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Chair: Ahmed Hussien





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• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Ahmed Hussen (York South—Weston—Etobicoke, Lib.)):** Ladies and gentlemen, I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 14 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

[Translation]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, September 23, the committee is now meeting to study Canada's Africa strategy.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses today.

From the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, we have Cheryl Urban, assistant deputy minister, Africa branch; Andrew Smith, director general, pan-African affairs bureau; Susan Steffen, director general, west Africa and Maghreb bureau; and Sara Nicholls, director, central and southern Africa bilateral relations division.

Up to five minutes will be given for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions.

I now invite Ms. Cheryl Urban to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

**Cheryl Urban (Assistant Deputy Minister, Africa Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Thank you very much, Chair.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, honourable members, as assistant deputy minister of the Africa branch at Global Affairs Canada, I am pleased to address you this afternoon to discuss Canada's engagement in Africa and the progress made in implementing Canada's Africa strategy.

On April 10, 2024, we had the honour of presenting the committee with an update of the government's approach with regard to the African continent as part of the study on Canada's approach to Africa.

Global Affairs Canada was then preparing for the second high-level dialogue with the African Union Commission, which took place in November of that year.

At the same time, the department mobilized stakeholders in Canada and Africa to develop an engagement framework, which led to the launch of Canada's Africa strategy last March. The committee's report was an important reference in guiding this process.

[English]

Much has changed since we last appeared before the committee and since the strategy's launch in March 2025. We are seeing a rise in global economic turbulence and widening global fault lines. The Government of Canada, in response, is focused on Canadian productivity and economic prosperity and protecting Canadian sovereignty and security. Our government has committed to increase exports with non-U.S. markets and to diversify trade. More than ever, there is a need to build strong economic partnerships with countries around the world.

The Africa strategy underlines the need to focus on mutually beneficial partnerships and provides a framework to advance the priorities of the government today. The strategy aims to strengthen Canada's engagement with Africa towards greater economic co-operation, strengthened peace and security partnerships, enhanced engagement of African diaspora communities in Canada, and international assistance that supports poverty reduction and economic development.

[Translation]

Canada's Africa strategy presents the continent as a key partner and a region of opportunity for achieving Canada's international priorities. Africa stands out due to fast-growing economies, a growing middle class and a dynamic youth population that is driving innovation and entrepreneurship.

It is essential for Canada to partner with the African continent to promote security and stability.

[English]

In the course of our ongoing implementation of the Africa strategy, Global Affairs Canada continues to respond to this committee's recommendations put forward in your November 2024 report.

[Translation]

We are making progress on a number of fronts in implementing the strategy. First, the government has appointed two special envoys to strengthen our presence and exchanges with African decision-makers, Ben Marc Diendéré, special envoy for Africa, and Marcel Lebleu, special envoy for the Sahel.

Second, we are working to deepen our diplomatic and commercial presence in Africa, as recommended by this committee, including the creation of a full high commission in Zambia and a full embassy in Benin.

We also rely on the interpersonal ties that unite Canada and Africa, particularly our membership in the group of francophone nations. This comparative advantage allows us to leverage partnerships with francophone African countries in terms of both trade exchanges and political alliances, including in multilateral organizations such as the International Organisation of La Francophonie.

[English]

We set up the Africa trade hub, which coordinates Canada's economic diplomacy and trading investment engagement across Africa. This hub has been instrumental in coordinating with Canada's missions in Africa to support Canada's private sector on the continent and trade policy priorities such as ongoing foreign investment promotion and protection agreement negotiations with Zambia and Tanzania.

Recognizing the need to shift from traditional aid relationships towards deeper economic partnerships, we have launched a new Africa trade and development program. A concrete example of this work is the development trade marketplace organized by Canada's high commission in Kenya, which took place at the end of October in Ottawa and helped link development partners and Canadian companies looking to do business in Africa and other developing country markets.

Trade and development investments build on Canada's long-standing support for the African Continental Free Trade Area, which has involved the African Trade Policy Centre at the UN Economic Commission for Africa and Canadian partners such as the Trade Facilitation Office Canada and a consortium led by Carleton University's Centre for Trade Policy and Law in providing technical and strategic expertise for the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Canada continues to invest in poverty reduction, building on decades of meaningful investment in areas such as health systems and education, including for girls and women. Meanwhile, Canada continues to provide humanitarian assistance and to undertake political advocacy in conflict and crisis situations as part of our engagement in fragile contexts.

• (1540)

We have also continued to strengthen collaboration with the African Union since the signing of the Canada-AUC memorandum of understanding at the second high-level dialogue with the commission last November. Our officials have been working together to advance joint priorities, and a third dialogue is scheduled to take place in the fall of 2026.

[Translation]

Our engagement with the African diaspora in Canada has intensified, particularly in support of economic partnerships and trade diversification efforts. Since the beginning of this year, Global Affairs Canada's Africa branch has participated in over 20 diaspora-led initiatives in Canada, including through our network of missions. In June, for example, Canada's high commission in Ghana co-hosted the Ghanaian diaspora investment forum with financial institutions and the Ghanaian government.

We have also been working closely with South Africa, increasing high-level exchanges over the past year as part of our respective presidencies of the G7 and G20. These interactions have strengthened our strategic relationship to advance our shared bilateral interests and to support our respective summits, in Kananaskis and later this week in Johannesburg.

Finally, it is important to remember that African voices are essential to building inclusive multilateral systems. Canada has actively supported the integration of the African Union into the G20. We invited South Africa to the G7 summit and are working with it to support its presidency of the G20. Together, we are making progress on shared priorities, including critical minerals, disaster risk reduction and artificial intelligence.

As you can see, we are focusing our efforts on the government's new priorities for shared prosperity and security by deepening our relationships with key and emerging African partners. The implementation of Canada's Africa strategy will continue to adapt to the evolving global context and domestic priorities.

Amid geopolitical tensions and growing global uncertainty, guided by the Africa strategy, Canada is committed to being a reliable partner, in a spirit of equal and mutually beneficial relations.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your remarks.

We now open the floor to questions, beginning with MP Rood.

You have six minutes.

**Lianne Rood (Middlesex—London, CPC):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thanks to all of you for being here today.

My first question is, does this strategy conflict with the budget's stated decrease of \$2.7 billion in aid spending? What problems will a decrease in funding create for a strategy such as this, and how is the department planning to adjust for that?

**Cheryl Urban:** The strategy in itself, at the time of its release, was a strategy that was implementable with existing resources. It's all about prioritization and using existing resources to their greatest effect. Even in today's context, when the Government of Canada is focused on consolidating government operations and reducing its expenditures, we can achieve the aims of the Africa strategy.

This is a question of having very clear, concrete strategies of where we are going to prioritize and where we move our resources. It's also a matter of doing even more coordination among different government bodies. That would be, for example, among Global Affairs Canada, Export Development Canada, FinDev Canada, etc., so that we can multiply our effect.

Finally, it's about streamlining our processes, leveraging artificial intelligence and leveraging technology, so that we have processes that are more effective and that this is doable with the resources we have in today's government agenda.

**Lianne Rood:** Thank you very much for that answer.

You mentioned streamlining and moving money around in different places. I'm curious how much new money over and above the existing aid and departmental baselines the strategy requires over the next five years. How will you report return on investment and exports, Canadian jobs supported and private sector dollars mobilized?

**Cheryl Urban:** As I said, it's written in the Africa strategy itself that over the past five years the amount that Canada has contributed bilaterally to Africa for the five-year period is \$4.5 billion. With that amount, that can be used to achieve the aims of the Africa strategy as it is currently articulated. Even if there are further government reductions, this is something that is achievable by using the resources we have, moving them, for example, to those priority markets.

I'll give you an example. On the African continent, our trade and investment relationships are predominantly with eight to 10 countries on the continent. We know where there are places where we can focus our efforts.

In terms of reporting on the results from that, we have the estimates process, where we will always commit to reporting on the achievements of all of our activities, including whether those are diplomatic and whether they are trade or international assistance.

We also have an international assistance report, which reports on the details of how we are spending our international assistance dollars.

• (1545)

**Lianne Rood:** Is there an actual mechanism that reports on a return on investment for Canadian tax dollars and how many Canadian jobs would be supported by that funding?

**Cheryl Urban:** The Government of Canada and Global Affairs Canada will be reporting on all aspects of its economic co-operation and trade opportunities. It's going to be developing a trade diversification strategy. As part of that, our engagement and our economic co-operation on the African continent will be a part of how we report on what have been the results from the activities. We are committed to reporting on results and how they impact Canadians.

**Lianne Rood:** Thank you.

Canada signed a memorandum of understanding with the African Union in 2024. What concrete deliverables, deadlines and joint work plans will flow from that MOU this year and next? How will progress be reported transparently so that Parliament can hold the government to account on its commitments?

**Cheryl Urban:** I'll begin answering this question, and then I'll turn to my colleague, Drew Smith.

The memorandum of understanding that we signed had several components. Some of them were about development; some of them were working together on peace and security, and some were on economic co-operation.

We have had engagement with the African Union since. We had, for example, our sherpa for the G20 and G7, who travelled to Addis Ababa and had meetings with the African Union. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, we are scheduled to have another high-level dialogue in the fall of this coming year, in 2026. There will be public reporting on that meeting and on the lead-up and what the deliverables are.

Drew, would you like to share?

**Andrew Smith (Director General, Pan-African Affairs Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I would just say that within the African Union Commission, there has been a transition in the last several months. In February of this year, there was a new chair of the commission. There were eight new commissioners put in place. It's those commissioners who are key to our establishing the priorities and work plan that are linked to the MOU.

In terms of process, we're in the process of establishing those relationships with the commissioners and setting the course for the action plan and concrete work that we'll do through the MOU.

I would just note that one of the key deliverables of "Agenda 2063", which is the central planning document for the African Union Commission, is the continental free trade agreement. We continue to maintain engagement on that through a number of different development assistance investments.

**Lianne Rood:** This strategy was pitched as a landmark approach. Specifically, what is new or different versus past strategies? What previous measures did the department consider failures that will not be repeated?

**Cheryl Urban:** I think the point of the strategy is to invoke a real change. It is meant to be a pivot. Predominantly, it's a pivot towards more economic co-operation and mutually beneficial partnerships between Canada and African countries.

Canada has had a presence, and a meaningful presence, for many decades in Africa and is generally welcomed. We did two years of consultations in the development of the Africa strategy. What we heard from African interlocutors and others was that that was positive, but it was also missing an opportunity to make those partnerships more multi-faceted in order to make them more about trade and investment and to engage our private sector.

That's what we'll be doing differently. We'll be having less of a focus on a one-sector approach to those relationships.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, MP Rood.

Next, we go to MP Vandenberg. You have six minutes.

• (1550)

**Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much for your briefing.

I'd like to talk a bit about the work we're doing on conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction, particularly for women, peace and security. We know that right now there could be as many as 50 active conflicts on the continent. Canada's commitment to women, peace and security has been long-standing. We're on our third national action plan for WPS. We know that when we have women at the table all the way through the process, we have a greater chance of sustainability of peace agreements.

Could you talk a bit about our ongoing commitment to women's peace and security and how it is integrating into some of our conflict prevention on the continent?

**Cheryl Urban:** Thank you very much. I'll start, and then I'll turn to my colleagues to provide more concrete examples.

I've spoken a lot so far about economic co-operation being a pillar of the Africa strategy, but another very important pillar is peace and security. If we're looking at mutually beneficial relationships and a strategy that benefits Canadians, it's not only about economic benefit; it's also about security benefits. That goes back to Canadians.

Canada does have a long-standing history in engaging on the African continent in peace and security. We have multiple programs, such as weapons threat reduction, counterterrorism, and peace and security programming. We have partnerships on the Elsie initiative and the Vancouver principles. Women, peace and security is an area in which Canada has demonstrated leadership. It goes to show that a focus on women can help us achieve our aims in peace and security in the region.

I can turn to one of my colleagues to provide a concrete example of how we do that.

**Sara Nicholls (Director, Central and Southern Africa Bilateral Relations Division, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I'd be happy to offer an example from Ethiopia. This is a place where there's been impressive Canadian leadership following the Pretoria agreement in 2022. There was a deep need for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programming, or DDR programming.

Canada led the creation of the multi-stakeholder alliance, which is now the multi-stakeholder DDR fund for Ethiopia. Canada has

put in \$14 million and is seeing impressive results, including 80,000 people who have been demobilized in this first phase.

That's a place you can point to as Canadian leadership.

**Anita Vandenberg:** I noted that you mentioned in your remarks the Equality Fund and the women's voice and leadership program, which are providing funding directly to women and feminist organizations on the front lines. They are small grants that really have, dollar for dollar, a lot more impact.

I know that Canada has also committed, in its 10-year commitment for health, to SRHR, or sexual and reproductive health and rights. Of course, all of that is in accordance with the Maputo protocol and nation-states.

Could you give us an overview of where we are in terms of our support for SRHR and also some examples of where this has had impact?

**Cheryl Urban:** I might take the same approach I did last time, where I can provide a little bit of a general response to that and then turn to some concrete examples.

I would say that programs like the women's voice and leadership program are real examples of how Canada is creating transformational change by leveraging local approaches and localization in how we do programming. Also, while we're looking to achieve economic growth and major changes, we know that investing in women is a very important way in which we can achieve those economic and security aims.

As I mentioned, we have a long history of investing in health. It's something that forms a lot of the partnerships we currently have on the continent.

I'll turn to Sue.

**Susan Steffen (Director General, West Africa and Maghreb Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I can speak to at least one example that supports our commitment to promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as economic development. It's a project we have in Ghana called "generating revenues for improved nutrition". It's with the International Potato Center from P.E.I. and CARE International. That's \$10 million.

It improves the nutritional and financial security of women, youth and young children in the districts of northern Ghana, which are particularly affected by insecurity. The project is training women and men in equitable nutrient availability and child-feeding practices. It promotes households to participate in farming as a business club and provides technical and logistical support to small and medium-scaled agro-processing. It focuses very much on women's role in nutrition and health. This allows them to be healthier when it comes to giving birth, which is a key component of their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

• (1555)

**Anita Vandenberg:** Thank you.

I note that you talked about localization. Of course, we know that for development, certainly international development projects, if you are involving women, our feminist international assistance policy is predicated on the idea that rather than seeing women as just beneficiaries, we need to have them as part of the design and development of all projects. Whether or not they benefit women specifically, those projects are more likely to be successful when they have local input from women and girls.

I wonder if you could talk a little about the progress of our feminist international assistance policy.

**Cheryl Urban:** One thing I would say in general is that, as you mentioned, we know that human rights is an important component of how Canada engages around the world. That involves taking a human rights-based approach to undertaking international assistance, which means that those we are helping to benefit are agents of change for their own benefit. We've achieved many results through our investments in these areas.

I'll turn to my colleague Sara on that.

**Sara Nicholls:** Thank you.

If I may, I'd like to offer an example from Mozambique, where the women's voice and leadership program, which is focused on building the capacity of very small-scale women's organizations that wouldn't necessarily be able to access grant funding in different ways, offers more support so that they can be strong and stand where they are. In Mozambique we work with a local partner. It has its challenges, with the local language being Portuguese, but we work heavily with that local organization to build the capacity of hundreds of women's groups throughout the country.

That became even more prominent as Mozambique came through the post-electoral violence and needed to have a strong civil society as part of the reconciliation and peace process. The chair, the head of AMUDEIA, is sitting in that central peace process. She credits the work that has been done with Canada to make sure that women's organizations are strong in her country and to make sure that she had the visibility to be invited to that table.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Simard, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your opening remarks, Mr. Smith.

I don't normally sit on this committee. I'm going to ask you a question that may seem a bit unusual to you.

I was in Sudbury a week ago, and I visited a nickel mine. It was explained to me that the main competitors for Canadian nickel mines are Chinese, but mostly African. Social dumping means that these competing mines are able to extract nickel at very low costs and drive prices down. If I'm not mistaken, the ore sells for \$14,000 a tonne. That is a very low price.

In your strategy, are there any developments under way or measures to combat this phenomenon of social dumping? To strengthen economic development and partnerships, do you have any programs or initiatives that aim, on the one hand, through a public education component, to inform people about their rights and enable them to improve their working conditions and, on the other hand, to try, at the very least, to balance this economic functioning between the north and the south, which is often a problem?

[English]

**Andrew Smith:** As part of the strategy's implementation, there was the announcement of a trade and development program. I think you're touching on some important issues. In terms of dumping, there is very little we can do within Global Affairs to have an impact on the market price of minerals like nickel, but there is a lot we can do in terms of the way in which the minerals are produced. That's something we will certainly look at as we start to implement our trade and development program. We'll be looking at the enabling environment for the development of, in this case, mineral production, whether that be labour standards or other forms of human rights assurances as investments take place, either Canadian investments or other support to a local government.

I would just say that Canada has a very strong reputation globally when it comes to questions about ESG standards. The "towards sustainable mining" standards that have been established by the Canadian Mining Association are very well regarded globally, and we would see them being implemented through our work in Africa.

• (1600)

[Translation]

**Mario Simard:** Thank you.

I mentioned this because some things seem to have changed between the time you implemented this strategy and the tabling of the 2025 budget, when the government announced its intentions. I don't know if you heard what Prime Minister Carney, said about the budget. He said that he wanted Canada to compete with China in the critical minerals sector and become a global supplier that would be a little more ethical than some other countries. In that context, have you changed your approaches, or is this something you can focus more on?

I understand that a strategy is something that evolves and must be transformed. Is there a feedback loop that is activated when you implement a particular strategy? Is there a way to review the practices you've put in place to respond to changing interests and issues?

[English]

**Cheryl Urban:** To begin, I would say that in the implementation of a strategy, it would be very important to make sure that it remains current with the challenges of today. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, since its release in March 2025, we have already seen the change in global conditions.

The implementation of the strategy is being done in real time. It's being done at headquarters but also by each of our embassies and our heads of mission, who are looking on the ground every day and considering what the current reality is, adjusting and selecting priorities and approaches.

[Translation]

**Susan Steffen:** I can add to that.

In Africa, when it comes to China, there is very often talk of illegal and artisanal extraction, which causes many problems for the people involved in these activities. That's where competition in the form of dumping can occur. We are therefore focusing much of our efforts on mining issues.

Illegal and artisanal extraction also causes environmental problems. The African governments themselves are increasingly asking us to work on this issue because it causes them security problems and it's a source of frustration for their market.

**Mario Simard:** I don't want to interfere with the committee's study, but if you have any additional information on this, could you submit it to the committee? It could be interesting.

I want to quickly go back to your strategy, because I think I'm running out of time.

Africa is a very diverse cultural environment. I would like to talk to you mainly about the language issue. Do you have different approaches in French-speaking and English-speaking Africa? In your opening remarks, you talked a bit about the International Organisation of La Francophonie. I guess your approaches are tailored to French-speaking Africa, and then—

[English]

**The Chair:** We're over time. Give a very brief response, and then we'll have to move on.

[Translation]

**Susan Steffen:** All our approaches are modulated and tailored according to the context of each country, whether it is French-speaking, English-speaking or Portuguese-speaking, or whether none of these three languages are spoken there, such as in Ethiopia.

The contexts and forums in which we interact with these countries are different. There is the International Organisation of La Francophonie, which brings together 27 African countries. So it's a good forum for interacting with these countries.

[English]

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

Next we have Ziad Aboultaif.

You have five minutes.

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

Ms. Urban and your colleagues, thanks for appearing before committee.

One in five workers at Global Affairs will lose their job. For some, this could be before December of this year. How's that going to affect the Africa strategy and the Africa mission in general?

**Cheryl Urban:** Global Affairs Canada is one among almost all federal ministries that are going to be undertaking that reduction exercise, understood within a context of current Canadian economic conditions.

When we are looking at undertaking those reductions, it's certainly an exercise that we're doing with regard to making sure that the resources that remain are aligned with what our priorities are. As I was mentioning earlier, in order to deliver on the Africa strategy, it's quite simply a question of understanding where the priorities are for us in order to deliver and where that means we need to keep or move our resources to operate within that framework.

● (1605)

**Ziad Aboultaif:** Speaking of which, you mentioned priorities. I'm keen on priorities.

What are the priorities since we did the Africa strategy in the last Parliament? I believe that there were a lot of recommendations to focus rather than go all over the map in Africa. You must have taken this report into consideration. We know that, in March of this year, I believe, the Africa strategy was released.

Where are the priorities, and where is the focus? Between the job cuts and being effective on such an important strategic market and plan for us, how are you going to balance that? Where is the focus going to be? I'm curious to know.

**Cheryl Urban:** The Government of Canada has been very clear about what its focus is with the seven missions that have come from the Prime Minister.

Within the ministry of Global Affairs Canada, we understand what that means for us in terms of our international engagement. We know we need to be working towards enhancing Canadian economic and security interests and advancing Canadian sovereignty. We have a clear mandate to focus on trade diversification.

We know our engagement in Africa is part of that priority. While the government today is focusing on markets in Indo-Pacific and Europe, this is where we have Canadian engagement at present. We also know that operating in Africa is part of that prioritization and that we have a role to play in focusing on economic co-operation through various means by which we engage. We—

**Ziad Aboultaif:** I'm sorry to cut you off.

As the assistant deputy minister, Africa branch, would you be able to share with us a specific project or projects that the government is working on in order to make the success of the Africa strategy something Canadians can hear some good news about? If there's anything that you can name right now, it would be very beneficial. I know the government is working, but you are part of the government, and you have an important job.

We would like to hear some news from you on that.

**Cheryl Urban:** Sure.

I've already talked to you about some of the initiatives we've undertaken.

Perhaps what you're getting at is this: What this government needs, right now, are deals. What it needs are concrete opportunities, including for the Canadian private sector, so it can truly advance its economic agenda.

**Ziad Aboultaif:** Is there a specific project or specific country you can name? This week, the Prime Minister is in Abu Dhabi. We know this can be good news for, hopefully, the AI industry.

What will be in Africa, and where and how? Where's the focus? I think that is very important to know, rather than the overall generic news about where we're going.

**Cheryl Urban:** I'm happy to provide you with an example. It's not just one country. There are a few countries that come to the top when we're looking at the potential of having real deals.

As an example, we've been working quite a bit with South Africa in the context of G20 and G7 presidencies. We've had numerous meetings at the leader level and the foreign minister level. The Prime Minister is travelling to Johannesburg. He's going to be attending the G20. It's very likely that there will be bilateral meetings held at the leader level there. Canada and South Africa have been working together on developing an ambitious economic agenda to advance both of our economies.

**Ziad Aboultaif:** I'm sorry. Is it in AI? Is it in mining? Is it in oil and gas? Is it in education?

Can you name something?

**Cheryl Urban:** I don't want to get ahead of any kind of news release that comes out after the G20 meeting.

What I can say is that they are working on concrete elements of that agenda. I can say specifically that, if you look at the link be-

tween the G20 and G7 presidencies, there are joint priorities in the areas of AI, critical minerals and wildfire. There are joint areas, including a joint interest in increasing investment between the countries.

**The Chair:** You're over the time, sir, unfortunately.

Next, we have MP Rob Oliphant.

You have five minutes.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for coming. Thank you for the work you did.

I have several thank yous. One thank you is for taking seriously the work of this committee in the development of the strategy. There were two tandem processes going on. There was one here, around this table, where we heard from witnesses, and there was the process that was happening at Global Affairs, with approximately 600 representations, consultations and written submissions. That was a lot. Thank you for taking parliamentarians seriously.

I could follow up on Mr. Aboultaif's questions. What I would cite first as the most significant change is the development of a trade hub. While we don't get deals done, it's been six months or seven months—we had an election in the middle of this and we had many things go on in summer—but the trade hub is up and running. I can give you a few minutes on that.

What I am hearing in the community, from both Africans and Canadians, is that they now have a place to go and they now have a sense that there is one-stop shopping. They're able to bring together a bunch of different players in the nexus—I don't like that word—of bringing all of those things together. That is one thing.

In terms of deals, those come. They can come in agri-food, mining, construction, infrastructure and a variety of things that Canada has expertise in.

I want to push a bit on the diaspora. You mentioned it in your remarks, but among the things we—I have to say we—identified were the strength and the comparative advantage Canada has compared to other countries. In the struggle and the so-called scramble for Africa are the Canadian diaspora communities from every part of Africa. We have citizens, business people, academics, organizations, institutions, francophones, anglophones, lusophones and others who are in universities, business associations and trade groups. One of the imaginings was that we would find a home for them.

We have a trade hub, but we talked about finding a way to not have random or ad hoc conversations with diaspora African Canadians who showed up. Rather, we need to try to make a system of it whereby Canadians who have African roots have a place to go, like the trade hub, to say, “These are our ideas and these are our connections. We have the language capacity, the cultural capacity, experience and all the things.”

Can you talk a bit about how we're going to do that?

• (1610)

**Cheryl Urban:** The trade hub has been quite game-changing for Global Affairs Canada and our ability to engage on trade issues. The team is busy prioritizing markets, taking into consideration Canadian strengths and Canadian sectors that can be engaging with interlocutors.

On the diaspora, we committed to developing a diaspora engagement mechanism. I'll turn to my colleague, Drew Smith, who can talk to you a bit more about some of the activities of our trade hub, how we've been able to leverage that, and what we can look forward to in engaging more systemically with the diaspora. In the lead-up to the strategy, we learned how valuable it is to have an ongoing dialogue with diaspora communities.

**Andrew Smith:** Before moving to the trade hub, I would note that the diaspora relationship is very much multi-faceted. Noting the recommendation from this committee that informal engagement—as well as more formal, structured, ongoing strategy implementation engagement—with the diaspora is important, it's central to how we're looking at the relationship with the diaspora. We're seeing that diaspora relationship play out in many areas of the work we're doing to implement the strategy.

On the trade hub, as Cheryl just mentioned, market prioritization is very important. It's come up in other questions today how we take the strategy and move from Africa to important countries and regions, whether we're talking about trade and investment or peace and security. Central to the work we're doing right now is trying to establish where those priority markets are and how we want to engage.

The budget has provided expanded tools for us to engage through the trade hub to support Canadian enterprises looking to get into the African market. This is where the diaspora is very important. We can work in Canada with the Canadian diaspora community that is engaged in commercial relationships with Africa or looking to expand into and export to Africa.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Simard, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

• (1615)

**Mario Simard:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

With the aim of strengthening your ties, diplomatic commitments and interpersonal relationships, the academic community is an excellent vehicle for exchanges between countries, as is the scientific community.

In my former life, at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, several of my colleagues maintained relations with African universities. To my knowledge, these were never structured by the government. They were initiatives that came more from the professors themselves in their specific fields of research.

Are there elements in your strategy that can support these initiatives, which would benefit everyone involved in academic exchanges?

**Cheryl Urban:** Thank you for your question.

I'll start by answering it, and then I'll ask my colleagues to add comments.

The education sector is very important. It represents a significant portion of our trade and our ties between countries.

Perhaps my colleague can give you some examples.

**Susan Steffen:** Thank you.

The Université de Québec à Chicoutimi has carried out projects in Africa together with our department, and they have paid off. Several examples of projects or initiatives may seem less structured from the outside, but from the inside, we have established priorities for each country in which we operate. In addition, if a project is proposed to us that corresponds to our priorities for this country, we look at whether we can fund it or not. From the outside, it may be perceived as a bit far-fetched, but that's how it's structured in our department.

I would also say that another part of our department is responsible for relationships with university bodies and colleges. Their job is to ensure that their international agenda aligns with the department's priorities.

**Mario Simard:** Thank you.

I'll continue along the same lines. I don't know if you saw the reports on the program *Enquête*, perhaps a month or two ago. We were talking about African smugglers who were supplying university titles illegally. The word seems to have been spread in Africa, that it was easier. We know that there is a very large French-speaking African diaspora in Quebec.

Are you doing any work to provide the right information? As part of your strategy, have you seen large migration movements— asylum seekers and students coming to Canada on fake invitations from universities? Is there anything you can do on your end to provide information to these people?

[English]

**The Chair:** Could we have a very brief response, please? We are over time.

[Translation]

**Susan Steffen:** I think other departments are involved, so I won't speak on their behalf.

We are very aware of the problems that exist. We're a bit of a victim of our own success. Information has been shared through university fairs, which are set up on the ground as part of our missions overseas, and we provide information specifically to try to avoid that kind of situation.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will go next to MP Ziad Abouttaif.

You have five minutes.

**Ziad Abouttaif:** Thanks again, Mr. Chair.

In 2018, I visited Senegal, Benin and Nigeria with Minister Guilbeault. I know that in Benin both the Chinese and U.S. governments have a big presence, and I am glad to hear that we now have an office or embassy there.

In Nigeria I was told by our diplomatic mission that we need to pay more attention to Nigeria, and that maybe a visit by a minister would be worthwhile because there is so much going on there.

It is the same thing that I hear about Algeria, as it is also a growing economy, and there is so much in common as far as agriculture and oil and gas are concerned.

Can you share with us the focus of our missions in Nigeria and Algeria? I would really appreciate it if you could name some projects.

**Cheryl Urban:** Indeed, Nigeria and Algeria are very important countries for us in terms of trade and investment.

I'll turn it over to our director general to speak more about the specifics.

**Susan Steffen:** I'll take those separately. They are two of the largest economies on the continent.

Algeria is our largest export market on the continent. The bulk of our exports are cereals. Stay tuned if you want to listen to deals that are happening. That's going to be a very productive space. Agricultural products to Algeria is a space you should continue to watch. I think we're going to be quite successful there. Our priorities across the continent are now trade diversification and making sure our relationships with those countries are solid. Where we have common interests, we move those common interests ahead. In the case of Algeria, absolutely, the trade diversification point is top of the list.

In Nigeria, it's twofold. Security is an important part of their reality and, therefore, of our relationship with them. In the past, Nigeria has been a big supplier of peacekeeping troops, so we've had some interaction with them there as well. Now they're struggling with their own internal security in a much bigger way. Nigeria is the second-largest economy on the continent after South Africa. It is a complex business environment. We're focusing on trying to help our companies find their way through the Nigerian market. There are lots of opportunities for two-way trade. There are lots of people from Nigeria who are very interested in many things Canada has to offer.

• (1620)

**Ziad Abouttaif:** Thank you.

I'll give the remaining time to Ms. Rood.

**Lianne Rood:** Thank you very much.

Foreign interference is a well-documented and much-discussed problem in Canada, and we all know that China is pursuing an aggressive stance in Africa through its belt and road strategy.

How will you screen out adversarial influence and hostile state proxies in procurement, research partnerships and digital systems tied to projects funded under this strategy, and what audits will be made available so Canadians can see exactly where our money goes?

**Cheryl Urban:** Indeed, foreign interference is a very significant issue. It's a growing issue around the world. It's something we pay very close attention to and monitor through our embassies and reporting. We know there are a number of international players on the continent who engage in practices like foreign interference, so this is something that is important to us in terms of our engagement.

In terms of how we operate and spend funds, we have many checks and balances. We work with trusted partners when we're spending international assistance resources abroad and on the African continent. We undertake fiduciary evaluations of those partners before we fund them. In many cases, we're funding organizations. We're not providing funds directly to governments.

I don't know whether you want to add anything to that, Sue.

**Susan Steffen:** The question of how we manage risk in our development programming—which is where the bulk of the funding from the Canadian government comes—is a really pertinent one. We revise our processes regularly.

Our assistant deputy minister spoke about the risk assessments we do and the risk mitigation structures we put in place. We also do regular audits and monitoring missions. That's partly why we have people in the field. Where we need specific expertise, we hire it to go and do field missions, as best we can.

**Lianne Rood:** Is there any requirement for transparency in how the funds are used? When you give money to an organization, how is it using Canadian taxpayer monies, or how is it funded?

**Susan Steffen:** Yes, there's regular financial reporting. It depends on the level of risk. If it's a higher risk, we increase the level of reporting, which means we get regular financial reporting on how all the money is spent, very specifically.

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

Next, we go to MP Mona Fortier.

You have five minutes.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier—Gloucester, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here today to discuss Canada's important Africa strategy that has been put forward.

I'd like to continue in the same vein as the answers given to my colleague Robert Oliphant's questions, because, surprisingly, I was going to ask the same questions he did, but in French. In addition, we haven't even spoken to each other.

Maybe I'll take it a step further. I think it's important to know how to implement this strategy, how to apply it.

The African Canadian diaspora is 1.3 million Canadians. We know that we can achieve a lot by putting these people to work. We talked about the trade hub, but on September 5, the Prime Minister also announced new measures to protect, strengthen and transform Canada's strategic industries and to help them deal with the impact of changes in U.S. trade policy.

Among these measures is the strategic response fund, which provides \$5 billion to help Canadian businesses across all tariff-affected sectors adapt, diversify and grow. In addition, there is assistance for Canadian canola and agricultural producers. That's \$75 million over five years for the Government of Canada's AgriMarketing program. I would also like to address the issue of Canada's bilingualism, which obviously represents a natural advantage for doing business in Africa.

How will these measures align with Canada's strategy for Africa and the possibility of increasing the participation of the African Canadian diaspora in this initiative?

• (1625)

[English]

**Andrew Smith:** It's a very broad kind of accounting of how the government is addressing issues related to the tariffs. As far the diaspora is concerned, we've been paying quite close attention to the opportunities that exist in Africa and then considering which kinds of partners in Canada are best to work with in terms of finding opportunities for them to work in Africa.

I would say that Black-owned enterprises are a very interesting group: a subset of Canadian enterprises, some of whom have a very strong relationship with Africa. That experience, I think, can be shared more effectively with other Black-owned enterprises and, more broadly, with other Canadian enterprises that are interested in working in Africa.

We're looking at how we can engage these enterprises in ways that can support their efforts and aspirations to export to Africa.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I recently met with representatives of the Benin-Canada Chamber of Commerce in Montreal. They asked me how they could help diversify the markets that Canada wants to undertake in Africa, particularly in Benin, we hope, and remain competitive despite U.S. tariffs.

So it was an invitation. What do we do when we are asked that question on the ground? Where should those people be directed, to trade commissioners or a trade hub?

I think that's the question that arises when we talk about Canada's Africa strategy. How is it enforced?

**Susan Steffen:** Thank you for your question.

It's very interesting that your example is about the Benin-Canada Chamber of Commerce, because I haven't had a chance to meet with them yet. Perhaps you will be able to put them in contact with us.

Our trade officers in Ottawa are part of the trade hub. They're not two different things. I would advise those people to contact our trade officers on the ground in Benin. That's a very pragmatic answer.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I also took part in the International Business Forum Impact Diaspora, a major event that took place in Ottawa just recently. The Mauritanian ambassador informed me that he was coming back to Ottawa because he wanted to do business in Canada. We hadn't heard from them for a while, but they were willing to work with us again.

It is therefore also interesting to note that this strategy attracts potential trading partners. Do you know if there are other opportunities to do business with countries like Mauritania, which want to work with Canada again?

[English]

**The Chair:** Give a very brief response please.

**Andrew Smith:** I was just saying that, in terms of how to respond to the question you received in Montreal, the strategy is part of a broader effort, of course, within the Government of Canada and certainly within the department.

The CanExport program is something that I think is worth noting, and perhaps sharing, with constituents.

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

MP Holman, you have five minutes.

**Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses who are attending the foreign affairs committee today.

I'd like to ask questions regarding the geostrategic situation and potential foreign interference in Africa.

What efforts are Canada and our allies taking to counter the increased presence of both Russia and China on the continent?

**Cheryl Urban:** I'll begin, and my colleagues can provide a little more specificity.

Indeed we are very much aware that countries like Russia and China have a large presence on the continent. In fact, they're increasing the number of embassies they have and increasing their presence. The trade volumes are generally getting bigger, and there's involvement with mineral extraction, arms supplies, etc.

This is something that the Government of Canada is well aware of. It's also why we maintain a diplomatic presence in a number of countries, including in West Africa and in countries like Mali. By maintaining relationships with our government counterparts, we are providing a counterbalance and a Canadian influence, and it allows us to stay abreast of issues of concern on the continent.

Did you want to add something, Sue?

• (1630)

**Susan Steffen:** Given that I cover the West African region, it's obviously an issue that is top of mind very often.

I think we need to be realistic about what is possible. We will do our best by staying engaged. We're often asked why we continue to speak with interlocutors with whom we don't agree, and it is very much for that reason. At some point, we're going to find some common issue we can agree on. We can move forward together and try to build a relationship that shows opportunities and different ways of doing things that are more aligned with the way we would like to see things happening.

Right now, in that region, it is very difficult. The presence of Russia is deep. The presence of China is deep, and I would say it's very long-standing. That is one of the things we pay close attention to. Sometimes we don't get the result today, and sometimes we don't get it tomorrow, but if we continue to work at it now, we will get it in a slightly more medium-term perspective.

**Kurt Holman:** Thank you.

I want to go back to specific questions. What steps is Canada taking to counter China's belt and road initiative, and does the department have concerns about Beijing's expansion of soft power through this program?

**Cheryl Urban:** There are a number of ways. I would actually point to Canada's G7 presidency this year, through which Canada is mobilizing its G7 partners. For example, there's the G7 critical minerals action plan. I think this is a recognition that there are G7 countries and other aligned countries that have a focus on undertaking, for example, critical mineral extraction in a sustainable way and adhering to international standards. This is an approach where we feel that we can collectively make inroads. Therefore, we are very much focused on collaborating with like-minded partners.

Another way is an initiative called the PGII, through which G7 members are collectively investing in infrastructure around the world, including on the African continent. The idea there is for a value proposition to make sure that there is an alternative and a counterweight.

As part of the Africa strategy, we're looking at our own Canadian trade diversification and looking at prioritizing markets. Some of that is identifying where there are African partners we can partner with to build supply chains that are of interest to Canada and where there are critical minerals that may be of interest to Canada and to our allies.

**Kurt Holman:** Thank you.

How has the recent suspension of France's counterterrorism efforts in Mali affected Canada's Africa strategy?

**Susan Steffen:** Mali is the gift that keeps on giving.

I don't know at this point that I can answer that question directly.

The changes in the American presence in the whole region of West Africa is taking some adjustment for everyone, for the governments of that region in particular. For everyone who is engaged there, the French have a particular relationship with the countries in that region, and we are all adjusting to the stance that those countries have taken.

It's not the forward progress that we would hope for, but, as I said earlier, we stay engaged to see what it is and where there are opportunities. If we don't stay engaged, then we won't be able to find the opportunities, so we're there. We have a smallish presence in Mali, and we have a small presence in Burkina Faso. For now, they're there under very difficult circumstances to keep those doors of communication open and to see where we can have some kind of positive impact.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

• (1635)

**Cheryl Urban:** Maybe I'll just add a reference to the African strategy.

**The Chair:** Be very brief.

**Cheryl Urban:** Very quickly, our objectives in the African strategy are not only with Mali. We also have strong partnerships, and part of our approach is to build partnerships with countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Benin, which are strong democracies we can partner with to fight against the spread of terrorism and instability in the region. We also have a special envoy for the Sahel, who co-operates internationally. Our efforts, I think, are worthwhile, and they're broader. There are challenges specifically with operating in the country, but it's part of a bigger picture, and I think that it is as important as ever right now to be engaging in it.

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

Next, we have MP Bill Blair.

You have five minutes.

**Hon. Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses, not just for your appearance today, which has been very informative and very helpful to this committee, but also for your important work on the African strategy. I think you've positioned the country well for the next steps.

I'd like to talk a bit about some of those next steps. As has already been acknowledged by my colleagues, there are some challenges. I think China is well established in Africa through its belt and road investments. Not only do they overwhelmingly dominate the extraction of critical minerals and copper in Central Africa and critical minerals through Zimbabwe and Mali, but they are also dominating the processing of those minerals, so our supply chains, quite frankly, are somewhat in jeopardy.

Frankly, I note that money, notwithstanding our good relationships, is very important in these investments. The United States in 2019 established their International Development Finance Corporation, and they put about \$8 billion a year into African development, which I think could be advantageous for us.

My question is going to pertain to the next steps in the Africa strategy. How do we position Canada? In particular, I'd like to hear your thoughts on the development and negotiation of multilateral agreements with African countries that are rich in critical minerals, to secure and sustain those sustainable supply chains.

You, Ms. Steffen, referenced the possibility of establishing formal partnership frameworks with African nations to coordinate investment, technology transfer and environmental standards.

We understand that environment can be challenging, but, at the same time, I think the obvious next step in our strategy is to establish bilateral and multilateral agreements with either a specific nation or a group of nations that we can work with in this area.

**Cheryl Urban:** That is a very real challenge that we are well aware of when it comes to critical minerals and the processing of critical minerals.

When you look at the engagement of the United States, one thing that is often spoken about is the dismantling of USAID and the departure from an international development perspective, but that also coincides with the United States going in more heavily on the economic side and having an emerging policy of trade, not aid, in terms of how they undertake their diplomacy. In fact, I believe they are now replacing China as the primary investor on the continent.

There are opportunities for Canada. We know that there's a lot of focus right now on the Lobito corridor in southern Africa, and there are opportunities for Canada to engage with other parties, including African ones, for example. As I mentioned, we've had lots of discussions with South Africa in our G7 and G20 presidencies, looking at opportunities for collaboration, and even with the United States to look at where there are opportunities for Canada in this space.

I'll turn to Drew to elaborate.

**Andrew Smith:** I would say that as far as multilateral engagement goes, certainly we can work through the African Union. There are well-established standards and approaches to mining generally, but to critical minerals as well. That's an important focus for us.

In terms of bilateral relationships, I think the question is how we—as a government, as the public sector—can engage in what are effectively private sector operations. Also, can we ensure that the minerals and the supply chains that we need to supply those minerals to are consistent with our standards? I think that's very impor-

tant. If we look at the G7 action plan on critical minerals, standards are central to that piece.

As I was mentioning earlier, Canada's brand in Africa is very much geared towards meeting those ESG standards that the G7 and other like-minded countries have established and feel are important in our business operations in Africa. I think that's an important way of contrasting where Canada stands in terms of mineral extraction and production.

I guess the other question is on beneficiation and how we partner with governments in Africa around the question of how we can ensure there is local benefit coming from the extraction of these minerals.

• (1640)

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I believe that this committee would be strongly supportive of our continuing efforts both in development aid and in diplomacy in that region, but I think we also have to reflect on the practicalities of advancing Canada's economic interests in the region as well.

I think we have a great deal to offer, but governance issues and even corruption in some of these countries make it very difficult to ensure adherence to and compliance with those standards in the mining operations.

**The Chair:** Give a very brief answer, please. We are out of time.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** If you have a response, please....

**Andrew Smith:** I would just very quickly say that as part of our thinking around the trade and development program, on the issues you're raising around corruption and other limitations, the things that create excessive risk within markets for Canadian companies, that's something we're trying to address alongside the work that trade commissioners do in these markets.

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

Next we have MP Simard.

You have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mario Simard:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to follow up on that.

Ms. Urban, you spoke earlier about an initiative, or whatever it is, called the IOGC.

Can you quickly explain what that is?

[*English*]

**Cheryl Urban:** It's the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment.

[*Translation*]

This initiative began under the U.K. government during its presidency of the G7.

**Mario Simard:** Okay, but that's not what we're talking about. There is a discussion to have floor prices on critical minerals, which would mean that we would get—

Is it under this initiative?

**Cheryl Urban:** No, it's different.

[English]

Do you want to speak to the PGII?

**Andrew Smith:** I would just say that the PGII is very much connected with critical minerals. It's about the transport corridor. It looks at transport corridors generally—

[Translation]

**Mario Simard:** Okay.

[English]

**Andrew Smith:** —but the Lobito corridor is the one that we are most focused on.

[Translation]

**Mario Simard:** Thank you.

I am a member of the Bloc Québécois. I would therefore be remiss if I failed to mention the Gérin-Lajoie doctrine, which is the foundation of Quebec's foreign policy.

I know there's a lot of co-operation between Quebec and Africa, particularly with Senegal. Not so long ago, I saw that the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles received \$25 million for a type of agricultural program.

My question is very simple: Do you respect these kinds of initiatives by Quebec or other provinces and do they have a place in your strategy?

**Cheryl Urban:** Absolutely.

We work together, even at missions.

Ms. Steffen will give you more details.

**Susan Steffen:** Thank you for your question.

Indeed, we have very close and collaborative relations with the Government of Quebec's overseas offices. There are some in Abidjan, Dakar and Rabat. We work closely together. Sometimes the Quebec office can do something that the embassy can't, and vice versa. We help each other a lot.

Furthermore, in Quebec, the academic community and certain organizations have an affinity with West Africa; they have long-standing relationships, partnerships and ties. For example, the Center for International Studies and Cooperation, or CECI, and the UPA Développement international, or UPA DI, have very strong ties in the region.

We rely on those connections to have very effective projects in areas of expertise.

[English]

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

Next, we have MP Rood.

You have five minutes.

**Lianne Rood:** Canadians have a strong and proud history of engaging with developing African nations through projects like the Muskoka initiative under the last Conservative government. I've been lucky enough to be on the ground in Tanzania, for instance, and have seen first-hand the success stories and felt the gratitude of the residents and the women who have used the clinics for maternal and child care and the birthing centres.

This particular strategy that we're talking about today does not mention maternal, newborn and child health care. I'm curious why the strategy does not include continuing the Canadian legacy of maternal care.

• (1645)

**Cheryl Urban:** Thank you very much for the question.

Indeed, Canada has a very proud history of investing in maternal and newborn child health. In fact, we've been doing that continuously and were doing so even before the Muskoka initiative; it forms the backbone.

The approach with the Africa strategy will always be to build on past Canadian investments and on the legacy of the good things we've done. That includes the leadership we've shown in gender equality and our investment in women and girls and in women's health.

Tanzania is a very good country to use as an example. Perhaps I could turn to Sara, but what I would say about our investments in health in Tanzania is that those are particularly sustainable, and we've been able to help strengthen health systems in Tanzania through investments. That's having a great benefit for women. Africa, as I think is well known, has terrible rates of maternal mortality, so there is a very big need for that.

**Sara Nicholls:** Absolutely.

I'm so pleased that you've had a chance to see that work in action, because it's some of the best work that happens on the continent, with very strong Canadian partners as well.

If I could add to what our assistant deputy minister said, those investments in health are such a strong platform to stand on for dialogue with the government and in other spaces. The team at the high commission, working with the high commissioner, is very committed to engaging in that space and building on that strong legacy.

**Lianne Rood:** I'm just curious as to why it was not included in the strategy specifically. The strategy does not mention it. Is that just an oversight in the strategy?

**Cheryl Urban:** No, it's not an oversight, because the strategy is about a pivot. What we're doing with the strategy is moving towards using international assistance to do more economic growth activities and trade and development.

Those are spaces that we did not use a lot of our international assistance for previously. It does not mean that we're holus-bolus leaving priorities or sectors that we've already invested in. There are a variety of areas in which we invest. In fact, the strategy itself does mention some of the history and the good practices that we've already undertaken. It is not the intention of the strategy to completely leave behind all past investments or priorities.

**Lianne Rood:** Thank you very much for that answer.

The strategy promises clearer results. I'm curious as to whether there will be a public country-by-country maternal newborn child health scorecard on maternal deaths, newborn deaths and vaccinations, and if it will be updated each year.

**Cheryl Urban:** We can take note of the interest in having additional information in those areas.

**Lianne Rood:** Okay.

**Cheryl Urban:** We certainly do work with partners to track development outcomes in the countries in which we're undertaking development assistance. We report on the results, even at the project level, of what we're investing in. As I mentioned, we have documents that we contribute to the estimates documents in our report on Canadian international assistance that comes out annually, where we try to provide granular-level examples of the results of our development investments.

I don't know if my colleagues have anything to add to that.

**Lianne Rood:** On that, are you able to tell us how much Africa strategy funding is explicitly earmarked for maternal, newborn and child health for the next five years, compared to Muskoka levels? Also, how will you protect those dollars from being reallocated?

**Cheryl Urban:** Subsequent to this meeting, we can provide you with detailed information about past investments and the sectors to which those have been directed, but I cannot speak about where funds will go in the coming five years, because that is at the discretion of the department. It's a process to determine where we're going to put our international assistance investments, so that's an ongoing discussion.

**Lianne Rood:** Okay.

Thank you.

The last question I have is this: Could you let us know what the top African MNCH partner countries are and what their targets are for maternal and neonatal mortality reductions or skilled birth attendants?

**Sara Nicholls:** I can speak to the top four, which are Tanzania, Mozambique, Ghana and Ethiopia.

**Lianne Rood:** Thank you very much.

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

Next, we'll go to MP Rob Oliphant.

You have five minutes.

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

Two words I don't like are "nexus" and "pivot". I used "nexus" in my last question, and I'm going to use "pivot" in this question.

I want to get a bit more into the pivot you mentioned. There is something we're not communicating well enough, maybe to the opposition and maybe to Canadians, about the massive change this means. We're moving from a 20th-century model of charity and helping to a 21st-century model of mutual prosperity, mutual security and engagement as one-on-one, eye-to-eye, equal relationships, which is quite different for us. It doesn't necessarily mean fewer resources, but it does mean pivoting the resources to things that will create a mobile middle class, which will then become a venue for us to sell products to and provide opportunities for trade. I just want to poke a bit on that one first.

I'll give a heads-up on the second question. In the sixth pillar of the report, we talk about the engagement of African countries on the world stage and opening up multilateral fora for an appropriate proportional representation of African voices at the UN, at the UN organs and in multilateral fora. How are we going to do that?

The first one is a bit more on the pivot and the other one is a little more on the engagement of African countries in their rightful position on the world stage.

• (1650)

**Cheryl Urban:** Okay, thank you very much.

In answering that question, maybe it's beneficial to talk a bit about the context within which we're working. Indeed, the pivot we're talking about is towards greater economic co-operation in our development relationships on the African continent. We know that even when we were consulting for the Africa strategy, that was what our interlocutors in Africa wanted. They wanted greater economic co-operation. We also know that globally, if you look at ODA levels, they are expected in 2025 to drop by 17%. ODA levels in general in the world are decreasing.

This has started a conversation. It's started a global conversation about how we do international assistance and how it can be the most effective. They're looking at different models. Definitely peer-to-peer, mutually beneficial models are a way in which we can look at undertaking development. That involves also bringing in the private sector and looking at innovative ways in which we undertake international development, for example, looking to impact investing and blended finance as ways in which we can undertake development from this point forward.

We can invest in things. For example, we can continue to invest in health, but we can do so in the way the world is coming to, which is making sure that the investments in development are sustainable. We can make sure that we are investing in institutions, so that they themselves have the capacity to undertake them over the long term and make the development benefits more sustainable over the long term. Also, I would say that the focus on trade and investment is something that African partners are looking for, and there's the feeling that those are ways in which they themselves can have control over their own development outcomes.

On the world stage, indeed, I mentioned in my opening remarks that Canada was a champion for making the African Union part of the G20, and we are pleased to see that that has taken place. We also see the benefit and appreciate that, whether Canada is assisting or not assisting, Africans have a greater voice in multilateral organizations. In fact, the whole landscape of multilateral institutions globally is evolving and changing, and the global south is demanding to have a greater voice.

One of the things we do is to provide instruction to our executive directors at international financial institutions, at the World Bank and at the development banks. We are talking to them about the reform of multilateral institutions, international financial institutions and development banks, so that they can—

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** I want to get one last question in.

How has the strategy been received by African partners, particularly governments, in terms of state-to-state relations?

**Cheryl Urban:** Since the release of the strategy, I would say in general what has been expressed to us is an appreciation that the Government of Canada has recognized that diplomatic relations with Africa are important. They are appreciative that there's a strategy that lays out a framework so that we can get down to business.

I would say additionally that they are impatient to get going. They are very enthusiastic. At missions and at headquarters, we are engaged with partners who really want to see the implementation.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. You were right on time.

We have MP Michael Chong next, for five minutes.

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

I'd like to talk about something that you mentioned in your opening remarks. As you reiterated, the government has done a pivot on its foreign policy. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have indicated that the government's number one foreign policy priority is defence and security. The second priority is economic resilience, part of which is diversifying trade and ensuring that Canada is a reliable trading partner, which is something you referenced in your opening remarks.

Building on that second pillar, the Prime Minister said about three weeks ago that the government is working to expedite the export of Canadian energy, particularly oil and gas. He indicated that Canada is an unabashed “energy superpower”. He said, “We have the third-largest reserves of oil [and] we have the fourth-largest reserves of LNG.” He also added, “We've just started our first LNG shipments”.

Africa, as you know, is a continent of 1.3 billion people. They use as much oil as we do on any given day—about four million barrels of oil a day, which is a bit more than we do—but we're a country of 40 million people. They desperately need energy—oil and gas—to expand.

Is there now a whole-of-government focus, particularly within the Department of Foreign Affairs, to build on the Prime Minister's commitment to expedite Canadian exports of oil and gas to the

African continent, where they are in need of energy? What is being done through the whole of government, particularly foreign affairs, to do that?

• (1655)

**Andrew Smith:** I think one of the issues in Africa is that the use of energy is not very efficient. Electrification in Africa remains a major problem as 300 million Africans remain without electricity. Energy poverty is a serious problem. That is not necessarily due to a lack of fossil fuels, for example. A country like Nigeria has tens of millions of people who don't have access to electricity, yet perhaps—I don't know for sure—the single largest export from Nigeria is oil.

Where Canada, I think, can be helpful in this regard, in terms of expanding Canadian exports in the energy sector, is through our technology. We see that in Nigeria, Tanzania and other markets where Canadian energy technology can be applied, where that can—

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I would just interject by saying that the fastest way to ramp up electricity production in a way that's lower carbon than conventional coal is through natural gas. Canada has 30 trillion cubic metres of natural gas reserves. Nigeria has maybe six billion cubic metres. We have more natural gas than the entire African continent, and that's a surefire way to increase electricity output. That's why, when Ontario closed its coal-fired plant in Nanticoke, it replaced a lot of that coal-fired generation with natural gas plants throughout the province of Ontario to fill in the gap.

We have an opportunity here to ensure that Africa doesn't become reliant on coal, like China has, in increasing electricity output and contributing massively to global emissions. Gas has about half the greenhouse gas output per kilowatt hour produced that coal has.

I think it's something that needs to be incorporated into the government's approach to Africa. As I said, Africa is short on energy and Canada has the third- and fourth-largest reserves of oil and gas in the world. I think it needs to be part of what the government is doing in Africa.

**Cheryl Urban:** I would just add that obviously Global Affairs Canada and Export Development Canada have been tasked with delivering on the government's agenda to diversify trade. Africa will be a part of that trade diversification strategy as it rolls out.

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

**The Chair:** We will go next to MP Anita Vandenberg.

You have five minutes.

**Anita Vandenberg:** Thank you.

I want to pick up on something you said, Mr. Smith, about the brand of Canada, particularly when it comes to things like resource development.

When I was in the D.R.C. and speaking to officials there, there was a very strong sense that they want more Canada. The reason they said they want more Canada, particularly on resource development, is that Canada brings those values. Canada ensures it's looking after the local communities. It's not creating conflict in local regions because of conflict over those minerals. Environmental standards.... We bring something that others do not. That is an advantage for Canada.

I also note that, in global trade, generally, Canada has been bringing a kind of trade that is more people-to-people. It is trade that will not just benefit corporations and elites but also involve the population and benefit the people of a country, which is vitally important today, when we're seeing more and more turning against globalization. We're seeing isolationism. In order to counter that, I believe we almost have to do for global trade what the welfare state did for capitalism and make sure this is something that is actually benefiting people.

Can you further elaborate on how Canada is perceived, particularly in these areas but also regarding the kind of work we're doing with FinDev and the African Development Bank? We are leveraging private capital, but is it in a way that will have broad benefits for communities and local populations? There are many comments about countries in Africa, where you have rich countries but poor people. Where can we play a role through trade to ameliorate that?

• (1700)

**Cheryl Urban:** I'll start, and then I'll turn it over to Drew.

I think this gets at the heart of mutually beneficial relationships. Canada can engage in a way that is beneficial for its own economy and security but do so in a way that benefits the countries we're partnering with.

Our values and standards are things that make us an attractive partner for African governments and institutions. When we were developing the Africa strategy, we did so not only thinking about the opportunities in Africa but also thinking reflectively about what Canada has to offer. Therefore, we took into consideration the advantages we have that are considered to make us a partner of choice for those very reasons.

We also know there are certain sectors that African partners are looking at in Canada. For example, we get asked about agriculture. We have those education partnerships. ICT is an area. We want to be focusing on sectors that are Canadian strengths, which is where we are asked to partner with them.

Our linguistic ties, which were also brought up at this meeting, provide us with an advantage when we're doing business, because there are a number of countries that want to do business with a French-speaking country. With the Africa strategy, we want to better leverage those aspects that are Canadian advantages and make sure we maximize them.

I don't know whether Drew wants to add anything.

**Andrew Smith:** I have a concrete example of what we're looking at when we talk about broadening this mutual benefit.

I quite like the work we do with the African Guarantee Fund. There's a project we have at the African Development Bank called AFAWA. It provides guarantees to African financial institutions. This encourages them to lend and provide financial services to women. The amazing thing is that women are great clients but are oftentimes seen as too risky. These guarantees provide the incentive for financial institutions to lend to women. We're seeing that those guarantees are rarely used, because women are a much better bet than expected.

**Anita Vandenberg:** Thank you very much.

There is youth as well. I know we've worked with the African Development Bank for young people who don't have credit or experience. For that population, you see a greater return. I appreciate that.

It's in Canada's interest, especially when we are trading, to be trading with democratic countries that have good governance and that are accountable back to their citizens—pluralistic countries. We've touched on governance. I know Canada is doing a lot of capacity building when it comes to good governance. It's far better when a country is accountable back to its people and provides the necessary services, health and education through its own systems. That is far more sustainable than continuing to provide external aid.

Can you talk about democracy and governance?

• (1705)

**The Chair:** We are way over time. Unfortunately, that will have to wait for another time. We're 40 seconds over. Thank you very much.

We go next to MP Simard for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mario Simard:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to come back to the energy issue raised by my colleague Mr. Chong.

A little earlier, when Mr. Oliphant questioned you, you talked about a pivot and changing paternalistic relationships to one of equal relationships between economic partners. This reminds me of the language we use to talk about our relationship with indigenous communities. We say that choices must be free and informed. In terms of energy, I think we have to distinguish between industrial energy needs and individual energy needs.

Mr. Smith told us that most countries don't have access to electricity. In these circumstances, low-cost energy sources tend to be wind and solar. If our goal is to give people energy, not industrial processes, we need to promote solar and wind energy. In that sense, we mustn't confuse our commercial interests, which are to trade in oil and gas, with the energy development of Africans.

I don't know if you agree with me, but clean energy sources may be more attractive to them than gas and oil.

[*English*]

**Andrew Smith:** I can answer that in a general sense. My colleagues may have specific examples that they could add. I would say that one of the challenges in Africa, when you talk about renewables, is that you can do it on a small scale. You could have microgrids, and you could apply solar and wind on a very small scale, but to do that on a much larger scale, not for commercial use but for the population, is very challenging. As one MP was mentioning, this transition from oil to coal, with natural gas being a better choice, I think is being looked at quite closely in many parts of Africa, where the grid doesn't allow for renewables to be applied immediately.

I'm not sure if anyone has anything to add.

[*Translation*]

**Sara Nicholls:** I want to give you a practical example of a balanced relationship.

[*English*]

We can look to South Africa and Canada's investments in the just energy transition, which is meant to move South Africa's dependence from coal to other avenues and create commercial opportunities for Canada. Foundational in this approach is a sovereign loan to the Government of South Africa that they pay back every six months, which is enabling this transition, decommissioning coal mines, training a new workforce and dealing with significant unemployment in the country. It's also creating opportunities in this new space.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Thank you for your appearance and for your testimony today. We really appreciate it. I now ask for unanimous consent from members to go into an in camera session, so that we can have a discussion of committee business.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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