fact that many of the conflicts we're seeing, in the sub-Saharan African continent in particular, are repeat conflicts. We have seen conflict flare up in Sudan and the DRC repeatedly. I feel like Canada has that important role to play as peacekeepers, and we're not seeing Canada play that role any longer.

I'm wondering if I could just ask each of you to talk a bit about the importance of having countries like Canada engage in peacekeeping in the region because of the repetitive nature of some of these conflicts.

• (1750)

**The Chair:** Why don't we go to Mr. Sultan?

[Translation]

**Mr. Benjamin Sultan:** Indeed, I think that Canada can really play an important role in conflicts. Those conflicts often have major consequences, particularly as regards internal displacement in Africa, where huge numbers of people are displaced as a result of those conflicts. It's the leading cause.

The second cause is climate and global warming. I also think that there's a connection between global warming and those conflicts, which are often the result of diminishing resources, such as water. In that case, having aid and a partnership with Canada could be critical to improving security in the region.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Heines, you have 20 seconds.

[Translation]

**Mr. Modou Diaw:** I can respond.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, Mr. Diaw, you have 20 seconds.

[Translation]

**Mr. Modou Diaw:** I think that Canada's neutral profile can make it a key player in tackling the root causes of conflict. The problem is that, to date, the issues are only being superficially resolved, without the root causes being addressed. I'm referring to climate change, poverty, economic underdevelopment and debt. If we can tackle those underlying causes, the impact of the conflicts may eventually wane.

[English]

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

That concludes our questions.

At this point, once again, I wanted to thank you for having accommodated the delay in starting the meeting. I appreciate full well how late it is in the evening, given where you are located. On behalf of all the members, I want to thank you for your time and your expertise.

We will now suspend for no more than a minute. Two of the witnesses are here. The next one has done the sound check. Given that we only have limited time, until 6.30 p.m., we will try to get started as soon as possible.

• (1750)

(Pause)

• (1755)

**The Chair:** Welcome back, everyone. I would now like to start with the second panel.

We are very grateful to have with us here, from Cuso International, Nicholas Moyer, chief executive officer; from Food for the Hungry, Jonathan Papoulidis; and, joining us virtually, we have Abdirahman Ahmed.

Why don't we start off with Mr. Moyer.

You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

[Translation]

**Mr. Nicolas Moyer (Chief Executive Officer, Cuso International):** Good afternoon.

First, I want to thank the committee for inviting me to appear today.

Cuso International was founded 63 years ago by Canadians who felt that their country could make a significant contribution to world progress. Our model is based on collaboration, and we work closely with local private and public sector partners and with non-profit organizations around the world. We address the root causes of inequality to improve the economic and social conditions of marginalized groups.

We do that by focusing on three priorities: advancing gender equality and social inclusion, creating economic opportunities and promoting climate action.

Although our work focuses on those areas of activity, Cuso is often better known for its history of volunteer co-operation. Sharing skills remains an important way for us to have an impact on communities. Over the years, we have deployed over 14,000 volunteers in more than 100 countries, and we continue to work with Global Affairs Canada on the roll-out of Canada's volunteer co-operation program. Today, we are active in 17 countries, including six in Africa. Some 88 volunteer co-operants are currently in Africa.

[English]

As you've heard—or hopefully have heard—in previous consultations and committee hearings, for a range of strategic reasons, it's clear that Canada would benefit immensely from recommitting to Africa. Yet, despite a period of strong ties in the 1970s and 1980s, elements of Canada's recent history in Africa paint an opposite picture, one of disengagement. It's to the point where, in some places, its presence and relevance has all but disappeared. Diplomatic infrastructure offers one illustration of this, as Canada has missions in only two-fifths of Africa's 54 countries. Another is the disappearance of Canada's most visible brand on the continent, CIDA.

The longer this estrangement persists, the more challenging it will be to repair. That's even more so in the face of deepening influence by other global actors that have prioritized engagement on the continent.

Canada's feminist international assistance policy, FIAP, commits 50% of aid to be directed to projects in sub-Saharan countries. Cuso is keenly aware of and helping to address the systemic challenges of so many communities in that region. We unreservedly applaud this focus on the most marginalized.

With the added support provided through the FIAP, the African continent is seeing very positive signs in the fight against gender inequality and discrimination. This progress is especially consequential in the context of Africa's demographic and economic surge. Africa's infant mortality rate has been declining steadily for years now. It's the direct result of increased access to education and health services for women, fewer teen pregnancies and lower incidences of child marriage. These are all areas covered by the FIAP.

However impactful these contributions, Canada's undertakings in Africa should not be defined by a charity mindset or an aid policy. Indeed, given its size and future prospects, it may be more appropriate to consider that Canada needs Africa more than Africa needs Canada.

Canada must engage on multiple levels and adopt a clear, principled stance: No more talk by Canada about Africa or for Africa's development. To be taken more seriously on the continent, for its word to be trusted and for its advice to carry weight, Canada needs to reinvest in partnerships to show leadership by convening like-minded allies, organizing international summits and conferences, and redefining our relationship with countries on the continent in a way that centres their interests as much as Canada's own.

This means shifting whole ways of thinking that have long been embedded in bureaucracy and systems. Our sector calls this decolonization. It's an area where we are all uncovering many lessons about more meaningful and impactful forms of collaboration.

Canada can be a leader again, if not by the power of its purse, then with conviction, coherence and long-term commitment to our partners. It sounds deceptively simple. It isn't. This path requires changing how Canada develops relationships. It means choosing partners carefully and strategically, embedding their interests in our own decision-making, being coherent across multiple policies and practices, and resisting distractions to staying the course over the long term.

Relationships with civil society should be a top priority as Canada embarks on this new direction worthy of equal or greater attention than relations with public or private sectors. It's civil society that delivers change at a systems level with credibility, accountability and unparalleled cost effectiveness. As we see time after time, our African partners are driving their own solutions and collaborating amongst themselves, with Canadian NGOs increasingly shifting to a supporting role.

● (1800)

[Translation]

The international co-operation sector is ready to contribute to this effort, as it has done in decades past. I also encourage Canada to tap into the expertise and networks we have cultivated over many years of engagement in Africa. Both represent tremendous potential.

Today's conversation with this committee is an excellent step in that direction. I am honoured and grateful for this opportunity to share our organization's perspectives with you. I look forward to your questions and the discussion ahead.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Moyer.

We now go to Mr. Papoulidis.

You have five minutes as well.

**Mr. Jonathan Papoulidis (Vice-President, Food for the Hungry):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for the invitation to contribute to this critical study on Canada's approach to Africa.

Food for the Hungry, including our FH Canada affiliate, has been working in Africa for four decades. We design, develop and deliver catalytic solutions that build resilience so that children, families and community can flourish. We do so through community-led development to provide health, water, education and food security solutions, with gender and environment as cross-cutting themes.

Much of the testimony that you already heard has outlined the significant opportunities on the continent, from the Africa free trade agreement and forecast that 12 of the 20 fastest-growing economies in 2024 will be from Africa, to the youth bulge who will contribute to tomorrow's global and regional workforce, and to the natural wealth that can power a just transition to renewable energy. At the same time, you heard about the converging risks and compounding crises facing the continent, from climate change and worsening disasters to economic shocks and high debt distress, rising instability and conflict, the spectre of future pandemics and epidemics, and deepening poverty. The success of Canada's approach to Africa will hinge on our ability to navigate these complex risks and crises in pursuit of advancing African and Canadian interests.

As surprising as it may sound, the development community has lacked effective assessments and strategic approaches to determine how to achieve peace and development objectives in the face of overlapping risks and crises, and their root causes. Therefore, as you work to define Canada's approach to Africa, our first recommendation is that the committee affirm the fundamental need for a risk and resilience framework, such as the one used by the OECD, to help establish the scope and substance of interventions necessary to support Africa and advance Canadian interests in the face of adverse conditions. This resilience framework should guide Canadian government action to identify complex risks and crises and their root causes; assess the exposure and vulnerabilities presented by these risks and crises to specific sectors, institutions, markets, groups and communities that Canada will prioritize as an outcome of both this study and ongoing work by Global Affairs Canada; and find the entry points within these communities, sectors and markets in order to strengthen resilience through a Canadian whole-of-government approach.

Various studies by the World Bank, the Overseas Development Institute and the UN have found that resilience is central to achieving long-term growth, sustainable poverty escapes and conflict prevention. We've seen positive momentum from Global Affairs Canada to support resilience in several sectors. Canada's feminist foreign policy also presents an opportunity to focus on the resilience of women and girls to a range of shocks and stress.

Given the evidence and importance of resilience in this age of crises, at Food for the Hungry we have recently developed a new evidence-based global program model that is rooted in resilience, which we are currently piloting in Africa and other regions. Together with our peers in Cooperation Canada's food security policy group, we have made recommendations for Global Affairs Canada to support gender-responsive and resilient food systems, which Africa desperately needs in the face of worsening droughts, desertification and other extreme weather events. Canadian NGOs are ready to partner with Canada to advance a multi-sector resilience agenda across Africa. These efforts should take place within a broader co-operation approach among like-minded partners for greater leverage and support.

To this end, our second recommendation is for the increased use and investment in so-called "country platforms" across a range of African countries. Country platforms have gone by different names over the past two decades, but are among the least visible and under-examined mechanisms in development practice. Emerging evi-

dence from Liberia, Somalia, Niger and Rwanda have shown the importance and potential of these platforms to do three things: convene governments, societal stakeholders and like-minded international partners on development; promote mutual accountability between actors; and solve collective action problems, including in times of crisis. The OECD, UN and MDBs have all variously committed to support country platforms. Canada has been the lead donor in support of Mozambique's country platform.

• (1805)

In conclusion, we believe that if Canada adopts a more strategic resilience framework to guide its role in Africa, and if it supports greater collective action, dialogue and mutual accountability between actors, these efforts can exponentially help to support Canada's own understanding of regional developments and opportunities, rally and leverage support from governments and other partners, and help deliver on Canadian national interests in the face of compelling opportunities, but also risks, crises, and uncertainties.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Papoulidis.

We'll now go to Mr. Ahmed. You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Abdirahman Ahmed (As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to start by thanking the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for inviting me to appear as part of its study on Canada's approach to Africa.

This important reflection is taking place just a few days ahead of the celebrations for Africa Day, initially Africa Freedom Day, held each year on May 25, in memory of the founding of the Organization of African Unity.

For the past 15 years, I've lived and worked in West Africa, North Africa and East Africa. I'd like to mention that, although I was born in East Africa, I grew up and studied in Canada. It was in this country that I was offered my first job after I graduated. It was a project to strengthen the technical skills of Palestinian women in Gaza in the occupied Palestinian territories, a project that was funded at the time by the Canadian International Development Agency.

Regarding my participation in this important study on Canada's approach to Africa, I'd like to begin with a personal reflection on the potential approach.

Will Canada's approach to Africa be businesslike, profit-seeking and condescending, or will it be based on universal values and principles?

It's important to remember that Africa, the cradle of humanity, is a huge continent that is now home to a vast community of nations spread across 54 sovereign states. After Asia, it is the world's second most populous continent, representing one fifth of the world's population, over 70% of whom are young people.

Africa is also a continent rich in natural resources, in minerals—it has 30% of the world's mineral reserves—and available agricultural land. Seen in this light, is it Africa that needs Canada, or Canada that needs the African continent?

While the African continent has its share of difficulties, tragedies and challenges, its potential is just as impressive. Indeed, it boasts a demographic vitality that is fostering the rapid growth of a large middle class, an increasingly well-educated population, abundant natural resources, a more open trade framework thanks to the recent signing by all African countries of an agreement establishing a continent-wide free-trade zone, and significant diplomatic weight in international forums.

So what approach should Canada take to the African continent?

Before answering that question, let me remind you of the role Canada played after the devastation of the Second World War. At a time when the western world was in the midst of reconstruction and the African continent was engaged in struggles for liberation and independence, Canada could have decided to stay in its corner and opt for isolation. Instead, it decided to play a leading role in shaping a new world order. This bold policy, described by many as the diplomacy of hope, was aimed at creating and strengthening international institutions capable of producing rules and standards to guide international relations.

Thanks to the diplomacy of hope, Canada was able to build a distinct identity, becoming a much-appreciated mediator between north and south, a promoter of the multilateral system and of peace, notably through the creation of the peacekeepers. Canada's diplomatic activism has paid dividends. The country has been elected six times as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. What's more, its expertise in disarmament and peacekeeping has been sought out the world over, and has enabled it to play an important role in a number of forums.

Today, we are living through a period of far greater change than the one in 1945. The world is in the throes of geopolitical transformation, with international relations undergoing profound change and moving towards the establishment of a multipolar world. In this new multipolar world, we are witnessing the emergence of a new balance of power between north and south, in which African countries are demanding that their sovereignty be respected, including their choice of geopolitical alliances and governance.

Whatever happens, one thing is certain: Canada can no longer behave like the good missionary of the last century. It is this reality

that must shape Canada's new approach to the African continent. Now is not the time for Canada's current indifference or retreat, but rather, it's time for a bold and ambitious commitment that will set it apart from other economic powers.

To make a real difference on the African continent, Canada should adopt an approach inspired by universalist values, focusing on the following three areas: pragmatic diplomacy and diplomatic activism focused on reforming international institutions to better shape international relations in a multipolar world; more equitable co-operation and exchanges, where Canadian expertise and technological innovations could help change the game, notably in the fields of culture, education, health, renewable energies, as well as the digital, social and circular economy, and so on.

● (1810)

Finally, Canada needs to be more open and transparent, to increase multidisciplinary exchanges with African universities and to work more closely with cultural and sports centres on the African continent, in conjunction with the African diaspora in Canada.

Thank you for your rapt attention.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ahmed.

We now go to questions from the members. We will start off with MP Epp. There will be four minutes for each member and for each party.

MP Epp, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

I'll start with Mr. Papoulidis.

In your first recommendation, you spoke about resiliency frameworks. Can you give us a little more detail, but not too much, only because of a lack of time? Also, how is that different from what Canada is doing now?

**Mr. Jonathan Papoulidis:** A resilience framework would have two components. One is looking at the risks that a particular country or region is facing and how they interact, the crises that are also coming about, the root causes and the political economy. The second element is looking at three specific capacities that need to be cultivated for a resilience approach: an absorptive capacity, an adaptive capacity and a transformative capacity. Oftentimes, we'll look at risks as an aid community, but we won't look at building these capacities. We'll try to meet people's needs, which is absolutely fundamental, but until we build those absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities, we're not actually building resilience.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Are you basically saying that we need to focus a little more on the development side? There is the humanitarian side, but it is on the development angles where the nexus comes together.

**Mr. Jonathan Papoulidis:** It can truly be a whole-of-government approach where the defence side, the humanitarian side and the development side are all looking at what kinds of capacities can be strengthened for resilience in their spectrums and then coming together to address those collectively.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Your second recommendation dealt with a country platform approach. One of my concerns, and it's been expressed by others around the table, is that Canada will need to focus in its approach to Africa, as we look at the intersection of defence, diplomacy, development and trade. We will need to focus on our strengths and the intersection of needs or where we can best help.

Would taking a country platform approach help us focus as to where we should be putting our efforts?

• (1815)

**Mr. Jonathan Papoulidis:** I believe the short answer is yes because it's a one-stop shop. It's a place where people can come together—governments, societal stakeholders and partners—to decide what the top priorities are, what everyone is doing in that space and how Canada can contribute in a way that builds coalitions and that helps us punch above our weight because we're contributing thought leadership, policy leadership and programming leadership in a place that's far more efficient. This is also the case where Canada might not be in a particular country or might have attachés. When the country platforms meet, the attaché can be present in those meetings and be privy to information that they wouldn't ordinarily get in a more fragmented environment.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** How does that work? There are 54 countries in Africa, and there are 27 missions. Can you again go over it? I'm not quite following the intersection of a country platform with our existing framework there.

**Mr. Jonathan Papoulidis:** The country platform is in a place, like Mozambique, where you have all the partners that come together with government. They set policy standards. They look at troubleshooting what's happening in a country. They look at where their resource gaps are, where their bottlenecks and political issues are, or where the sector reforms are. Canada, if it chose to invest more in Mozambique, would invest more in that country platform, which it's already doing, as a way of strengthening the entire response to the country and as a way of pinpointing and focusing where Canada can best serve. If you don't have a country platform, it's a very fragmented aid environment, as you probably know. There are lots of projects and lots of bilateral communication with ministries, and you don't have that collective push for a better future.

What we see in Rwanda, as a mature example, and in Somalia, as an emerging example, is that these platforms make a huge difference in actually moving the peg forward.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Thank you.

I'm going to get one question in for Mr. Moyer.

You basically stated in your Senate testimony, a month or two ago, and here, that Canada—relatively speaking, and I don't want to

put words in your mouth—is not exactly trusted right now on the continent. What do we need to do, as opposed to say, to regain or to earn that trust from our African partners?

**The Chair:** Keep your response to less than 20 seconds.

**Mr. Nicolas Moyer:** In fairness, I don't think I used the word “trust”. I think Canada remains trusted. I think we're less visible than we were, and I think we have changed our priorities so much over the years that we've lost a lot of the capital that was built in years prior. There's a lot that should be considered about how we can show up in ways that are lasting and how we can leave an impact on those with whom we engage.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Next, let's go to MP Oliphant. You have four minutes.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses in both panels. It's very helpful.

I'm going to focus on Mr. Moyer.

I want to give you a little time to expand on what you said, because everything you said I thought was extremely important about the partnerships and moving our models of engagement towards those situations. In my sense of moving from a dominant model of development towards a commercial development of investment, engagement and employment, there are some things that Canada could do to help establish that framework in a partnership way.

I want to give you some time to think about the kinds of things that Canada is good at doing, that we could add capacity in, to improve the opportunities for investment, engagement and employment in Africa, to gradually reduce assistance and increase the ability of Africans and African countries to feed themselves and the world and do other things.

**Mr. Nicolas Moyer:** Thank you very much for the question. There is so much to say with respect to that. I think making choices is difficult.

Thank you for pointing out a theme that I think is very important, the one of partnership. Partnership is a deceptively simple concept, especially when between organizations people change. It's really finding ways to centre the decisions we make, as a country and as organizations, around the interests of our counterparts and not just our own. To be long-standing partners means understanding the interests of others. Part of setting our priorities should be understanding the priorities of our counterparts and really understanding what their needs are.

At a policy level, that presents a certain different set of dynamic challenges. When we come to the great aid that we might provide through the FIAP, for example, how can it be consolidated in a way that represents the kind of interest that government is asking us to prioritize? There are ways to marry those two considerations, I believe. I do think that investment in a relationship does matter over time. I do think we've had an approach of kind of parachuting in. We have to think differently. I talked about volunteer co-operation. Where are exchanges today that might be thinking about things in a different way, about relationships on another playing field?

Now, when you talked about a process to move our relationship from an aid relationship to a trade-based relationship, we have to think strategically about our engagements. Where does Canada already have ties and added value? How can we strengthen relationships between universities in areas where Canada already has strengths? That's the kind of strategic thinking that could have long-term real beneficial value, because we could marry the interests of our partners with our own.

I think that's the only avenue by which we get to defining priority countries or thematic, because fundamentally there are so many different things to choose from and so many tables to be at. I think we all know that this is the biggest challenge Canada faces in terms of decision-making. As Canadians, we want to be at every table, and rightly so, but in many respects, we have to make those choices based on where we'll have the greatest impact. I don't think it's necessarily about our own interests. It's also about our partners' interests.

• (1820)

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** I would just add that one thing the African Union has been clear with me about is that Canada should be very up front about our interests too. They've been very clear: We don't want you to come and help us; we want you to say what you want from us and what you expect to get.

They're looking for that kind of equal eye-to-eye relationship.

**Mr. Nicolas Moyer:** This changes the dynamic of a relationship. You can really talk partnership in that case.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** I was going to give some time, but I think we're out of it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bergeron, you have four minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you to our witnesses, once again, for illuminating our study on the role Canada should play in Africa over the coming decades.

I'm going to address you in French, Mr. Moyer, if that's all right.

**Mr. Nicolas Moyer:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Fine.

Last February, you testified before the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade as part of its study on Canada's interests and engagement in Africa.

I always get the impression that we're two steps behind the Senate committee on just about everything.

You pointed out that despite a period of strong ties, Canada's history over the past two decades in Africa paints a picture of disengagement, to the point where, in some places, its influence has all but disappeared. You also pointed out that Canada only has missions in two-fifths of Africa's 54 countries.

I should add, since we're talking about a new type of partnership, that over the past few decades, Canada has signed free-trade agreements with countries on every continent except Africa. To date, not a single free-trade agreement has been signed with an African country.

There's a lot of talk about Canada's typical commitment on the international stage, and I get the impression that Canada itself isn't quite sure what its approach to Africa is. In our discussions with government officials, we talked initially about a strategy for Africa, similar to the Indo-Pacific strategy. Then, it was more like a policy for Africa, then a framework for Africa, and now we're not sure what to call it.

Can you shed some light on what Canada's approach to Africa is and should be?

**Mr. Nicolas Moyer:** Thank you for those references.

I would say that it's not up to me to decide on Canada's approach in Africa. However, I do think it's very important for Canada to clarify its intentions, as was said earlier, and to maintain those intentions over time and over the long term.

That's really the difficulty we're seeing today. It took years for these relationships to develop. I lived in Ethiopia in the early 2000s, and I often heard a saying that went something like this: "When things aren't going well here, fortunately, they're going well in Canada." The Canadian flag was recognized on bags of humanitarian assistance that were distributed. Unfortunately, that isn't the image we necessarily want to project, but a brand image was developed, along with a sense that Canada was present.

Whether we like it or not, we lost that with the disappearance of the Canadian International Development Agency, or CIDA. It wasn't reinvented. Our potential competitors on the geopolitical stage are flying their flag, so to speak, on existing major infrastructure projects, at the request of those countries, in Africa.

How can we ensure that we serve our own interests, where they intersect with our partners' interests, and that we have visibility and credibility in relation to those commitments? Finding the answer to this question could help resolve the situation.

On the other hand, I would say that Canada has its own unique strengths in terms of equity, gender equality, human rights and governance systems. This is an integral part of our identity. Canada can also be a partner when it comes to accessing other markets.

That said, the question is whether we should give priority to Africa. As you said yourself, we haven't made Africa a priority. Are we in a position to do so? That's a question we have to ask ourselves. I think the demographic and economic arguments clearly show that we should make Africa a priority. If Canada doesn't, it's totally abandoning any future global progress.

I hope that answers your question.

• (1825)

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Yes, that was an excellent answer.

In fact, I don't think Canada has a very clear idea yet of what it wants to do about Africa.

You talked about “flying a flag.” We heard from a number of witnesses, including Mr. Côté of the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale, or AQOCI, who told us that in terms of official development assistance, Canada gives priority—

[English]

**The Chair:** We're out of time.

Mr. Bergeron, did you want to pose one quick question?

[Translation]

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

Canada provides most of its development aid through international organizations.

In your opinion, is that one way of doing it, or should we “fly our flag,” to use your expression?

**Mr. Nicolas Moyer:** We have to be careful when talking about “flying the flag.” I believe that Canada must first recognize what contribution it's going to make. We also have to be careful about where we fly the flag and how we use it. Aid is not necessarily a marketing tool.

In the past, most of Canada's humanitarian and development assistance was provided through the United Nations and other multi-lateral organizations. The contribution made by those bodies is essential.

In fact, it's often an easy choice for Canada. Accountability is simpler; we can simply hand over the money, reports are sent to us and civil society channels are often overlooked. Those channels have always been an easy way to demonstrate greater added value, which is associated with lower costs and a very good investment. What's more, they showcase Canadian expertise and strengthen direct relationships. Too often, government takes the approach that—

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm afraid I'm going to have to cut you off. We've gone considerably over time.

For the final question, we'll go to MP McPherson, for four minutes.

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

Thank you for being here today, and for being online. This is important testimony for us.

Where do we choose to put our aid? How do we choose to engage with Africa? What does that look like? We have an ODA bill that says that the perspectives of those that we are giving our ODA dollars to have to be considered in how we're spending it.

These are questions that I always struggle with. There are a multitude of different ways that we can do developmental aid. Some of it is very difficult. We spoke yesterday at an event with the Global Cooperation Caucus about how it's easier to put a vaccine into the arm of a child in Nairobi than it is to put a vaccine into the arm of a child in Sudan.

When we think about what Canada needs to do, what we should be prioritizing, and how we choose to build a road map—that clearly we don't have at the moment, to be fair—how do we balance hard development, the development that is difficult to do, but must be done?

It is not something that FinDev Canada can do. It is not something that we can use private enterprise to accomplish, because that's not how good development will happen there. It requires the ability to, you know, prioritize those things we might be really good at.

Maybe I'll start with you, Mr. Papoulidis, and then I'll go to you, Mr. Moyer.

**Mr. Jonathan Papoulidis:** I think this is really where the country platform idea has specific purchase, especially in countries—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Even with choosing countries, how do we do that? Sudan is difficult.

**Mr. Jonathan Papoulidis:** Typically, it's the countries where it is more difficult that you need the country platform all the more because you have a lot of aid actors all contending for certain areas, certain regions and certain projects. You have a government that is weak, so it's dispersed. It's not coming together.

It's having a platform where you have a high-level space for dialogue and mutual accountability. Below that are sector groups led by ministries that are trying to reform health, education and social protection, with the ministry of planning as the secretariat. This is the model of the platform.

This would allow Canada to say that it is particularly interested in these hard-to-reach areas and that it wants to see how it can support, but in a more holistic view of what the government's trying to do and with what other partners are trying to do as well.



Then you find your comparative or competitive advantage in that space or you help to carve it out. You actually say in these meetings where Canada is going to take a stand, but you're doing so in a way that is aligned to the broader development planning. You're doing it in a broader way, so it doesn't become just a project or a one-off. It actually harmonizes with other types of investments that are going in the country, including from, potentially, FinDev over time.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Yes. Harmonization is a huge issue that we have faced in countries across Africa, frankly.

Nick.

**Mr. Nicolas Moyer:** Thank you.

This is a fundamentally difficult question. The ODA Accountability Act tells us what we know, which is that aid should go to those who need it the most, period. However, it's never that simple because it's hard to get to some of the hardest places. I think that's why our humanitarian assistance is there. It has to be used with that sole purpose in mind.

When it comes to development dollars and how we can have an impact, tough choices have to be made. I think they do come at the intersection of where we think we can have purchase and where we have enough influence to make a difference.

How those decisions get made is definitely outside of my remit, but I do think there's an intersection there of existing historic relations that could help and alignment of interests as countries.

I do think, though, that one vector that allows us to be successful at something like the ODA Accountability Act and to overcome some of the challenges related to this question is actually how we can support local civil society. They are the ones that are strongest there. They know well. They have such a greater impact themselves. As they grow able to respond to the needs in their environments and communities, they actually drive the change. I think it takes away a lot of the responsibility of, or the onus on, a donor government to make some of those choices.

It's a complex topic for sure.

● (1830)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Mr. Ahmed, do you have anything to add very quickly?

We're out of time.

I'm sorry, Mr. Ahmed.

**The Chair:** I will take the opportunity to thank all three of our exceptional witnesses.

Thank you very much Mr. Ahmed, Mr. Moyer and Mr. Papoulidis. We're very grateful for your many years of experience and expertise. Thank you.

This meeting stands adjourned.

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