



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade

FAAE • NUMBER 013 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, December 1, 2004

Chair

Mr. Bernard Patry

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are undertaking a study on disarmament issues.

Our witness today is Ambassador Paul Meyer. While this is his first appearance before us in this position, he appeared before us in 1998. He appeared during our study of Canadian nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policy. One of the recommendations of that report, entitled *Canada and the Nuclear Challenge* was that the ambassador for disarmament appear before the committee on a regular basis to keep us informed on this issue.

Welcome, Mr. Ambassador. I know you have some introductory notes. Please, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Meyer (Alternate Permanent Representative, Ambassador to the Office of the United Nations, and Permanent Representative to the United Nations for Disarmament, Department of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Chairman, I am please to have this opportunity to appear before you as Canada's Disarmament Ambassador in keeping with the Committee's request pursuant to its 1998 report on *Canada and the Nuclear Challenge: Reducing the Political Value of Nuclear Weapons for the Twenty-First Century*. That report, and the government policy statement in response, have played a major role in guiding Canada's diplomacy in the field of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the continued interest that Parliament, and this committee in particular, has shown for our work. I will limit my own opening remarks mainly to a few key themes relating to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in the interest of having more time for questions and discussion.

[English]

Mr. Chairman, the development of diplomatic strategy, as with any strategy, is helped by having clear objectives.

With respect to weapons of mass destruction, the Canadian government's aims are simple and straightforward: the prohibition and elimination of weapons of mass destruction under legally binding treaties, plus control and reduction of associated means of delivery, especially missiles.

In the case of chemical weapons and biological weapons, comprehensive prohibitions exist by virtue of widely supported international treaties. In the case of nuclear weapons, the situation is

more complex, as an outright ban on nuclear weapons was seen, especially during the Cold War, as incompatible with the security requirements of key states. Nevertheless, there was even then—and I'm talking about the mid-1960s—a growing concern about the proliferation of nuclear arms to other states beyond the initial five then in possession of them.

The diplomatic result of these circumstances was, as you would expect, a compromise among the various concerns of states at that time. The nuclear non-proliferation treaty, NPT, which was signed in 1968 and which entered into force in 1970, enshrines a tripartite bargain among the five nuclear weapon states—the U.S., U.K., France, Russia, China—and all the other states parties.

The former commit to nuclear disarmament under article VI of the treaty and the latter undertake not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons under article II. In parallel, all states commit to facilitate cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in article IV, subject to assurances that such cooperation will not contribute to the development of nuclear weapons, in article III.

This fundamental bargain has held up over more than 30 years, and the NPT has become the most widely adhered to international security agreement, with 188 states parties. Only Israel, India, and Pakistan stand formally outside the regime, with North Korea's status uncertain following its announced withdrawal from the treaty.

Next May in New York, the NPT will be holding its review conference, convened every five years to consider the implementation of the treaty. I think it's fair to say this will be a crucial meeting for the NPT, given the grave challenges it has faced in the last few years: the defection of North Korea, the serious non-compliance of Libya and Iran, the revelation of a global black market network in sensitive nuclear technology, and the concern that some nuclear weapon states are backing off from their non-proliferation or disarmament obligations.

All these developments have fueled something of a crisis of confidence within the NPT. Canada believes it is important for the NPT to emerge from its review conference with its authority and integrity reinforced. We are advocating a balanced result that would see each of the basic bargains mentioned earlier strengthened through concrete action.

We have been working hard in the G-8 process, as witnessed in the Sea Island action plan, to foster stronger approaches to nuclear non-proliferation at the level of states, and in organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Nuclear Suppliers Group. We would like, for example, to see the IAEA's additional protocol recognized as a standard for international safeguards under article III of the NPT. This would give the agency the means and authority to provide a much higher level of assurance in its determination that a country's nuclear program is in conformity with its NPT obligations.

Strengthened export controls are in order to restrain access to proliferation-sensitive technology. We would also like to see further significant progress in fulfilment of nuclear disarmament obligations, measured against the agreed benchmarks of the NPT's 2000 review conference—the so-called 13 steps.

● (1540)

We have lobbied hard with key states to promote early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, which would prohibit any nuclear explosive test anywhere at any time, and we have made significant technological contributions to the establishment of the CTBT verification system. At present, 11 more states must ratify the CTBT for this vital instrument to come into force.

In addition, we are espousing an innovative set of proposals that would establish for the first time annual meetings of NPT states parties and a standing bureau that would be empowered to convene extraordinary sessions of the treaty membership under conditions of urgent challenge to the NPT community. That, for example, was the case when India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons, or when North Korea announced its withdrawal decision. Such steps would provide treaty members with a regular forum for overseeing the implementation of the treaty, plus a rudimentary capacity for self-defence and rapid reaction when their interests under the treaty are directly affected.

Canada will also pursue earlier initiatives to encourage greater reporting by states on how they are implementing the treaty, and a more significant engagement with civil society. We all have a lot at stake in safeguarding the NPT's stature and viability, and Canada will be devoting considerable time and energy to this end in the lead-up to May's review conference.

Closely related to the prospects of success for the NPT, as well as for other arms control goals, is a situation in the Conference of Disarmament, a 65-member consensus-based arm of the United Nations that serves as the chief multilateral negotiating forum for arms control disarmament matters. This forum has produced some of the major arms control treaties, such as the chemical weapons convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, but has suffered from gridlock over the last six years because of conflicting priorities and interests on the part of leading states.

In brief, the western group of states at the CD has sought as its first priority the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty that would ban the production of fissile material for nuclear explosive purposes. There has even been an agreed mandate for this negotiation—the Shannon mandate, named after a former Canadian ambassador who was instrumental in getting it adopted—that

foresees a non-discriminatory, internationally and effectively verifiable treaty.

The non-aligned members' chief priority is nuclear disarmament, and Russia and China—the latter a group unto itself—have argued for work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space as their top priority. Canada strongly supports urgent attention by the CD to all three of these priority issues. None of the chief proponents wants to agree to the others' preferences, however, without some understanding that its priority will also be addressed.

The best current opportunity for unblocking the logjam may lie with the United States. After a lengthy internal policy review, the U.S. has recently taken a position arguing that it is not possible to effectively verify an FMCT, a fissile material cut-off treaty, and that therefore this treaty should be negotiated without any verification provisions. While the U.S. would be willing to begin FMCT negotiations on that basis, the new position does not for the moment treat the other two priority areas, nuclear disarmament and outer space.

Canada has been working with Washington and in Geneva to engender flexible approaches that could result in agreement on a program of work in the CD and that body's return to productive activity in keeping with its central purpose. In this regard, for example, Canada has floated a simple compromise proposal that would have the CD start work simultaneously on each of the three priority topics espoused by the chief groups of states.

In a multilateral forum that works on the basis of consensus, we are only going to be able to make progress if parties accommodate suitably the interests of others. It is important to remember the negative consequences of continuing the current impasse. To cite just one, the immediate commencement of negotiation of an FMCT is one of the chief nuclear disarmament objectives agreed to by all the NPT states at their 2000 review conference. The failure to act on this commitment will not go unnoticed at the 2005 review conference.

● (1545)

While the formal work of the CD has been in suspense, a lot is being done informally to exchange views on issues of substance, and Canada has contributed significantly to special seminars, unofficial sessions on such topics as outer space, security, negative security assurances, and the fissile material cut-off treaty. Ultimately, however, it is not diplomatic ingenuity so much as political will that will determine whether the CD adopts a program of work.

As Canada's permanent representative to the Conference on Disarmament, I've been heartened by the strong political support provided by the Prime Minister, who in a September 22 speech to the UN General Assembly stressed the need for the CD to resume its mission on behalf of multilateral cooperation in the field of arms control. In the same address, he also reinforced Canada's position on such key non-proliferation and disarmament issues as agreeing to a ban on space weapons and enhancing global verification capacities.

I can only hope that his counterparts in other leading capitals show a comparable level of concern and political engagement.

Before closing, I would underline some positive developments that took place in the UN General Assembly's First Committee earlier this fall. The New Agenda Coalition resolution on nuclear disarmament, which Canada supported for the third year, gained new support from among key NATO allies, including Germany, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Turkey, Lithuania, and Luxembourg, and from other key players such as Japan.

Our resolution calling for the establishment of a UN experts group on verification as a cross-cutting issue was adopted by consensus. Verification and compliance is a field in which Canada has long-standing expertise and that represents a key aspect of our work to strengthen the multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament regime in the face of evolving challenges.

In addition to activity at the UN, we've been striving to develop Canadian research capabilities, advance new initiatives, and intensify cooperation with some of the world's leading institutions in the field.

● (1550)

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, I would propose to conclude my opening remarks at this point. As noted earlier, there is a much broader story to tell about Canadian efforts in the realm of disarmament. I would have liked to speak about some of the more productive aspects, such as coming to grips with the problem of small arms and light weapons, and advances in international humanitarian law concerning explosive remnants of war.

I would have liked to discuss the hard work Canada has been doing to promote solutions to problems posed by missiles, including our leadership in the Missile Technology Control Regime and on the Hague Code of Conduct setting up the first multilateral norms and restraints on missile holdings, transfers and other activity.

While this is not part of my portfolio, the committee will also want to follow the progress Canada is making in the G8 Global Partnership against weapons and materials of mass destruction.

Important projects are under development or under way in Russia to dismantle decommissioned nuclear submarines, to protect fissile materials, to re-train former weapons scientists and to destroy chemical weapons.

Given the importance of the upcoming NPT Review Conference and the focus on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament of the original SCFAIT report, however, I thought it best to concentrate on these subjects. I would, of course, be pleased to answer questions relating to other aspects of my disarmament mandate.

Thank you.

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

I would like to specify two things. First, the ambassador is accompanied by Mr. Robert McDougall, Director of the Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament Division.

[English]

Also, I wanted to pinpoint that Ambassador Meyer has mentioned the 13 practical steps agreed to in the year 2000. I would just like to point out that we have circulated those today.

Now it's five minutes of questions and answers. We'll start with Mr. Sorenson, please.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Ambassador and Mr. McDougall, for coming today. This is an awaited visit; we have tried to find a date and a time where we could put you in. We're glad you're here, and we thank you for your presentation.

My questions stem from a report that was out a couple of weeks ago, where Russian President Putin said that his country would soon deploy a new nuclear missile system that would be state of the art. It would surpass all other nuclear systems, and it would help Russia become another nuclear power, surpassing other nuclear powers to be a real power. We also know that the Russians are perfecting land- and sea-based ballistic missiles, with warheads. It could possibly put many different countries at risk, but certainly every country should be taking note of what Russia has openly admitted to doing.

Today, in Canada, the President of the United States said we must be concerned for results, not just process. So I would ask you, as the ambassador for disarmament, are you satisfied with the results we are seeing? Years ago, President Eisenhower said that all pertinent information on how to build nuclear weapons would soon be shared, maybe with all countries. President Kennedy believed in the sixties that it would be a very short period of time when maybe up to 20 countries would have nuclear capability. Are you satisfied with those successes? The countries listed as having nuclear weapons are about eight or nine. Are you satisfied with those successes? What do we have to do to achieve better success? What should Canada be doing?

● (1555)

The Chair: Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. Paul Meyer: I think one should never be satisfied with the situation in terms of the non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament regime. There's clearly a lot that needs to be done still. I think in my presentation I indicated the serious challenges that are confronting that regime currently and the importance of developing remedial action. I mentioned some of the initiatives we will be bringing to that crucial review conference in May. So, yes, you have to avoid any complacency.

We have been very well served by the NPT since those years of the sixties when, as you alluded to, President Kennedy spoke about the danger of a world where there would be 20 nuclear weapon states. That was an important motivation for the conclusion of the NPT. But we need to reinforce that crucial treaty. We have to continue to work at the three outsiders to the treaty to bring them in. We have to resolve the question of North Korea's nuclear ambitions and bring that country back into compliance with the treaty. And we continue to have to encourage all those possessing nuclear weapons to move ahead with a fundamental recommendation that was issued in this committee's own report, which was to devalue or diminish the political significance ascribed to nuclear weapons.

You referred to President Putin's commentary recently. I would say I'm less concerned by ongoing modernization, which I frankly think was emphasized more to demonstrate in front of his generals that there's a political commitment to continue to maintain Russia's nuclear status. I'm more concerned with some of the policy and doctrinal issues behind that, because, unfortunately, Russia has tended recently to re-emphasize the significance of nuclear weapons, rather than going in the other direction, which it has an obligation to do under the NPT and the review conference documents. Some suggest this is because of their conventional military problems, that they are feeling the need to emphasize the nuclear component in their military capabilities and even to suggest it could be extended. That's a worrisome factor, and I hope that in our interaction with the Russians we can convince them to move further in the direction of reductions of deployed nuclear forces—and also, significantly, to change their rhetoric and policy line to be more in keeping with diminishing the political and military significance of those weapons.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: I thank you for your answer. To be quite honest, I wasn't sure what to expect when I came to hear you. I anticipated that maybe some of the answers would be as we've heard in the news media so far this week, that "We'll just blame the Americans, as the Russians are doing it because the Americans have it".

What are you doing specifically to countries like North Korea? Obviously, our influence there is minimal; we depend on countries like China. What are we doing about countries like Iran, some of these rogue countries that you wonder if they listen to any directives from the UN or anyone? How do you try to influence the government? Is it just by external governments putting pressure on these, or what specific things do you do to control some of those rogue states?

The Chair: Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. Paul Meyer: Of course, these are extremely difficult cases we're presented with. North Korea, particularly, is a hard case, a Stalinist hermit regime, which one has very little leverage over. There is a multilateral process, or six-party talks, currently under way to try to persuade North Korea to come back into compliance.

I would also say, though, that one of the reasons we are suggesting changes to the NPT procedures, including an annual meeting, is that we feel it is important that something like the North Korean situation is of concern to all the NPT states parties. We would like an opportunity to have a forum where we could meet when something drastic happens like this and bring collective peer pressure on the DPRK. It's difficult, I admit, but it's something that even they are not

inured to, if you could have 188 states line up and say, "No, North Korea, we think you've made a mistake here; come back in." That's one of the reasons why we're going there.

On Iran, I could come back to that more broadly, but I would just remind you that one of our suggestions is that the additional protocol be made a universal new standard. Iran has signed up to that, and we hope the agency will hold it to account, taking advantage of the new resources the additional protocol brings.

● (1600)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Now, we'll go to Madame Lalonde, s'il vous plaît.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, your report is not very encouraging. It does not even seem to consider, or does so very subtly, this intention of the current American administration to develop an anti-missile defence system.

In the past, when the world was bipolar, the struggle against one another through technology finally resulted in the signature of a mutual treaty where it was accepted that no anti-missile shield would be built. Is it not possible that the arms race could be revived by this logic, according to which no powerful state—I am not talking about rogue states—can accept that another state be decisively superior, and has it not inspired the Russian declaration my colleague quoted earlier?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Indeed, nuclear dissuasion should be reinforced, but in reality, Russia has enough offensive missiles to use this dissuasion policy against any country. At the same time, according to me, it would be important to convince both countries, the United States and Russia, to make more headway towards disarmament, because it is the only reliable guarantee for the future of their own security.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I appreciate that answer.

Getting back to your report, you say that there are three groups which, for the moment, are irreconcilable. One of them includes Russia and China, who want the discussions to focus, as a priority, on preventing an arms race in outer space. Could you tell us more? Is this not, indeed, the most disturbing threat?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Yes, according to us, this is a very important area. The intention is to prevent a new arms race in space. Space will be preserved as a common asset for all the countries in the world. It has become very important for development too. This is not a challenge only for developed countries. Developing countries also have an interest in preserving space and preventing arms from being put there.

Canada made a few suggestions. We launched a study on space security policy which emphasized the role of all countries, but also of civil society and the private sector. In my opinion, it would be important to have the support of these communities for promoting our ideas.

At the same time, the Prime Minister proposed in his speech to extend the scope of the outer space treaty to include all weapons, not only weapons of mass destruction as is the case now. We, officials, now need to prepare a diplomatic strategy to achieve this goal. We will also support broader public discussion on the use of space by everybody. This spring in Geneva, we co-sponsored a seminar on this issue.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Now we'll go to Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to say how much I appreciate having the opportunity today to hear from our Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament at the United Nations. I think we all know that this is a commitment that Canadians take very seriously and in which we take a considerable amount of pride.

It seems to me that on the day the President of our closest neighbours takes the opportunity to outline his foreign policy vision for the future, it's good for us to be reminded, as you have done, that the NPT has become the most widely adhered to international security agreement. What we want to talk about is not just multilateralism for the sake of multilateralism, but multilateralism that actually works. The successes have been dramatic.

I think what concerns Canadians and many others around the world is that we seem to have reached a new stage of where there are some real concerns about the next chapter.

I don't know if it's a fair question or not, but we were very pleased to have, in a way, your civil society counterpart before the committee last week, the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. There was considerable concern expressed about some real ambiguity on the part of Canada's position today around some aspects of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and I'm wondering if you had an opportunity to familiarize yourself with that testimony.

I don't say that to put you on the spot, but I don't want to waste your time and the time of the committee going through that. I know you opened by saying an unambiguous policy is key in terms of the credibility we have.

Mr. Paul Meyer: Yes. If your reference is to the November 24 session with a number of witnesses, I did have a chance to review the transcript of that. I'm broadly familiar with what they said, yes.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: There were really two aspects, and it's hard to summarize it all quickly, but two aspects that I think were very worrisome. One was the situation with respect to NATO, in which of course Canada is a partner, which seems, in a way, to be talking out of both sides of its mouth with respect to various aspects

of living up to the NPT agreement. I'm wondering if you could comment on that.

Secondly, I think there's an emerging consensus among a good many of the most informed, most active, civil society partners that any possibility at all of Canada participating in the U.S. proposal for NMD would seriously compromise the future of the NPT and Canada's credibility. I might say—I don't think people want to hear this—that, as my leader indicated, coming out of discussions last night with President Bush, with Condoleezza Rice, and with Colin Powell, there was absolutely no attempt on their part at all to dismiss the notion that, yes, they do indeed intend to go to a third stage of their missile defence system, which is the weaponization of space, and, quite unapologetically, they proclaimed that they're going to keep space safe by being not just present in space, by weaponizing space, but actually by maintaining exclusive control through the weaponization of space, consistent with their land, sea, and space-dominant policy position. I wonder if I may ask you to—

• (1610)

The Chair: Mr. Ambassador, I want to point out that you're just entitled to respond within the policy of the government. You understand the question, but it's up to you to answer that question within the policy of the government, please.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: He's an experienced diplomat—

The Chair: But I want to pinpoint this. I think it's valuable.

Thank you.

Mr. Paul Meyer: Fine, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the question.

They are two complex subjects. Let me speak briefly on NATO. Actually, the NATO record on nuclear disarmament, pursuant to the obligations of the 2000 review conference, is actually a pretty good one. There's been a sizeable reduction in terms of deployed forces. Operational levels and timing have been reduced. I think the figure now is something like a 90% reduction from Cold War levels. There has also been some promising confidence-building measures, proposals, that have been put forward by the alliance to Russia.

Frankly, I think the alliance has been given a bit of a bad rap at times in the NPT context. Clearly, there needs to be more work done, and Canada remains a very consistent voice for realism and continuing to ensure that the alliance is seen also as a vehicle to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation aims and not just a defence entity.

On missile defence, I should of course indicate that that's outside my immediate responsibilities. You had the minister and my colleague Jim Wright, I understand, before the committee on Monday, earlier this week. I'm sure they're happy to come back and talk more about it. Let me just say that there's nothing in the bilateral consultations on this subject that I feel have constrained my ability, and that of the department and the government, to be very energetic advocates for our non-proliferation and disarmament objectives. I continue to see scope for pursuing those.

In terms of timing, I'd like to come back, though, to the question about the United States, because I do have some views relating to the administration. Having served in Washington at an earlier time, I think it's important to keep in mind that it's not a monolith. There is a variety of opinion there. I think our job, as diplomats and for parliamentarians who are interested in this field, is to try to identify the allies within U.S. government circles and congressional circles who can be supportive of Canadians' aims and to try to get changes, over time, in some of the policies of the administration.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Bevilacqua.

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you.

First of all, thank you very much for your presentation. Perhaps you can use my time to elaborate on your last thoughts.

Mr. Paul Meyer: I know there is at times a tendency to, as I say, pick the administration in a monolithic way. I don't think that is right, and it's not really reflective of the realities. It's incumbent on those of us who are interested in influencing obviously a key—if not to match the key—power on these matters.

Because I know it came up in the testimony of last week, I would cite the example of budget requests relating to the research in new nuclear weapons. From a Canadian perspective, we of course had concerns relating to that, because any suggestion that we're going to be expanding nuclear arsenals clearly undercuts our interest in promoting further nuclear disarmament and sends, I would say, the wrong message to nuclear wannabes out there. We note in this case that Congress responded responsibly, I would suggest, and eliminated that budget request.

It was just, I thought, a useful reminder that there are checks and balances, that there are a variety of forces within the U.S. government and U.S. civil society. I therefore think we shouldn't at all be pessimistic about our prospects over time to influence their thinking. I think that's something we can all contribute to.

• (1615)

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: Just very briefly, reviewing your presentation on page 4, in the second-last paragraph you say:

I would have liked to speak about some of the more productive aspects, such as coming to grips with the problem of small arms and light weapons....

—and you went on.

Perhaps you can use my time to in fact elaborate on this as well.

Mr. Paul Meyer: Sure, with pleasure.

We have to realize that there's a wide spectrum in terms of arms, but we often focus on the weapons of mass destruction, understandably. At the other side of the spectrum there are the small arms and light weapons, which are the instruments that are killing thousands of people day in and day out around the world. Getting a better grip on the proliferation and misuse of those weapons is also very much in Canada's interest.

We had, in 2001, the first UN conference on small arms and light weapons. It adopted an ambitious program of action, and we're trying to implement that. To cite one very specific example, there are

negotiations under way now in New York on an instrument on marking and tracing. This is not kindergarten work. Actually, what this means is an agreed to system of unique identifiers for each small arm and light weapon. If those weapons appear at some point in the future in, let's say, the DRC or in Sudan, or wherever there is conflict, there will be a system to trace them back to where these arms originated, who they passed through, and you'd have a way of giving maybe greater teeth to UN arms embargos.

I mention that just as one concrete example where we are presently engaged in something that I think will make a significant difference in terms of that problem.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bevilacqua.

Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies (MacLeod, CPC): Thank you for your comments, Ambassador Meyer.

There are a couple of points I would like a little clarification and some insight on. I'm a little concerned with the sentence in here about chemical weapons and biological weapons. You seem to dismiss those as items of non-concern: "...prohibitions exist via widely supported international treaties." Do we not indeed still have some chemical and biological weapons of great concern out there? In fact, is that not what we were expecting to find in Iraq and also maybe even in Afghanistan? Is that not more of an issue?

I know ballistic missile defence is a term that quickly scares people to death and the media love it, but is that our big concern? Are we not more susceptible to attacks with something we can't see coming? These are the things that concern me, and I would just like your comments. Are we dismissing these things that can be packaged in a vessel load of wheat or corn or rice, or in a container, or in water? There are lots of ways they can come at us without even being able to see them.

The second point, quickly, refers to land mine removal. Are we in fact doing enough to remove them? I know we've been proponents of that. In fact, there's a land mines conference on right now in Nairobi. Last year we spent \$120,000, and this year Canada is suggesting that \$5.9 million go toward that. Can you explain to us the drastic change? Is there a change in policy?

● (1620)

Mr. Paul Meyer: On the first question, I didn't want to appear to be diminishing the significance of chemical weapons and biological weapons. What I was underlining is that at least there are widely supported international treaties that ban those weapons. Of course, there are some states that are still outside those treaties, and one of our objectives is to universalize them, but that group outside is a minority and is getting to be smaller all the time.

We are also, through the G-8 global partnership I mentioned, giving assistance so that countries can actually meet their obligations for destruction of chemical weapons, mostly notably Russia, which had the largest arsenals and wouldn't really be able to meet its own obligations under that convention without help.

On the biological weapons convention, we continue to want to strengthen it. Unlike the chemical weapons convention, it currently has null verification provisions, and we would like to strengthen the possibilities of implementing that convention. When I get back to Geneva, I'll actually be heading our delegation for the annual meeting of the states parties to the biological weapons convention. We have, again in that area, some ideas about how to promote international cooperation.

And that's key. This is a field where borders are porous, where we also need to recognize that a biological event could be developed through non-military, non-terrorist purposes, and it could be simply an infectious disease that breaks out. The WHO, which is again an organization in Geneva—and I'm active there as well—is currently doing a revision of something called the international health regulations, which will be very useful across the board. But it's also for the first time providing a much more comprehensive surveillance and rapid response capacity for public health emergencies, and that could of course also relate to the biological field.

On land mines, I hesitate to go into details, because there is a colleague, Ross Hynes, Ambassador for Mines Action, who has that file, rather than myself. You rightly note, though, that we have a very important review conference under way in Nairobi this week. We have an action plan. We have a significant fund for mine-related action, including demining. I thought it was in the range of \$80 million that the government has put into keeping it through 2008, but we can take note of those specific figures and see if we can get a clarification for you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Now we'll go to Monsieur Paquette, s'il vous plaît.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your presentation. I wanted to have your opinion on this issue, which is widely discussed by specialists, mostly because of the arrival of Bush. The idea of preventive war was used in the case of Iraq, and the notion that nuclear weapons are weapons of last resort could be questioned. According to you, can it be assumed that the American administration might want to resort to nuclear weapons for preventive purposes?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Frankly, no. I believe the United States recognize that this is a fundamental taboo. Even in the Gulf War, the use of these weapons is out of the question. I think that, in the second

term, the administration changed its rhetoric on this issue. Pre-emptive attacks are more rarely evoked.

At the same time, as an ambassador for disarmament, I want an absolute guarantee that nuclear weapons will not be used and will be eliminated.

● (1625)

Mr. Pierre Paquette: As regards the strategy Canada intends to adopt, as Ms. Lalonde mentioned, you spoke of three groups with objectives and priorities that are complementary but somewhat difficult to reconcile in the current situation.

There are those who want to reduce the proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is the issue of preventing weapons from being put into space. Where does Canada stand relative to these three groups? In the declaration made by Mr. Martin that you referred to, there are at least two of the three priorities.

How do you work with these three groups, China and Russia and the other groups?

Mr. Paul Meyer: As I said earlier, we proposed a compromise. Work at the Conference of Disarmament should begin on the three themes at the same time.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Is that realistic?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Yes, according to me, it is very realistic. In fact, it would be difficult to understand how these conferences could take place without this kind of compromise. This is also a conference based on consensus. You cannot ignore the priorities of the other countries and expect these countries to participate in a discussion on your priority. This is a multilateral diplomacy action.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: More specifically, what are the relationships with the New Agenda Coalition? People who came last week led us to believe that Canada should choose to get closer to the New Agenda Coalition and countries like Norway and Belgium, among others. However, you seem to say in your report that Canada already has a special relationship with these groups. Last week, this did not seem so obvious for the people we met.

Mr. Paul Meyer: I disagree on that last point. In fact, it is recognized among NGOs that Canada has very promising and constructive links with Coalition member countries. Of course, we have supported their resolutions over the last three years. At the same time, a partnership with several countries around the world should be encouraged, including with our NATO allies, who are concerned with their security. We are very open to working with a wide variety of countries that share our goal to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

We will now turn to Ms. McDonough.

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Thank you very much.

I want to return to the question about NATO, because there was a pretty clear message to the committee last week—and I'll just quote directly from the testimony—that NATO's "commitments to nuclear weapons and the affirmation that they are essential to security are contrary to the objectives of article VI of the NPT and to commitments made in the year 2000".

It went on to elaborate on what a big problem it is that:

...it does little to encourage potential proliferators to adhere to non-proliferation obligations. Despite widespread concern about countering proliferation threats, NATO's own policy provides the rationale used by other nuclear weapons states, both within the NPT regime and, most importantly, outside of it, to retain their weapons indefinitely....

It was in that connection that there was a real call from the first Canadian ambassador to the UN for disarmament, Doug Roche, for Canada to address the ambiguity of NATO's policy and practices in this regard.

He's not alone in that. We have heard similar concerns publicly and most recently before the Parliamentarians' Network for Nuclear Disarmament, from Doug Roche's successor Peggy Mason, and very particularly concerns about the desperate threat of any launching of the ballistic missile defence leading directly to the weaponization of space. And your immediate predecessor has also spoken quite strongly on this publicly, about how this is going to really fuel an arms race.

Maybe diplomacy prevents you from taking that question head-on, but you're the guy out there in the field to whom we are looking to really move this forward. I just want to hear a clearer statement from you on this issue.

• (1630)

Mr. Paul Meyer: I recall being before this committee in an earlier capacity, when I was director general of our International Security Bureau. This was during 1999, when there was a review of alliance security policy instigated largely by Canada, in something called the strategic concept. We pressed very hard for a revision of some of the existing language relating to nuclear arms at that time. I can assure you that if it were only up to Canada, that concept language would read differently than it does because we felt it was antiquated, outdated, and not realistic.

To suggest that the presence or non-presence of nuclear weapons in Europe was the essential glue between North America and our European allies was patently wrong. Look at real world developments subsequent to that. The U.S. disengagement on Bosnia, and finally its engagement with NATO on Bosnia, had nothing to do with the presence of those. The fact that the alliance, shortly after September 11, invoked article V in terms of offering assistance to the United States after it suffered that terrible attack...that was totally removed. But there are some countries that still seem to have a certain attachment relating to the ultimate guarantee, if you will—or coupling, as it's sometimes used—relating to nuclear weapons.

Frankly, the enlargement of the alliance in recent times is something Canada has been very supportive of, but I would say it has also brought into the alliance a number of countries that still have, in my view, more conservative thinking about the continued utility of nuclear arms. That is an objective factor that works against a full-scale revision.

That said, it is clear, as I mentioned earlier, that in practical terms, in real significant terms of lowering the levels and operational readiness of nuclear forces, NATO has actually done quite a lot over these years. Its doctrine, though not how we would necessarily like it to appear, as I said, was a compromise result, and it put the emphasis on any contingency in which the use or threat of nuclear weapons would be contemplated is ever more remote. It was a very clear signal in contrast to, as I said, some of the more worrisome doctrinal pronouncements out of India, Russia, etc., that de-emphasized the role of nuclear weapons in its security.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will go to Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, in one of your statements you talk about congressional support for the Canadian view. I'd like you to comment further on that and if there is much of it there.

I was also interested to see in your presentation that our allies in the UN put in place "a UN experts group on verification as a cross-cutting issue" and that it "was adopted by consensus". What success do you expect to have there in the disarmament area, looking at the situation in the world today as it develops, particularly in the U.S.?

Also, you've indicated in your presentation that the Russians, in their disarmament mood, have talked about re-educating scientists in a different area. Is that still what you expect to see happening, considering what we hear around the world today?

I'm also concerned about the shoulder weapons that are used. I think terrorists would certainly use these shoulder weapons that could take aircraft out of the air. What control do we have in the world on those things?

I certainly agree with the statement that was made on chemical and biological weapons too. These are the types of things that will create nothing but terror worldwide.

• (1635)

Mr. Paul Meyer: Let me take each of those in turn.

I just want to make the point that disarmament is a concern for us all—and I mean civil society, politicians, government officials, and parliamentarians. Parliamentarians who are interested in interacting with their congressional colleagues do have opportunities to espouse our views and to try to see if they can persuade some of their counterparts. There's an active Canada–U.S. Interparliamentary Group. There's the Inter-Parliamentary Union; a few weeks ago I received a delegation from them on that in Geneva. So there's also a channel for parliamentarians to get engaged here.

On verification, I'm delighted we got consensus on the resolution. It was a significant initiative for us, because we essentially went out and said we didn't want to just repeat old language; we wanted to create a new process, we wanted to rethink verification, and we said enhancing new end capacity is an important objective, so let's establish a panel of experts in 2006 and use 2005 to solicit views of member states to see what can really be done here. Again, this concerns us all, so let's use the UN's potential capacity in this area to move us along.

My colleague Robert McDougall's division has also completed an excellent study by an international experts group on the theme of verification and compliance. I understand it was part of our contribution to the Blix commission, which some of you may have heard about, the WMD commission that the Swedish government put in place that was headed by Hans Blix, former UNMOVIC head. The Simons Foundation, in Vancouver, hosted a meeting, and this report that I referred to was put there. I think it will also be on the WMD commission website any day if you're interested.

I'm also told that plans are afoot to establish, right here in Ottawa, at Carleton University's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, a new centre of excellence on verification and compliance. That pleases me very much, because I think it's important that we get academic expertise harnessed as well behind these projects.

On MANPADs—that's the acronym related to those man-portable, shoulder-launched, anti-air missiles—they are indeed a serious problem. There is some important action under way. In the UN First Committee we had for the first time a resolution on the subject of MANPADs, and it passed handily. We have the so-called UNCAR, the UN Conventional Arms Register, which is a comprehensive register on transfers of conventional armaments. Again for the first time, MANPADs are a separate category this year and countries are being asked to report on any transfers. And I think there are new controls in the Wassenaar Arrangement—which again I'm not responsible for—that are reflective of the recognition that this is a very dangerous arm that we need to get a better handle on.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: So you're telling me that for what you call the MANPADs, there's going to be a registration and there will be a way to trace this type of thing. Is it one country where they're produced?

• (1640)

Mr. Paul Meyer: I don't want to overemphasize this step, because at this moment it's still based on a voluntary submission to this UN arms register. Like many things here, you're also ultimately relying on peer pressure. If you can get enough states to report on that, the

state that might be reluctant to report on it will come under some pressure to do likewise. They will be reminded that, as responsible members of the international community, it's critical that there not be uncontrolled transfer of that kind of light weapon.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Are you satisfied with the Russians' move?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Sorry, I failed to talk about the programs that relate to this global partnership to reduce in a sense the potential risks, let's say, in the case of scientists who had worked before in the military industrial complex in the former Soviet Union, so that gainful, peaceful employment is found for them so that there's no temptation to maybe sell their services to groups or countries where we would not want to see that happen.

This is a very concrete, complementary program for our disarmament objectives. There's a whole bureau in Foreign Affairs involved in that, and there was a major initiative during our G-8 summit in 2002. If the committee has a chance, I think my colleague Allan Poole, who heads up that unit, would be pleased to come to brief you about its programs. As I said, they're a very practical disarmament feature.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacAulay.

We'll now get a short one from Mr. Menzies, please.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Yes, I have a very short question.

You talk about Canada strongly supporting the urgent attention by the CD: "The best current opportunity for unblocking the logjam may lie with the United States." Do you want to just quickly give us your hope for that happening and how it may happen? Could you just briefly explain that?

Mr. Paul Meyer: As we all recognize, the United States plays a very crucial role here. On those three priority themes, the U.S. has yet to respond to two of them: the proposal that there be an ad hoc committee established to discuss the prevention of an arms race in outer space; and the proposal that there be a committee struck to discuss nuclear disarmament. On the third, the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, they have broken what had been an existing consensus relating to the Shannon mandate governing a negotiation of that treaty. That mandate, I again remind you, involves internationally an effectively verifiable treaty.

From a Canadian perspective, our compromise suggestion reflects that we would like to see activity in all three commence. If our American friends have concerns about the verifiability of an FMCT—and I don't want to underestimate the challenges of verifying that treaty; this is a difficult and daunting task—we feel the problems are not insurmountable. To give credibility to the treaty, you have to provide some verification possibilities so that countries have some assurance that other countries are abiding by the commitments of that treaty. We would like to have the United States raise its concerns during the course of a negotiation, rather than refuse to initiate that negotiation because it has concluded that verification is not possible.

The mandate we have identifies as an objective “international, effective verifiability”; it doesn't prescribe the outcome. Like any negotiation, it has its own dynamic. The outcome will be a result of what all the parties to it can agree on.

The Chair: Merci, Monsieur Ambassador.

Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, Ambassador McDougall.

You had alluded a little earlier to three nations that have so far not signed or have been reluctant to sign the NPT: Israel, India, and Pakistan. I'll leave Israel aside just for a moment and deal with the two other countries.

We're more than familiar with the ongoing concerns over Kashmir, and yet, at the same time, in the past couple of weeks, in fact, I think most of us were witness to the medium-range missile that was launched again by Pakistan with presumably peaceful purposes.

I'm wondering what steps Canada has taken to try to invite these reluctant players into the treaty. Perhaps you could describe for us some of the obstacles we face or perhaps some of the diplomatic excuses that might be proffered and how we can overcome them. I think it's a real concern for all of us, but as far as your success or any propositions you could give are concerned, that might be helpful to this committee and to this government.

● (1645)

The Chair: Mr. Meyer.

Mr. Paul Meyer: It is an important question, and indeed, I think the whole enterprise of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation suffered a serious setback with the nuclear tests in 1998 by India and Pakistan, because that was an assault against the hitherto universally respected norm against nuclear testing.

What can we do about it? From the diplomacy point of view, I think we have to continue to argue the merits to India and Pakistan of reversing their nuclear ambitions; to underline that possession of nuclear arms will detract ultimately from their security, not enhance it; and to point out the risks inherent to not just themselves but to their region and to the viability of universal goals by their action.

It's going to be a hard sell. They have a different perspective on this, but given certain traditions in the past—and we have to recall there's a strong nuclear disarmament tradition in Indian society particularly—and that there is an open society there, more pronounced in India than in Pakistan, I think we should try to take advantage of that to stimulate serious and critical review of the wisdom of the government's actions.

It's going to be a long haul, but I wouldn't despair of influencing them over time. I do think we have to bear in mind that what's going to be most persuasive in the end is not outside powers nagging at them, but rather a reappraisal of the costs to their own security, their own prosperity—these are countries that are very low on the development index—of continuing to devote their treasure into the pursuit of nuclear arms and delivery systems.

I would note that there has been some effort to lessen tensions between India and Pakistan. Obviously we would continue to

applaud those overtures. If in the end clearly there could be some sort of resolution of the Kashmir dispute, that would of course make a crucial difference to the perceptions of threat on both sides. So I do think we have to encourage those thoughts.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Thank you for that.

Chair, do I have time for a small question?

The Chair: Yes, just one more.

Hon. Dan McTeague: I have just a final question, perhaps—and again, I think the comments you've just made and putting it in the proper context are very helpful.

You reported here earlier that “Strengthened export controls are in order to restrain access to proliferation-sensitive technology.” Are there examples you could cite of, say, theft of that kind of technology or misplacement of that type of technology that causes you concern?

Mr. Paul Meyer: I did briefly, to the black market revelations of A.Q. Khan and associates. This was the Pakistani nuclear scientist who apparently engaged in a private enrichment activity. That was very worrisome, because the indications were that countries like Libya and Iran were some of the customers, and, frankly, that there were intermediaries that included countries like Malaysia, a country like Germany, a country like Turkey, countries that normally would not, of course, provide any kind of support for that. But it showed weaknesses in some of the export controls, and we hope there would be a strengthening of those.

I might remind you too that UN Security Council Resolution 1540 had the salutary effect of making an obligation for states, really, to implement legislation to ensure that they were not guilty of contributing to proliferation.

● (1650)

Hon. Dan McTeague: Thank you.

Mr. Paul Meyer: We also had that additional protocol. Again I just hearken back; we would like to see that as a condition of supply. That means countries that have nuclear technology would agree not to sell any technology to a country that had not signed on to that additional protocol.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Ambassador, before closing, I have one question for you.

One of the problems with the NPT is that if a country is caught cheating, it can basically just withdraw. I think it's France that has proposed a solution where any withdrawal from the treaty will automatically go to the UN Security Council for action. Could you tell us what Canada's position will be if this occurs?

Mr. Paul Meyer: Again, it's a very crucial element, because it's a vulnerability that's in the treaty. France and Germany have made some suggestions, and there is our own proposal for those annual meetings and the standing bureau that would allow an extraordinary or emergency session, really, of those states parties to be convened when there was a notice of withdrawal.

Currently under the NPT a country just gives three months' notice of its intent to withdraw. Obviously there's a great concern that, as in the case with the DPRK, it might have benefited from nuclear technology given to it on the basis that it was a member of the NPT regime, and then, in a sense, abused that trust by using that equipment in a clandestine way for a nuclear program contrary to its obligations.

We have to find a way of bringing the NPT membership together rapidly to address any future situation. Among the options to be looked at would be early recourse to the Security Council, but also, as I mentioned earlier, getting the peer pressure and concerted diplomatic action that could be possible if all the states parties of the NPT had the time to react to that situation before it became sort of finalized.

[Translation]

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

Mr. McDougall, even though you have been silent, we thank you very much. It has been a great pleasure to have you here with us.

[English]

I hope this will be done on a regular basis, because it was very informative for our committee.

We're going to stop for about two or three minutes, and then we'll come back with Madame Lalonde's motion.

Thank you.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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• (1655)

[Translation]

The Chair: With your permission, we will begin.

We now have a motion presented to the committee by Ms. Lalonde. The motion is very long. I simply want to say to all the members of this committee that the Sub-Committee on Human Rights and International Development has just ended its session. For once, it sat at the same time as us, which is a rare thing. One of their witnesses today was the Prime Minister of the government in exile of the Union of Burma, Dr. Sein Win.

Now, we have different possibilities, but I will give the floor to Ms. Lalonde, because she's the one who proposed the motion.

• (1700)

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I would be willing to hear the report at this afternoon's session and then submit my motion.

The Chair: Do we all agree for Mr. Stockwell Day, Vice-President of the Committee, to submit his report?

[English]

Do you want to make a report concerning what was discussed in your subcommittee? Please, go ahead, Mr. Day.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): It was very good meeting, with the Prime Minister and his delegation making their presentation. Most of us have heard the presentation about the extensive and horrendous human rights violations that are going on in Burma and a list of all the other concerns.

The motion that has been prepared by Madame Lalonde was accepted, other than paragraph (d) in the motion. There was unanimous approval to adopt the wording that is right in the presentation of the Burma Forum Report—so it's their words, and the Prime Minister agreed with this—and that paragraph (d) of the motion would now read....

I've been asked to read this slowly so that the interpreters can interpret and have it written out so that we have the French translation.

It would read as such: impose more comprehensive economic measures on Burma, and in particular— and then these words come right out of their report:

Review the effectiveness of the Export and Import Permits Act.

Review the feasibility of fully invoking the Special Economic Measures Act.

Impose a legal ban on further investment in Burma.

That motion, amended as such, received unanimous approval.

The Chair: Are there any comments?

Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Subject to Madame Lalonde, I would concur with the report as given by Mr. Day. I think it shows concern about the efficacy of our instruments on embargos. Many members in this committee will know Canada does not have that much in the way of trade, but more importantly, it is, I believe, very faithful to the need for us to deal multilaterally with like-minded countries, while at the same time assuring that we have a better understanding of the restrictions we have under the Special Economic Measures Act, which really give rise to getting involved with sanctions only when there's a grave breach of international peace and security as a result of a fairly serious international crisis.

I suspect that members will speak to this if they wish, but I would recommend that we also support that.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Lalonde, please.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Since I met with the Prime Minister myself, and since Stockwell Day said he was there and agreed on this amendment, it would be ungracious of me not to accept it. However, since the proposal to severely punish Canadian companies is not supported, we will ensure there is an efficient review of the Export and Import Permits Act, the Special Economic Measures Act, and a ban on additional investments.

With respect to the Special Economic Measures Act, I had already prepared a private bill, because it seemed to me that Canada should be able to threaten to impose sanctions when it is noticed that companies have truly unacceptable behaviours. It is not before us now, but I suppose it will have to come. Currently, because these measures must be multilateral, they are in fact never used. Remember Talisman Energy. We can understand that companies make profits, but they support regimes we condemn with all our hearts. We must be consistent.

These restrictions being expressed, I nonetheless agree with the amendment, and I hope we will be able to help this democratic opposition party, which truly deserves our admiration and needs our support.

• (1705)

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Very briefly, I fully support the amendments that have been agreed to. Like Madame Lalonde, I feel frustrated that we can't demonstrate within our own house that we have effective means with which to clean up our own act, meaning to deal with Canadian violators who are involved in atrocities of one kind or another, whether it's forced labour or trampling of human rights in other ways.

I think it's extremely important for us to give unanimous support today to give hope, to give a basis for some optimism to the government in exile, and I think it reflects a good piece of work across party lines for us to do so. I think we do need to get on with examining the question of how we can deal with Canadian companies abroad that are not acting in accordance with Canadian values. This is something we should turn some attention to at this committee or at the international human rights subcommittee level.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McDonough.

In closing, Madame Lalonde.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: It would really be a mistake on my part, as well as a lack of gratitude, not to recognize the work accomplished by Stéphane Bergeron. This motion was first submitted to the House in April, before the end of the last session. It was somewhat unnoticed at the time. It was not adopted for the reasons we know, but I believe we should be grateful to Stéphane Bergeron for the work he did.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lalonde. I would also like to thank the members of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights and International Development because, with

[English]

Mr. Day, they've done a great job for us.

Are you ready for the question on the motion itself?

Monsieur McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Chair, I have difficulty, which may not have been raised by the subcommittee, with paragraph (c) of Madame Lalonde's proposal, that Canada must "provide tangible political support to the legitimate authorities in Burma, specifically the government in exile, the National Coalition Government for the Union of Burma, and the Committee Representing the People's Parliament."

Chair, that is a very specific recommendation. It's a very specific undertaking of recognizing a party as opposed to recognizing countries. It would certainly be a breach of tradition, as I understand it, within Canada. We have never recognized political parties. I point out to colleagues that we avoided having this included in a motion last week by one of our colleagues, not to become enthralled or entrapped in an issue of political recognition that takes us down a very, very dangerous road, particularly if we have no control over what that party does ultimately. I would suggest that paragraph (c) be removed altogether.

I point out that almost every one of our trading partners or others are also of the same view. We have some of the strongest economic and political measures of any country against the Burmese military regime, and we have had them for some time. I want to make sure we understand that this stance I'm taking today would be in line with other like-minded countries.

We maintain, as you will know, regular contact with officials, Burmese diplomats, and of course one of the things that has certainly come forward in the last little while is that we will continue to have these kinds of constructive meetings. But this is an important breach of precedent, and I suggest we not do it here.

• (1710)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McTeague.

Ms. Lalonde.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, you will understand that I would like Mr. McTeague to be as graceful as I was by accepting that my position be transformed.

First, I would like to point out that the American Congress adopted more stringent legislation. I am referring to what you said about *like-minded countries*. In the United States, for example, all imports from Burma were banished. The legislation they have on investments is more stringent than Canada's. I just wanted to mention this.

Second, the United States financially supports the government in exile. When we say “provide tangible political support to the legitimate authorities”, there is no recognition, nor eternal recognition. But it seems to me that, to tangibly support this political authority elected in 1990 at the only democratic elections that took place, we need, instead, to maintain this paragraph c). If we did not accept it, it would contradict the very work we have just accomplished at the sub-committee.

Let's be honest. If no other country supported this government in exile, they would never have been able to come here. I think we should ask the government to “provide tangible political support to the legitimate authorities in Burma, specifically the government in exile [...] and the Committee Representing the People's Parliament.”

[English]

The Chair: *D'accord.* Now we'll go to Mr. McTeague.

[Translation]

L'hon. Dan McTeague: I understand what Ms. Lalonde just said. However, according to us, there is no recognition of that political party by the government of the United States.

Mme Francine Lalonde: It's not recognition...

Hon. Dan McTeague: I would point out that paragraph c), without modification, would result in our recognition of a political party. I don't think this is something the other countries did, including the United States.

There is a way of saying we are there to support them. However, Ms. Lalonde, frankly, the government of the United States does not support nor recognize this party. We want to continue doing what we have always done, i.e. recognize countries but not recognize political parties.

There may be a way to change the wording here. Allow me to quote the text before me in English. It says:

[English]

that Canada “provide tangible political support”, which could be interpreted as being recognition. And “legitimate authorities in Burma” could be recognition. I think either we remove the entire section or we clarify that while providing an interest to the “National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma”, this is not to be understood as party recognition.

I think you have to have that in there, otherwise Canada breaks its longstanding tradition—notwithstanding all of our good efforts at bringing a unanimous motion forward.

[Translation]

The Chair: If I understand Mr. McTeague, he would simply like to take out “political” and leave “provide tangible support to the legitimate authorities.”

[English]

If I understood it, you want to delete, “tangible political”. We could say, “provide support to the legitimate”.

[Translation]

It's only the word “political.”

[English]

Go ahead, Mr. McTeague.

• (1715)

Hon. Dan McTeague: The wording is either very clear or it is ambiguous, and I don't think we should allow any room for ambiguity. I think we should just remove paragraph (c) altogether, because we have said a lot in paragraphs (a) and (b), subject to what Mr. Day has just suggested with the embargo. We've put a lot in this; this is a very long motion. I know there's a lot of detail in here, but I think it would be helpful, in order to be faithful to the notion that we not be perceived as supporting a political party, but recognize the situation through the other amendments or motions and stick with the view of simply taking paragraph (c) out.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Well, I have two real concerns with what I think the parliamentary secretary is trying to do here.

One was that elected representatives from all four political parties came together in the subcommittee this afternoon, examined this at considerable length, and came back with the unanimous recommendation, and I didn't hear a persuasive argument for why we should reject....

Secondly, it is important to make sure we understand the implications of what we're doing, obviously, and I don't object to that for a moment, and that's why it comes back to the full committee. But if I understand what we're talking about here, we're talking about literally 91% of the representatives who were elected by the Burmese in 1990 who are in exile. So it's not about support for a particular political party; it's support for those who were elected, and what political party is not really our concern.

If there is any argument to be made for even a minor amendment, I suppose it might be to remove just the word “political” from paragraph (c). In other words, provide tangible support to the legitimate authorities in Burma, because how can anybody pretend that 91% of the representatives in exile don't represent a refusal to acknowledge the legitimate representatives? So I would argue strenuously against any thought that we would throw out paragraph (c).

The Chair: I'll go to Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Ms. McDonough, I think it's very important that we understand that recognizing a party or recognizing a government is without precedent and that the wording “support” could very easily be construed as just that. I think it's important, and it's for the sake of consistency that we also recognize that. The argument I'm making is not one that many can argue against, simply because it has been the usage, it has been the practice in international law, and we've been faithful to that since day one.

Unless there are compelling, overarching reasons why Canada should break with this tradition and with this usage, I can't think of an argument ever in the history of our country where we've recognized a party or a government. This would have the effect, if we don't remove paragraph (c), of doing just that. I would urge members, therefore, to remove paragraph (c), unless we can find language that would clearly specify that that's not what (c) means.

The Chair: Monsieur Sorenson.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Well, I think we want this motion to pass unanimously. I think it's going to be important to know that all parties are behind this.

I'm just wondering, Mr. Chairman, and I'm not prepared to bring the motion right now, if perhaps tabling this motion until some of those concerns are addressed is the way to go, or if...

Monday is the next meeting?

The Chair: Yes. Monday afternoon is the next meeting, and we have as witnesses next Monday two American experts on missile defence. I just want to let you know about this.

[Translation]

Ms. Lalonde, quickly please, because the division bell will be ringing in five minutes.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I would rally to the proposal made by Ms. McDonough to remove the word "political." This is the heart of Dan McTeague's argument.

Furthermore, I absolutely refuse to accept being told that the effect would be terrible. Right now, because Canada says it recognizes the state, there are representatives of that government here whom the international community denounces. There is an ambassador here, while over there, those who were democratically elected are not recognized. They are not recognized. At least, we provide tangible support.

Let's remove the word "political." It seems to me that, as democrats, that is as far as we can go. Otherwise, it would mean we go back to the previous situation. We would tell them to manage on their own, and we would leave it to others to pay and support them.

• (1720)

[English]

The Chair: Okay, that's fine.

We'll go to the question. There are two amendments. The first amendment is coming from Mr. Day to change paragraph (d).

We'll go to paragraph (d), which is the motion from Mr. Day. Does everyone agree to change paragraph (d)?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Now we will go to paragraph (c)—

Hon. Dan McTeague: Before we do that, I think we could work with Mr. Sorenson's proposal. I understand the tension here and I understand the reasons for it, and I feel very much as they do—

The Chair: Mr. McTeague, I need to get unanimous consent if you want to go with Mr. Sorenson.

Hon. Dan McTeague: No, they didn't want it. Okay.

The Chair: There was an amendment from Mr. McTeague to delete all of paragraph (c) and after that there was a subamendment to delete the word "political".

Mr. Day.

Mr. Stockwell Day: I would like to speak to the amendment. Does somebody have the institutional memory here to help us? When Canada took a strong stand against apartheid in South Africa, did we at the same time also give support or say we were going to give support to the ANC?

Ms. Alexa McDonough: They weren't even elected then—

Hon. Dan McTeague: We did it under the rubric of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Stockwell Day: I know we supported them, but did we use the political name of their party? I don't know.

The Chair: I don't know either.

Hon. Dan McTeague: I'm going to say that we did not. If anything, we did it under the rubric of the Commonwealth.

The Chair: I cannot tell you. I don't know exactly.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: However, CIDA supported the unions. CIDA financially supported COSATU.

[English]

The Chair: I'll go first to the question from Mr. McTeague. The question is, do we agree, yes or no, to totally delete paragraph (c)?

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: The amendment of Ms. McDonough was to delete the word "political". That's the question.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I so move.

The Chair: Do we agree to delete the word "political"?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Now we go to the main motion, as amended, by totally changing paragraph (d) and by deleting the word "political" in paragraph (c). Is there agreement on that motion?

[Translation]

Mr. Stockwell Day: Could you ask the question one more time?

[English]

The Chair: It's on the motion, as amended with the two amendments. The first amendment is to totally change paragraph (d) and to delete the word "political" in paragraph (c). That's the motion as it's written right now.

(Motion as amended agreed to on division)

The Chair: That's it. Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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