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Chair

Mr. Bernard Patry

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● (0910)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)): With your permission, I shall call this meeting to order.

[*English*]

We are doing, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), a study on the international policy review.

We have the privilege to have as a witness this morning Mr. Andrew Cohen, who is a professor with the Carleton University School of Journalism and Communication. *Bienvenue*, Mr. Cohen.

I just wanted to pinpoint that the last time you came before the committee was just before you published your book *While Canada Slept: How We Lost Our Place in the World* , in 2003. I'm not sure if you're going to have a new book later, but I'll be very thrilled if you have another one to read.

The floor is yours, Mr. Cohen, please.

Prof. Andrew Cohen (Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University): Thank you very much, Mr. Patry.

I was before this committee, and it was an inspiration to me. It was from there that I began to think more deeply about Canada and the world, perhaps prompted by the questions of the honourable members. It was very helpful to me, and I appreciated the opportunity, as I do today.

I remember Bill Graham telling me that the best job he had—I guess it was before he was minister of defence—he always said, was the chairmanship of this committee, which he held for I think six years.

I don't have a prepared statement. I just have a few comments about the international policy statement—just a few thoughts rather than a prepared, majesterial statement.

I like the tone of the statement. I think it strikes the right balance between values and interests. Many Canadians who were following this discussion were concerned that perhaps values would overwhelm interests in the discussion of our foreign policy, and I think the balance is just about right here. There was a feeling I think in some circles that if we talk too much about the things we want in the world and the things we represent in the world, we might talk less about the things we need in the world and the things that are important to who we are.

I think the absence of a great emphasis on values, although it is there, is a good thing. Similarly, I think the presence of interests, and a very sombre and serious look at who we are, is an important thing.

A second point I would make is about what I call the recognition of decline. If we had been having this conversation two years ago, when you had people from the Government of Canada here or ministers of the Crown, if you had said to them that Canada was in decline in the world, they would perhaps have said, “No, that's not true.” I think what's important in this document is a recognition that indeed there has been a decline; there has been an erosion of the arms of our internationalism.

I note from the statement, “we need to be realistic and frank with ourselves”. It says, “Recent years witnessed a...decline in the attention Canada paid to its international instruments.... Canada will need to do more if we want to maintain influence in a more competitive world.”

Paul Martin, in his foreword to the statement, says, “our international presence has suffered”. He rejects the idea that everything is fine. He promises “to rebuild for Canada an independent voice of pride and influence in the world”. If acknowledging decline is the beginning of renewal, I think this statement is progress.

I think, third, the idea of integrating the elements of our foreign policy, our internationalism—trade, development, diplomacy, defence—is a good thing. It's the first time this has been done. We have had, as you know well, reviews before, but this is the first time it's been done in this way. I think in that alone there's an ambition here that there hasn't been in other foreign policy statements.

Each element of the four papers, so to speak, has its own strengths. Some say more than others. I think trade, for example, or commerce says the least, but on the other hand, it is the strongest of the arms of our internationalism. It is the one that probably needs the least attention. I think the one particularly on aid represents a new direction. The idea of focus is important; this is long overdue. Defence I think as well looks for a more rigorous sense of where we are in the world. What is in this statement on both defence and aid isn't new, of course; the budget signalled where this was going. But I think in both cases it reflects a much greater interest in looking rationally and practically at the arms of our internationalism.

Much of what has been done in the Department of Foreign Affairs under diplomacy—that is, the reconfiguration of the department—has already happened or is in train. The idea of having more foreign service officers abroad is a good thing.

It isn't anything to do with the review, but there was just a contract signed by the foreign service officers that will bring their pay up, which is an excellent and long overdue thing. They were and have been the lowest-paid professionals in the Government of Canada, as compared with engineers and lawyers and others, and finally they will be paid what they ought to be paid.

So in that sense there are interesting things happening in all elements of this document.

I have two major reservations about it. I wish the language had been different. I wish this document had spoken with some poetry to Canadians about what they can really do in the world. There are a lot of roles here, but there doesn't seem to be any way of communicating this to Canadians in a way they can easily understand, and I think engaging Canadians, as this committee is doing now, is the next step in this very important process, because, as you know, the public was not part of this process, at least as it was written. There was the dialogue that Mr. Graham led in early 2003, but the public has not been part of this process, and if this is going to be sold to Canadians and embraced by Canadians, they have to be brought in.

The language here does not tend to do that. I don't see anyone here calling Canada the good governance nation, for example, or, as we used to be known, the helpful fixer and the honest broker. Those are old terms, but they worked for Canada a generation ago. That isn't there; there is no reference, or very little reference, to our history here. It is as if we arrived from nowhere in the world—that we didn't fight in wars; that we weren't at Colombo when the world's first aid program was established; that we didn't have, as John Kennedy said, among the finest foreign services in the world, as he called it in the late 1950s; that Lester Pearson didn't win the Nobel Prize in 1957 for work in the Sinai.

There are oblique references, but I think that history is important to remind Canadians that we did do things in the world and that we didn't just arrive here *deus ex machina*—that in fact we were in hard places, we fought when we had to, we kept peace when we had to, and we did what we thought to, and it gave us a sense of ourselves in the world. I wish that had been there.

I think there is a vision struggling to get out here; I'm not so sure it has. There are certainly the elements of it. This is a wonderful beginning. I don't think it's an end; I do think it's a beginning. I think it's an ambitious and serious statement that probably can be refined in places but that nonetheless represents a good deal of thinking. I'm not one of those who dismisses it as perhaps self-satisfied or smug. In terms of making a difference, relevance, effectiveness—in that sense, it is using the right language to form or establish or create a foreign policy that really is meaningful and effective and reflects both the values and the interests of Canadians.

Thank you.

● (0915)

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

We'll start with questions and answers. Mr. Day, please.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate Mr. Cohen's being here. His book was I think helpful to all Canadians, for those who read it. I like the way you characterized it in the lives of Messrs. Wrong, Robertson, and Pearson, and through their work. That was very helpful.

I also hope that when you come to critique the Conservative government's foreign policy, your language will be equally gracious and you will gild the lily, as you have in this one. You document very fairly the atrocious decline in every measurable area, but then characterize it by saying in a complimentary way that it's good—decline is the beginning of renewal. That was your quote, and I hope you will be as kind to a Conservative government as you survey, should the people of Canada put us in such a place as to implement foreign policy.

Could you reflect on why there is this tendency in this government to either ignore or minimize the human rights atrocities that go on around the world, and why there is a tendency or reluctance to publicly—really publicly, not just at arm's length and deferentially—make reference to...whether it's China's human rights violations, the ongoing problem with Tibet? It mentions Colombia in the IPS, but it doesn't touch on the atrocities that continue in Cuba. There's the fact that we would send our embassador back to Iran after a Canadian woman is wrongly arrested, tortured, raped, and killed. Could you address that reluctance?

There's also very little in terms of playing a vital part in the transatlantic alliance. I agree with what you say; I think Canada could be, and should be, a leading nation in promoting prosperity and peace, and you promote peace by really promoting democracy, individual freedom, and human rights.

There's a reflexive part of the Liberal government that means we just do the opposite to anything the U.S. does, instead of putting Canada's sovereignty first, looking at our relations with the U.S. in terms of what is best for Canada, and then what's best for the continental relationship—seeing Canada, not as taking the European part as the constant counterweight, but seeing the potential for Canada to serve as the bridge in the transatlantic alliance between the United States and Europe, obviously, because some of the strain there related to the Iraq war and other things.

So there are two things—comment on Canada's reluctance related to really speaking out and doing something about the human rights situations around the world, and this proper, positive bridge role that Canada could play between the U.S. and Europe.

● (0920)

Prof. Andrew Cohen: Thank you very much for your question, Mr. Day.

Just on your preamble, I'd be happy to say lovely things about the Conservative Party foreign policy when I see it.

Mr. Stockwell Day: I said when we form the government.

Prof. Andrew Cohen: Mr. Day, your comments on human rights are actually well taken.

We have commerce here, as part of the elements of internationalism, but do we have conscience? The Minister of Foreign Affairs did give a speech in Montreal the other day that was titled "Conscience and Confidence". I'm not so sure where the confidence came from, but there was a reference to conscience. Our foreign policy has been heavily weighted towards commerce. I don't know what Mr. Pettigrew meant by confidence. If we talk about values—and, of course, at the core of our values is democracy, respect for human rights.... We have, institutionally, in the past, taken steps to bring that to light. The International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Montreal has been there for 15 years. Mr. Broadbent of the New Democrats led that for some time quite effectively.

I do agree that human rights does not have the prominence in this document that it might, probably because it gets in the way of commerce. For example, Mr. Chrétien went to China in 1993 or 1994 and famously said, four years after Tiananmen Square, "I can't tell the Premier of Saskatchewan what to do. How do you expect me to tell the Premier of China what to do?" Whether it was 1993 or 1994, the statement still stands. Many felt that we had abandoned dissidents in China and that we had abandoned the moral high ground on that issue.

So we made a decision, and then we began to lead Team Canada expeditions to China and we got away from what had been—in fact under your government, under Brian Mulroney, Mr. Day—a more spirited and focused view of human rights.

It is something that isn't as prominent as it might be in this document, whether it's Taiwan—although I should note that the Prime Minister did meet the Dalai Lama here in Ottawa last June.... The idea of elevating that to a pillar or principle of our foreign policy, which it had been at one time.... I wish it had been, and I don't see the level of gravity it might have had here, and I regret that.

I'm not so sure a review is the place where you would address the human rights records of each country. I'm not so sure reviews or statements do that. There was reference to the United Nations here and what we might do there as part of our package of UN reforms, but I would agree that there isn't as much as there might be.

I wish that ministers of the Crown and the Prime Minister talked about human rights more than I perceive they do. They always say they raise these things in private when they meet with the strongmen of authoritarian regimes. What that really means, I'm not sure. Maybe a dissident is released. Perhaps there is some progress, but quiet diplomacy has its limitations.

We might, at some point, want to re-examine where we are on Taiwan, which is a democracy. It will mean, at some point, that we have to make a decision there, but I do agree that I wish it had had the priority it might have had.

On the transatlantic relationship, you mentioned the United States, Mr. Day. You'll note here that the United States has a prominence in this document that it hasn't had in other documents. The review of 1970, you may remember, had no reference to the United States at all, surprisingly. I think this reaffirms that we do live in North America. That's why the emphasis is where it is. The United States is our leading trading partner. It also says that we don't know as much about the United States as we think we do and that we ought to know more about it, which I think, as someone in a university, is a good thing.

I think you used the word "link" in the transatlantic relationship, and I assume you mean between Europe and America, Mr. Day. Is that what you were saying? There is certainly a role for us there. I don't know if that suggests a blurring of our focus.

● (0925)

This document tries to reaffirm that we are citizens of North America, that we live in North America. That's at its core. On the other hand, we make reference to other places in the world. Increasingly, our role may be to moderate between the United Nations and the United States. If the United States sours on the United Nations, we as a prominent and loyal member state may need to assume this role.

I'm not so sure, however, that we can moderate behaviour in other ways. There was a time when Canada tried to do this in Vietnam and Korea. Now, though, I'm not convinced that we have the stature in Washington that would be required. We may have it in Europe. But I don't know that we have much of a voice in Washington any more, given the erosion of relations. I'm doubtful that our influence will go very far there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cohen.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lalonde, please.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Thank you for coming, Mr. Cohen. I remember your last appearance before this Committee and the very strong language that you used at that time.

I shall start with a question. I was surprised and disappointed to see Canada's refusal to make the 0.7 per cent of the GDP one of our goals for the millennium. I read Kofi Annan's report of March 2005. It is important to read it because it is a review of all major issues in the world. It shows the link between development and security and vice versa.

We are witnessing the emergence of a large number of conflicts in Africa on top of problems in the Middle East. A large part of those problems are the result of a breeding ground for terrorism. I think it is extremely important for human justice and global wealth distribution. Yet, Canada is one of the donor countries that is refusing to set a goal. I believe that this refusal takes away the capacity to influence that the rest of its policies are supposed to have.

Prof. Andrew Cohen: Thank you for your question, Ms. Lalonde. I shall answer in English, if you don't mind.

[*English*]

I could not agree with you more. I think the greatest single failing of this document is our failure to agree to 0.7%.

We had a lot to do with this as a nation. It wasn't just that we were in Colombo in 1950 as one of the founders of the world's first aid program to the developing world. It wasn't just that in 1960 we established an external aid office. In 1968 we established CIDA. In the same year, Pierre Trudeau, in his first speech after he was elected Prime Minister, talked about the obligation of Canada to the third world and what this meant for us a nation. Under Pierre Trudeau, in 1975, we reached 0.54% of aid. We were always committed to it. In 1969, Lester Pearson was part of the World Bank's Panel of Eminent Persons.

Now in 2005 we have the Prime Minister saying we are not going to commit to the 0.7%. In looking at Canada, people in the aid community around the world can only shake their heads. We are, according to this document, the 8th or 12th largest economy in the world. We have been in surplus for about six years. We agree that we're wealthy, but we don't seem to want to make this commitment. I was astounded. I wanted to give Mr. Martin credit for being honest, at least. His predecessors said they would agree to 0.7%, but they never got there. Politically, it would have been in his interest to say we were at least going to try.

In the last 10 years, as one of the OECD donor nations, we fell to a level of 0.22%. We're now up to .28%. The reason the minister gives for our position is that the economy is growing. The Minister of Finance actually said he wasn't sure how it was calculated. Other nations calculate it differently. I think it's a moral failure. I'm astounded that this country, which finds so much money to do other things, could not make this commitment now. We could not commit to selling the idea to Canadians as a part of our internationalism. So I couldn't agree with you more.

● (0930)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Also, don't you think that the language is rather vague as concerns multilateralism?

I was expecting a clear commitment to international law. But we find no such thing. The word “multilateralism” is used to designate the UN and any voluntary and occasional association with other countries aiming at reaching specific targets. This document says that the UN has many weaknesses and should be reformed. In other words, it is suggested that multilateralism can be all and everything. This worries me because there is no firm commitment nor principles in this statement.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Cohen.

Prof. Andrew Cohen: As you've just pointed out, Madam Lalonde, they're clear on the United Nations I think as to what we ought to do there, and I think they would like our focus to be there.

One thing I thought they would address is that Canada is a member of virtually every international organization that will have us as a member. We are the world's biggest joiners of clubs, whether as a dialogue partner with the ASEAN countries or as a member of la Francophonie, the Commonwealth, and a number of other organizations. We're also in the Organization of American States, of course.

I thought we might in this document look practically and seriously at whether we really ought to be members of all those organizations and at what multilateralism really should mean. Should it mean an emphasis entirely on the United Nations? Should we as a country be members of all those organizations, or are we diluting our influence in doing so? I thought there would be a discussion of that here, and as I think you point out, there really isn't. There is a vagueness.

There is I think a clarity with respect to the UN, though maybe not enough for everybody. But remember, it is a statement. I'm not so sure you can offer every element of your foreign policy in a statement like this; I think you point to directions.

At least we reaffirmed the work we are doing with the United Nations under Ambassador Rock in the sense that we believe in a Security Council that does not look like it did in 1945—which it does today—and we look at human rights differently. I think that's the good news. The bad news is perhaps that having talked about making a difference and being effective, maybe we ought to be looking at organizations that our memberships.... It's the cost of it, but are we getting something out of it? I think we might have looked at that more carefully.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cohen.

I will pass to Mr. Boudria.

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, maybe I could pick up on the last point.

You're asking, should we question our membership in all these organizations? Well, are there any of them, in your opinion, we shouldn't be a member of?

I'm a former Minister of International Cooperation and also a former minister responsible for la Francophonie. I presently chair the parliamentary component of the Canadian branch of the Organization of American States...[*Technical difficulty*]

Are there any organizations where you think we should not be a member, having said what you just said?

I see us as being maybe different from the others in a couple of these things. The mere fact that we hold this rather distinct position enables us to do things others perhaps can't. For instance, we are the only G-7 country, I believe, that has never been a colonial power. It's a feature of Canada. We've been colonized and all that but have not been a colonial power ourselves. That's a distinction we have.

La Francophonie is incomplete: Algeria is not a member. La Francophonie will never be a full organization, in my view, without Algeria being a member. I think there's a role for us to play there because we are, at the same time, a French-speaking nation without being France. That's important in la Francophonie, important in many African countries. Doesn't that give us a special role there? You can almost transpose that to a number of areas, can't you?

Anyway, I'm making a statement at the same time, but what are these organizations in which you think we don't really have the role we think we have or we say we have right now?

● (0935)

Prof. Andrew Cohen: Well, I'm not saying we should withdraw from organizations, but, for example, we show up at ASEAN meetings. We're now calling ourselves—which is not improper—an Asian nation, but that's Southeast Asia.

My larger point is not so much that we should drop out of organizations but that we should have greater clarity about what we want to do. What do we want to do in la Francophonie? What do we want to do in the Commonwealth? What do we want to do in NATO?

I'm not saying we should get out of any of them. In NATO, for example, we have diminished our presence there for some time. We got out of Europe. Our NATO allies began to wonder what we were actually doing there. I'm not saying we should get out. Once you have a seat, it's hard to give it up. I think with the United Nations we have a greater clarity of what we really want to accomplish there.

I would have hoped part of the review would have examined where we are in places and said where we might be. How can we make the most of and maximize our influence in places?

This is about making a difference. The language that is used in this document is about effectiveness, relevance, and making a difference. Are you making a difference by sitting at a table at a conference somewhere, or are you actually an innovator of policy and are you actually making imaginative proposals? That's what I would be asking of us: are we doing that in places? I'm not so sure that evaluation, that assessment, is coming through here.

You may have ideas—I don't know if you do, Mr. Boudria—on what we should get out of. I'm not saying we should get out, but you do spread your influence very thinly when you're showing up in meetings everywhere and maybe not with a considered policy.

Hon. Don Boudria: No, I'm not the one who brought up the issue of getting out of anything. I was responding to part of your statement.

If I can, I'll switch gears for a minute and talk about something quite different, something you touched on briefly, and that is our position vis-à-vis Taiwan. How do you see that evolving?

It is of course a democracy. I led the Canadian observation team to the presidential elections last year. I don't think there's any doubt in anybody's mind that it is a functioning democracy. They had election results that were remarkably similar to those of a certain election in the United States. The number of votes on each side was almost identical.

If I can, I'll get you to react as to what you think our position should be. For instance, the United States has to some degree a position that's similar to ours vis-à-vis Taiwan, but it's administered quite differently. They have what they call the Taiwan Relations Act, I believe, which says a number of Taiwanese leaders can visit the United States. They have fewer restrictions on that than we do. Could you react to that?

Prof. Andrew Cohen: Like you, Mr. Boudria, I've spent some time in Taiwan, and I have enormous respect for what the Taiwanese represent. They are a democracy. They've evolved from a dictatorship into a democracy. They have a very strong human rights record. They have a free press. They have, as we know, an enormously vibrant economy. They are one of the world's leading holders of foreign reserves. They have built, under extreme conditions, a functioning, free, democratic state. They live in a tough neighbourhood; they live beside China. The United States and the rest of the world will have to come to terms with Taiwan.

I think we are ignoring Taiwan now. As you know, they have no formal diplomatic status here. They have a trade office, or what is called a trade office. We do not even issue their leaders transit visas in Canada. We treat the Taiwanese, in a sense, as people who don't exist. We're happy to trade with them, but we don't want to talk to them. We are going to have to seriously think—as we think about China—about what Taiwan means to us, because I do think Taiwan will be an emerging issue in the next 10 years.

The United States will have to face it most critically. It will not be able to do what it did 10 years ago. In 1996 when I was in Taiwan—I don't know if you were there at that point—the elections were happening. The Chinese were very worried about the democratic movement there and began to lob missiles. Bill Clinton could send the American fleet into the Straits of Taiwan, and that was that.

We're 10 years on now. China is arming itself considerably. Its defence spending is increasing at 10% a year, and it is making very threatening noises about Taiwan.

As a country, I think we will have to evaluate what our relationship is with China and what our relationship is with Taiwan. We understand that China, big as it is, will countenance no relaxation or liberalization of our relationship with Taiwan. It just doesn't want us to go there, which is why Taiwan, as you know, has diplomatic relations with a handful of countries, all of them unimportant. The reason is that the moment a country recognizes Taiwan, it loses recognition from China.

So what do we do? There are more modest steps we can take. I think we have to be a little more open to Taiwan. I don't think we should be telling their leaders, who ask for something as basic as a transit visa to go through Vancouver Airport on their way to an engagement somewhere, that they can't stop. That's humiliating. When the representative of Taiwan asks for that kind of permission, it takes four months to get an answer from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

We trade with these people; we ought to learn to talk to them. They would like a free trade agreement with us. I don't know if that's the way to go, but I think we can talk about that. There are other things we might look at in terms of treating them as less than an international pariah. They are a leper now, in a sense, in the world. This country, unlike other countries, has worked very hard to make a democracy of itself and to respect human rights, which is important, I'm sure, to Mr. Day and the Conservatives, and should be important to all Canadians. I think we haven't taken a mature, sophisticated view on that.

I think we're afraid, and this goes back to commerce and conscience. What is our conscience about Taiwan, and what is the level of our commerce when it comes to China? Is there some kind of balance? It may be something that we as a nation choose not to do because we worry about endangering that trading relationship with China. But it is something I think we will have to address.

Unlike the United States, we do not have it codified in legislation. You referred to the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979. We don't have such a thing. In our sense, it's a more incremental and accidental foreign policy toward China. I really don't think we have thought it through. So it's largely stumbling in the dark and hoping it comes out right. At the moment, it isn't coming out right with Taiwan.

● (0940)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cohen.

Now we'll go to Mr. Julian, please.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): *Merci beaucoup, monsieur le président.*

Thank you for coming. Thank you for your presentation.

I'm struck by your comments around Canadian values. My question is in the sense of whether you don't feel there is a disconnect between what Canadians feel most profoundly about what our foreign policy should be, what our trade policy should be, and what's actually reflected in Canadian governmental decisions and in the document itself.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lalonde mentioned that there was no reference to Francophonie in this document. However, it is one of Canada's strengths and Canadians are counting very much on it. I come from the fourth French-speaking province of this country and this is highly valued, even by people from British Columbia.

[*English*]

We also have the values of wanting further development around the world, yet the government isn't matching the commitments it's made for 0.7% of GDP for overseas development assistance. We believe profoundly in human rights, yet the Canadian government, as you mentioned, hasn't spoken up on issues such as human rights in China. We in the country, and particularly younger Canadians, have this very real sense that Canada is profoundly different from the United States, yet the document seems to continue to push us towards more continental integration, which in my opinion most Canadians reject.

We have a trade policy that demonstrably has failed. In the 13 years of trade agreements under the Conservatives and Liberals, we've created fewer than half of the full-time jobs that we created in the 13 years prior. I mean, if there's a demonstration of failure, it's the fact that we do not have the full-time jobs we used to have.

So we have Canadian values and Canadian interests that go very clearly in one sense, yet the document and government decisions seem to go in another sense.

Do you not feel there is this disconnect between the document and government decisions on trade policy and foreign affairs and what Canadians profoundly feel—as you mentioned, Canadian values, our sense of ourselves, our independent voice in the world?

● (0945)

Prof. Andrew Cohen: Well, I think it's how we define Canadian values. I mentioned a speech that Mr. Pettigrew gave just recently. He gave one six months ago, in October, when he began to sound like the minister of values, and he talked about Canadian exceptionalism in the world and what we represented.

I think we've tried to define who we are. What do we believe in? We believe in democracy. We believe in pluralism. We believe, obviously, in the free market and representative government. Those are all things that we hold dear. We've made a profession I think of distinguishing our values from those of the United States—I think falsely so. People write books in this country called *Fire and Ice* to make the argument, which I think makes us feel good about how different we are from the United States. I personally don't buy it. I think *Fire and Ice* is closer to ashes and water than it is to fire and ice.

But there is a sense out there that we feel good about ourselves. Many people look to this document to reflect values, and values are here, but I think they've been rightly and understandably constrained and put in the larger context of values and interests. In other words, we believe certain things, but on the other hand, we want certain things and we have to do certain things.

So what do we have here? We have expressions of our commitment to generosity in aid, our commitment to peacekeeping through our military, our commitment to reform and liberalization of institutions through the United Nations. All those are considered to be values, and I think what the document tries to do—and I didn't write it and I'm not wholly defending it—is to bring them into greater consistency. You would disagree. So we're not just saying things that are quixotic or utopian. In fact, we identify certain things and attempt to find the resources, not always successfully, because in foreign aid we're not, and to try to find the ways to bring them to a certain reality.

So does the document show a way forward in that? I think it talks about things we want to do in the world—in aid, for example. There isn't enough money there, but at least it's saying quite practically that if you want to distribute aid, you're in too many places to do it. I think that's a good thing. In other words, if you believe in doing good things and if you believe you can improve the lot of people, then choose areas in which you're going to do it—in this case, it's largely the reduction of poverty—find the countries in which you're going to do it, and do it in a way that means something.

I think that's a good thing. I think that brings values and interests in closer harmony to each other, rather than just saying we're going to do everything in the world and we're going to do it in a number of different countries. So there I think is a practical example of making values and interests work in a consistent and cohesive way.

Does the document give voice to all that Canadians might want in the world? Probably not. We've already discussed here how it fails on aid. We talk a lot about being peacekeepers and the role we play in the world in mediating conflict. Will the kind of military we're describing here do that? Well, to a degree, but will the money be there to equip ourselves to do that? Maybe; maybe not. We talk about a more focused diplomacy. Will we have the resources to do that? We hope they will be there, but maybe they won't.

So there's an expression here of what we'd like to do in the world. The gap between resources and rhetoric, which has bedevilled our foreign policy for years, is narrowing. I don't think it's where we would like it to be, but I do think part of who we are is having a very practical and hard-headed sense of what is real and what is possible. I think a lot of our foreign policy in recent years has been informed by notions of what we'd like to do, a prime minister saying we'll be here, or we'll be there, without having the resources to match the rhetoric.

This I think is a more practical and more realistic document when it uses terms like “making a difference”, “being effective”, and “being relevant”, in at least saying to Canadians that these are things we might want to do and these are the ways in which we are going to do them. So in that sense, it is a form of progress.

● (0950)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cohen.

Now we'll go to Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Cohen, thank you for being here today. I'm sorry I wasn't here in 2001, when you originally appeared. As you can see, a lot has changed on the committees, with the exception of some of us who have had tremendous experience here.

I want to pick up on your comments with respect to Taiwan and officials there being refused transit visas—I think that is the word you used. I want to put on the record that no Taiwanese individual has ever been refused a transit visa for the purposes of transit. If, however, as we saw in the Australian experience and other experiences, someone is going to get off a plane, stay here for a couple of weeks, and then go back to Taiwan and say the Canadian government, or another government, has given formal recognition by virtue of accepting them, then that's a completely different matter, and I think you would agree with that. But in order to really make the point, I'm also willing to, with the indulgence of the chair, bring forward foreign affairs officials to demonstrate and to back up what I'm saying and to disprove what you have just said to the committee.

My question, however, is on a different matter. We had this debate when Jeffrey Sachs was here a few weeks ago on the subject of development and developmental aid. It is right to suggest that we move towards .07%. Other countries, as you've pointed out, have done that. In the case of Germany, for instance, they've used their debt initiatives in Iraq as part of that .07%, as a first steps towards achieving that, which is, of course, something Canada doesn't do with its $300 million that it's prepared to offer there.

But I want to ask a specific question to you, as to whether or not we would be successful. I think it's really important to understand whether the recipient countries of that aid are indeed in a position where they can receive it and constructively deploy it—spend it, as it were—to achieve the MDG goals that we've set for 2015. My concern, of course, is not that we don't meet them, and I agree with you that we have a responsibility to meet them, but if we do not meet the targets, is it possible that in not meeting those targets, ultimately we will have failed and future generations will not see targets as being a responsible way to approach global catastrophes?

Prof. Andrew Cohen: If I may just make a reference to Taiwan, since we were talking about that earlier, my understanding was that the Taiwanese had asked for—it could be I'm wrong—a transit visa for an official of their government and it was not granted. I may be misinformed on that. And it wasn't to stay in Canada. It was en route to somewhere else. I may be wrong, but my information is that that was indeed the case. If you can show otherwise, you should correct the record and the view of the Taiwanese government, which I believe holds that view, but I'm not here to represent the Taiwanese government.

Hon. Dan McTeague: It's important to understand that point. I believe you're referring to the vice-chair who came to Canada, I think at the time, for about three days and had recommended to come for a period of time, and it certainly wasn't for reasons of transit. This has happened many times, and what we've often seen in the past, and I'm referring specifically to your comments that transit visas have been denied, is there's usually a reason for it—not at our end, but of course they, at their end, refused to move ahead with it. But in order to understand—

Mr. Stockwell Day: Wrong.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Day, excuse me, you've had your opportunity. You'll have a motion on this in a moment.

We are prepared to bring officials forward to clarify exactly what happened.

But, Mr. Cohen, the comment you made was that Canada refuses transit visas from the Taiwanese. Canada does not refuse transit visas for refuelling purposes or for virtually any other purpose.

The Chair: Merci. You made your point.

I'll go back to Mr. Cohen to make his point also.

Do you have anything else to add, Mr. Cohen, about Taiwan, about the IPR, please?

Prof. Andrew Cohen: As interested as I am in Taiwan, I'm not here as their official representative.

You asked about our aid policy. I'm not so sure I got the entirety of your whole question. You were asking about our effectiveness and our ability to deliver on what we're doing in those countries.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Cohen, I'm simply saying if we are going to give *x* billions of dollars to a particular goal, to a particular country, and that country is not able to receive that money or spend it appropriately to achieve the very objectives that we all want, how then will we be able to act accountably for the money that is spent, if it's not practically spent, or the nation itself, which is the target of these investments, cannot possibly recover from the downward spiral in which it finds itself?

● (0955)

Prof. Andrew Cohen: You're absolutely right. One of the things that I think is lacking in the aid paper is enough emphasis on what I would call accountability and transparency. If you're going to give money to a regime, and it's government to government as opposed to passing it through international organizations, you have an ability to measure whether it has been effective. I use the language of this document, which is on effectiveness. In fact, it even asks, "How will we know that we are effective?" It's asking it in more rhetorical terms. It's in the overview, I believe.

I think one of the things we ought to be striving for in our aid policy is accountability and transparency, although this is hard, because you're giving money to countries that are awfully poor; as a function of their poverty, they don't have in place an ability to address corruption and are more vulnerable to corruption. What institutions and mechanisms do you have in place to combat that? I think that's a question we might ask.

Therefore, when determining where we are giving money, for those countries to which we are giving aid, to me, that should be a central and important criteria. In fact, we have the ability to measure where it's going so that it is not building villas for strongmen in Geneva, Zurich, or somewhere else. There's a history of this happening.

If you look at the 25 countries—I think it's 25 countries, but there were people here from Aileen Carroll's office a second ago who could tell you exactly what they are—some of them inspire more confidence than others. For example, Kenya is not exactly known as a place without corruption. I would think that we are going to have to be very careful in monitoring where our money goes.

Our intentions are good, but I think Canadians have a right to ask where the money is going. Particularly as we ask them to increase aid and to reach .07%, they have a right to know where that money is going and how it's being spent. I would think that knowing the very great demands that there are in this world, we ought to go to places, as much as we possibly can, where we can have the best chance of success.

I should note that the Danes, for example, have reduced their number of recipients from 18 to 15. Other Scandinavian countries have very focused programs. I'm delighted we're going to 25 from 150, although it's not entirely 25, but I think part of that must be accountability.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cohen.

We'll now go to Mr. Sorenson, please.

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

Thank you, Mr. Cohen, for being here today. We appreciate your insights and some of the comments you've made.

It's good to hear the government say that if Taiwan wants to refuel here, they can. We'll take that as a promise kept.

I'm interested in commerce versus conscience, or commerce over conscience. In one of your comments to Mr. Day, you said you were not sure of Canada's influence in the United States. Obviously, Canada is a trading nation. We depend on global trade, but perhaps more than anything else, we depend on trade with the United States.

We have some difficulties with them right now. I'm from a rural riding that feels the effects daily of the closed border on beef, softwood lumber, pork, wheat, and a number of other things, but we depend on the United States. We depend on the 300 million people who purchase our products and create jobs for us here in this country.

You mentioned that the document talks about an absence of values, but does it address some of the concerns the United States may have with Canada? Obviously, we have a lot of concerns. For some of those aforementioned cases of softwood lumber and beef, I really believe the United States is in the wrong in some of those areas, but does this answer some of the United States' concerns?

We know they have a concern about continental security. We know they have a concern about a fight against terrorism. We know they have a concern about our defence spending.

Today, in one of our newspapers, it says:

> The federal government's newly released defence and foreign-policy objectives fail to recognize a $1.1-billion shortfall in the military's operating budgets this year.

The government gave an indication that we would be signing on to BMD. We backed away. The Americans were pleased to see the direction they thought we were going in, but then, in a knee-jerk reaction, we backed away.

Sometimes I think perhaps we want to be everything to everyone, and we miss the relationships that are the closest, as far as proximity is concerned. In your opinion, what can we do to better address some of the concerns our major trading partner may have with Canada?

● (1000)

Prof. Andrew Cohen: Well, as I think we see in the document, the United States does get—as we say in the newspaper business—big play, so to speak. It is important. I refer you to 1970 when the government produced—you may recall seeing them—these very thin booklets looking at our role in the world. They're now in the archives, or you can find them occasionally in used bookstores. There was not one about the United States. We actually had a foreign policy where we didn't talk about the United States.

This doesn't do that. This acknowledges and recognizes that the United States is central to who we are. We live in this neighbourhood, and we have to deal with that. It does talk about security. It does talk about the smart border, where I think we've made real strides. I think we are moving to understanding that the United States believes that security trumps trade. Trade is more important to us; security is more important to the United States. I don't think Canadians are really quite aware of how things have changed. I know it has become a cliché now, but those people who spend time in the United States and who see what's happened there realize the impact of what happened on September 11 and how that has changed the American psyche.

If the Americans want to close their border, if they perceive a threat coming from Canada, they will close the border. I have no doubt about that at all. Therefore, our response on the smart border is what a self-aware nation does, and it says we have to secure the border.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: But if you say that Canada's values or Canada's direction is that commerce basically trumps conscience, in reality, it doesn't when we deal with the United States. Would that be a fair assessment?

Prof. Andrew Cohen: Well, when we use those terms I think we're talking mainly about human rights in the third world. I don't think we're thinking of civil liberties in the United States. I think when it comes to our relationship with the United States we are doing what we can to secure the border, and the whole smart border plan that is addressed here does that.

My lament is that we've lost influence in Washington, and we have that because we've largely allowed our military to erode in the manner that it has. I didn't know the figure you quoted today. It doesn't surprise me, and I'm very worried that much of the spending on the military, as we know now, is at the end of five years. I think the military is under very fine leadership now under General Hillier, but I'm concerned that the money isn't there now.

When I talk about influence, I think it has a lot to do with that. I don't think the Americans particularly lament that we're not spending money on aid. I think they value what we're doing in places like Afghanistan, which is real nation-building that they don't want to do, which we can do well. But I think we are not on the radar screen in Washington.

In fairness to the document, what it does do is it talks about something that I and others have been talking about for some time, which is a greater diplomatic presence in the United States. We have opened consulates. We're embarking on public diplomacy. If you've watched what Ambassador McKenna is doing now, that is a real shift in how we're handling that relationship. He is actually on American talk shows responding to attacks on Canada in the American media. So we are moving in that direction. There are a lot of positive things happening in that way, but it will take a long time before we reclaim influence in Washington, because, frankly, we have sunk very far in their estimation.

The Chair: Mr. Cohen, before you leave, I have one question for you.

Given your experience in Washington, you pinpoint the fact that we've done a lot with the borders. What more should we do concerning security, and in which areas?

We've talked a lot about influence, and my other question, a very short question, is how can we get back our influence with the United States?

Prof. Andrew Cohen: I think the smart border plan, which came into effect just after September 11, is a very good start. I realize there are elements in American public opinion that are always going to paint a vision of Canada that is absolutely false. I think it was reprehensible when Senator Clinton, whom I respect, used the kind of language that suggests terrorists were coming from Canada.... That hurts, and the only way you can respond is how we did respond in the United States, which is to have your ambassador go on television or to have your representatives say that simply isn't true. I do think we have to be vigilant about who is in Canada, and I think it is not a small thing to try to restore the confidence of your leading trading partner that in fact your border is secure. I think we're doing that kind of thing.

The larger question of restoring influence in Washington is the work of a generation. I think it's saying that we do indeed run a global foreign policy; we are in many places and should be. The United States is not solely what we do in the world, but it is our leading trading partner, and Canadians, when they think and talk about the United States, have to remember I think that we send some 80% of what we make to the United States. In a sense, we are heavily dependent upon the United States, and I think there is in Canada an ignorance of that, a feeling that we can operate in a world in which that isn't so, and we made that decision years ago as a nation. We talked about diversifying trade. We're not doing that; we are trading with this country. They are employing Canadians in branch plants, and I think we have to remember that.

It doesn't mean that you don't run an independent foreign policy. I've always felt that sovereignty—and national sovereignty means saying yes when you can and saying no when you have to—means never having to say you're sorry. In other words, you run an independent global foreign policy, but you take care of business at home first. I think restoring confidence in our ability to act as an independent player in the world, to be useful when we can to the United States but at the same time be an independent thinker, is very important. It means undertaking nation building as we see fit, it means embracing the priorities as a nation that we think are important, but it also means perhaps being very careful in what your ministers say. We went through a period when we had a lot of unnecessary comments that obviously in Washington were received badly. That doesn't help.

I think you take of business, you secure the border, you rebuild your resources, you conduct a global foreign policy, but you still remember where you live, and the neighbourhood you live in is on the upper half of the continent, which is dominated by the United States of America. So I think you have to be realistic and practical in how you conduct your foreign policy.

● (1005)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McTeague has a point of order for 30 seconds.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, I wanted to point out that between 2002 and 2004, Canada approved 18 visits by cabinet-level Taiwanese officials, including the vice-minister of foreign affairs, the minister of justice, transportation and communications. With reference to what was said here earlier, such visits are done on a case-by-case basis. And, Mr. Chairman, I wanted to point out that recently Taiwan's representative to Canada spoke favourably of Canada's visits practice, saying it was an example illustrating friendly relations between the two sides and that many senior Taiwanese officials have visited Canada in the last three years, which is impossible in many other countries.

Mr. Chairman, our policy does not allow us to approve visits by small numbers of officials, officials who, by the nature of their position in Taiwan's government, might spark the perception that the visit is official in nature. Visits by these individuals and their duration could be construed as, of course, a question of unofficial relationship and obviously a question of statehood.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McTeague. You've made your point.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): [*Inaudible*] on the Liberal side.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paquette.

Thank you, Mr. Cohen.

[*English*]

Thank you very much for the appearance.

We're going to recess for two minutes, and after that we'll go with the Iraqi witnesses.

Thank you.

● (1008)

(Pause)

● (1014)

The Chair: Okay, members, we're going to keep going. We'll continue with the second portion under our orders of the day, and that is relations with countries of the Muslim world.

We're grateful to have with us today the Women's National Commission. I would like to ask our witnesses from Iraq—I had the pleasure of meeting them last night—to introduce themselves. This way, I won't pronounce any names improperly, because it's not always easy.

So please introduce yourselves and tell us exactly what you do.

Mrs. Zainab H. Salman (Participant, Iraqi Women's Internship Programme, Women's National Commission): I am Zainab Salman, from Baghdad. I'm the chief manager for the Baghdad Women's Program, whose main aim is to train women to become more powerful in public life. I also work for RTI, as the women's program director, to improve the situation for women. We have a training program for women to become more involved in political life.

Thank you.

● (1015)

Mrs. Ula A. Ibrahim (Participant, Iraqi Women's Internship Programme, Women's National Commission): My name is Ula Ibrahim, and I am a member of the Iraqi Independent Women's Group. We have several branches in many different areas of Iraq. I also work as the premier scrutineer for the Iraqi Independent Democrats party.

Thank you.

Mrs. Salama Abdalrsul (Participant, Iraqi Women's Internship Programme, Women's National Commission): I am Salama Abdalrsul. I am a biologist, and a member of the 1000 Women Organization. We are dealing with women's rights, and especially with the women who are ex-political prisoners under the Saddam regime.

Thank you.

Mrs. Nassreen Rahim (Participant, Iraqi Women's Internship Programme, Women's National Commission): I'm Nassreen, from Kurdistan, north of Iraq. I work with a non-governmental organization that works toward enhancing women's rights and empowering women, building their capacity to get into public life and to work together to build a new Iraq, a democratic Iraq.

Thank you.

Mrs. Surood Mohammed Falih Ahmmad (Participant, Iraqi Women's Internship Programme, Women's National Commission): I'm Surood, from Kirkuk, Kurdistan, and a member of the worthy organization Women's Alliance for a Democratic Iraq. The organization is working to establish democracy in Iraq and to empower and involve women in political life.

Thank you.

Mrs. Taa'meem Abd-ul-Hussein (Participant, Iraqi Women's Internship Programme, Women's National Commission): I'm Taa'meem, from the south of Iraq. I am a technician, and I work with the international organizations that come to my city. That is my work, but my voluntary work is with civil society organizations. I am representing here the Defending Women's Rights society.

The Chair: Thank you. You are most welcome in Canada. I know that you've come here under an internship program.

It's time for questions, colleagues. Who would like to start?

Mr. Day.

Mr. Stockwell Day: This is a real honour for us. It is so exciting to see that you are here, especially when we look at the results of the election in January.

First, I just want to congratulate you, and thus back to the citizens of Iraq, on the tremendous courage that was shown by those who voted in areas that were under great threat, really, in some places. As a matter of fact, your percentage of turnout, the number of people who voted, was greater than in Canada's general election last June. And we have no fear about going to the polls. So I just want to thank you for being an example to us and for the tremendous work you're doing.

We hear reports of the ongoing “insurgency”, as they call it; in my view, it's really just brutal people wanting to revert to that regime. Is this insurgency more related to areas like Baghdad, or are there areas in Iraq where generally it's more peaceful now and more democratic? What's the balance there? Can you briefly tell us about the situation?

Mrs. Nassreen Rahim: Perhaps I can talk about my area. I live in the north of Iraq, which is totally secure. Proper security is available. There are no explosions, nothing like that. It's totally secure in the north. I can talk about Irbil, Dahuk, As-Sulaymaniyah.

There is a little bit in the Kirkuk area, because there are many people. There are others who are benefiting from this situation, because in Kirkuk there are different ethnic groups living together. But the real people, the ones who live there, are not the ones who are doing this. Many people were arrested, and many of them were from other countries, neighbouring countries. They are the ones who don't want Iraq to live in peace. In the north, though, it's totally secure.

Perhaps one of the others can talk about this as well.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Yes. You're from the south.

Mrs. Taa'meem Abd-ul-Hussein: Yes, I am.

Regarding southern Iraq, the religious movement or the religious organizations and institutions totally control the situation of the south. It is calm, but it is forbidden for foreigners to work, in my city especially. Therefore, for example, the UN organizations or the international organizations have 100% local Iraqi staff. If we want to meet with our foreign coordinators, we have to travel to Jordan or Kuwait.

● (1020)

The Chair: Good.

Are there any other comments on that question from Mr. Day?

Mrs. Zainab H. Salman: I think, in Baghdad, it's a little bit different because it's a mixture of the extremists and religious parties and the other scholars. In Baghdad, I think we have a mixture of different ethics that make it somehow stable in going about daily life, but this is threatened if we talk about security issues. In practising democracy, I think Baghdad is an example for other governments.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Madame Lalonde and Monsieur Paquette.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you very much for coming before this Committee. My name is Francine Lalonde and I am from Montreal, in Quebec. Montreal is the city where are located the offices of Alternatives, the organization where Ms. Langlois, who came with you works.

I was expecting you to make a statement. What questions could I ask you? There are so many. I shall ask you to tell me what are you two worst problems and your two biggest hopes?

[*English*]

The Chair: Good question.

Now, who wants to answer?

Mrs. Salama Abdalrsul: I think the most important thing we may talk about is the security situation. This is the biggest problem we are feeling.

In Baghdad, it is not as hard as it is in Najaf or Karbala or in the south. Still, we have the challenge now because there is the establishment of new laws, so there is a mixture of shariah and law. We want to avoid the shariah in the law in order to make everybody have the right to his religion.

Also, we are about to raise the awareness for women about the real Islam. I think it's for building, and it is not for death or killing. This is one problem.

The other problem I think is with the services that the government is providing to the people. These are the main problems I think: security and the services. That's it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Can I ask for other comments? Perhaps we could ask some other guests.

● (1025)

Mrs. Taa'meem Abd-ul-Hussein: I think one of the most dangerous things in Iraq now is focusing on races, for example, not thinking of it as a single country but focusing, for example, on the issue that the government must be a mixture of Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish. This creates more problems. Instead of having one ideology for the country that comes from a resolution of the conflicts between these races, they focus on having certain ratios for every race.

Thanks.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: And your hopes?

[*English*]

Your hopes?

Mrs. Ula A. Ibrahim: We hope that our government security will finish. We hope to live in this area, and we want the women to work without any threat. That's our hope.

Thank you.

Mrs. Nassreen Rahim: I hope we'll be able in the near future to create a new Iraq with a federal system where everyone would live together in peace. We are in Iraq a combination of different diversities. We have seen many examples during our visits to the U. K. and to Canada, so we hope to benefit from these models and apply them in Iraq.

Mrs. Surood Mohammed Falih Ahmmad: We were under the Saddam regime for more than 55 years, and during all these years we suffered more. Now we hope we can recover, fix our pain, so that we'll have peace. We need peace now because we need to live like other countries.

The Chair: Now we'll go to a question from Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you very much, and of course welcome. We're very pleased to see you, and we wish you all the peace in the world.

This lady indicated something about direction of government. I would just like you to expand a bit on that. You want a federal system with one direction, but you have some problem because of the different groups and how the government is put together. I'd just like you to address that.

Then on the human rights issues, during the Saddam regime, of course, women didn't play a big role, if I understand it at all.

Mrs. Taa'meem Abd-ul-Hussein: Yes, that's true.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: How do you deal with this attitude even if, pray to God, you do have peace? And you will through time. It must be a big job to change the direction or the view in the minds of so many people as to what they should actually do in life. What in fact are their rights?

We talk about human rights in this country. I would think it's a lot different talking about human rights in your country, and the right to work, the right to be involved in government. I'd just like you to expand on how you would work in order to change the attitude of the people in order to make sure they feel it's their right to be involved in decision-making and in the public sector or the private sector in business or whatever. I'd just like you to expand on that.

Mrs. Nassreen Rahim: I'll answer the second question. I come from the north, and we've been liberated since 1991. We've been working on this issue. It's true, it's been difficult for us. The first years we were totally oppressed because it's a male-dominated society. But little by little, the women realized and recognized their issue, that they should fight or work for bringing about their rights as women. We started by establishing a civil society organization, a women's movement. We all started to work together towards raising awareness about human rights, in particular women's rights, and to talk about the traditions.

One of our problems was that we didn't talk about our problems. One of the reasons was that everything was kept secret. So we started to make complaints and talk about, for example, female genital mutilation. It was a secret, not to be talked about. It's a family issue. It's a shame to talk about it. So we started to talk about it in order to know how to solve these problems. Now we have a large number of women's organizations and also other civil society organizations. Together with men, we are trying to raise awareness in all of our communities about these issues.

● (1030)

Mrs. Zainab H. Salman: It is more than that. Since the fall of Saddam's regime, we have established many women's organizations, each one concerned about a specific problem or specific categories of women. In Baghdad, maybe in Iraq, we have more than a thousand women's organizations, civil society organizations, men's and women's organizations. I think these organizations focus on some issues of the role of women in the new Iraq. I mean, they are working on this issue and focusing on the role of women in new Iraq.

One of the most important organizations, the U.S.-Iraq Women's Network, contains more than 88 women's organizations focusing on many different issues of women. This organization, the Baghdad Women's Program, which is my organization, focuses on grassroots women at the grassroots level, and it tells them to be more involved in political life. Also, through conferences and workshops, they are working to raise the awareness about the rights of women to be in political life or public life.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much. You are very much heroes to us, having lived through the oppression and war and instability. We're so thankful that you're here today to tell us a bit about your experiences.

What are your needs? How can Canadians, and how could Canada, help to bring about the kind of equality you're striving for in Iraq?

Mrs. Zainab H. Salman: I think the program we are in—passing through today and meeting with you—is a great example for our needs. Training and exchanging information between international organizations and our organization will be very useful for us. It's a big experience for us, because through 35 years, we didn't know anything about the world or how the democratic system works.

I think it's a great opportunity to be here now. If we can identify our needs, we can say we need training. We need some programs about adopting some system of federalism. We need to establish commissions that are related to the government, and also independent, to exchange points of view between the public and the government. I think this internship is a very great example. If we talk about a civil society project, we should talk about subsidy grants to train. If we talk about issues related to women, we need a grant related to training women to be more aware of all their rights, and maybe establishing organizations focusing on training or networking.

Mrs. Taa'meem Abd-ul-Hussein: I think you can work on two sides. You can work through the international organizations to promote the civil society in Iraq, and you can also affect the Iraqi government to call for human rights. I didn't hear that our government, since the transitional government was established until now, had called for gender equality or human rights. You can urge the government itself, and also the civil society.

● (1035)

Mrs. Nassreen Rahim: I can say another need is support to do some research. We think the field of research is very important. We don't have any data and information, and this is very important. As soon as we have researchers, we can identify the problems, and this is half of the solution. This field...no one is thinking about it; no one is supporting us. We think this is a very good area, if you think of it, to support our community. Also, another thing is to try to support projects that will enhance women's rights and build their management capacity and their capacity for their staff to do their work. This is also one of the needs.

Thank you.

The Chair: Now we'll go to Ms. Torsney.

Hon. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Thank you.

And congratulations. I was thinking, as you were giving us these very practical solutions, how we can ask the questions, whether it's through multilateral organizations demanding that gender equality be sought, or if in the establishment of statistics organizations we ask for the disaggregated data so that you have the ability to analyze the situation. We're especially lucky to have all of you here. You've clearly achieved an enormous amount of success in a very difficult situation, and I think all my colleagues commend you for that.

I was wondering, what is the level of participation? You clearly represent the top echelon of individuals. Are we seeing in your area the depth or the penetration of the women's organizations? Are the women participating at the level that you are? Are there other things we can do to help you? You've given us many practical examples.

As Madam Lalonde was asking her question, I was struck by how that was my question. Even across party lines, you know, we've found that we can focus on the priorities of people and not get caught up in testosterone-filled arguments about nothing. If we can help you in focusing on initiatives, please let us know.

What is the penetration you're having in each of your areas? Are you seeing in Baghdad success in getting lots of women to participate? Are there other ways we can help you?

Mrs. Zainab H. Salman: I think Baghdad has the higher ratio of women's participation. If we consider the security situation they suffer from, we should admit that we have very good participation in governance.

You asked about what class or level we represent. I think most of us represent the middle class level. Most of our organizations, not all, represent grassroots women who have the will to participate in public life.

You asked about the kinds of projects that can help. Through the period of Saddam's regime, 35 years, the women suffered from different problems. One of the problems is illiteracy. I think the United Nations has a statistical ratio of this. It's more than 60% among women. If we could establish a program to reduce this ratio, especially in the small towns around Baghdad, in the borders between the north and south, west and east of Baghdad, in the villages and towns that have no secondary schools—they usually just have a primary school for women, which is usually not attended—that would be very great.

Thank you. Maybe my colleagues will add something.

● (1040)

Mrs. Nassreen Rahim: In my area—I'm talking about the north—I think there are no restrictions on women's participation in all kinds of projects. Even in the rural areas, when we do income generation projects, they participate in these simple projects. There is a lot of participation. There are no obstacles.

Mrs. Taa'meem Abd-ul-Hussein: In the south, even religious organizations are institutions that need the participation of women. To prove that, Islamic values do not prevent women from such participation, so we make use of this advantage.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: We have very smart women here.

The Chair: Now we'll go to Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Macleod, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I also applaud the tenacity of women like you. I don't think that we, having been raised in this country, have any concept of the battles you have had to face. We appreciate you coming and sharing that with us. We have the greatest respect for your individual strength.

Taa'meem, you talked about being a member of civil society. Can you give us an idea of how that has grown? I guess I'm surprised that it is to the level you say it is. I'm very interested in how broad that civil society is, the number of people who are actually involved in it, and, going back to your previous comment, the role religion has played in that, if you could share that with us.

Mrs. Taa'meem Abd-ul-Hussein: The movement of civil society in my city started just at the fall of Saddam. It started in April 2003. Some of the organizations were established by a few members. Others were established through conferences. Some of these members during Saddam's time had previous concepts and previous affiliations to other movements, but they didn't appear in the society. So as soon as Saddam fell, these societies started to work.

Some of them were established with the assistance of the international organizations. Those who came from outside Iraq started to talk to people about building the civil society. Also, we have in our Islamic systems independent institutions that return to Hawza. Hawza is the highest religious school for Shiites. They have institutions to help poor people and publish Islamic instruction books and papers. I refer to either Hawza or to Islamic parties. We have two Islamic parties. We have Al-Majlis al-Al'a, the supreme council, which won the elections of the national assembly. We also have a Sadr movement, and they are very strong in my city. Since they've known about the 25% representation of women in Parliament, each one has tried to polarize and focus on having a group of women following them.

Regarding the other kinds of organizations, the independent women's organizations, they were started through international organizations—UN organizations, American organizations, or British organizations. They urged us to establish such kinds of organizations to lobby the government and to help our people understand, a link between the people and the government.

Mr. Ted Menzies: You didn't mention any Canadian organizations.

Mrs. Taa'meem Abd-ul-Hussein: In my city there's the Czech Republic and British and American organizations. I didn't hear about a Canadian organization in my city. But yesterday I met people from Canada who work for UNICEF.

● (1045)

The Chair: Thank you very much. We need to stop our meeting this morning. We have some committee business to do.

Thank you very much, all six of you, for being here to present to us. I hope that with your heavy schedule, your visit will be fruitful for you to build a wonderful and secure country.

We're going to recess for one minute.

Thank you.

● (1045)

(Pause)

● (1050)

The Chair: We have *les travaux du comité*. There's the presentation of the first report of the Subcommittee on International Trade, Trade Disputes, and Investment.

Mr. Menzies has said he wants to bring forward some amendments. I would like him to draft the amendments for the next meeting, and this could be given to the clerk. We're going to be able to proceed this coming Thursday if you all agree on this.

Mr. Ted Menzies: I would certainly like to consult with our subcommittee chair before we table it.

The Chair: We can postpone this one.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We'll go to the next one, resuming debate on the motion of Mrs. McDonough. Mrs. McDonough is not here at the moment; that means we are going to postpone it.

Sorry about that. Those are the rules.

The next one is an *avis de motion* of Monsieur Stockwell Day, that in the opinion of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the government should demand that the State of Israel be afforded the same right as any other member nation to participate in the deliberations of all United Nations bodies, and that the chair report the same to the House.

Are there any comments concerning this motion?

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, there are a number of points here in terms of the motion. Of course, I won't go into great detail about several sections in the motion. We've touched on some of these in the past, certainly in the House, in the late shows. In particular, the committee also recalls that at the World Health Assembly meeting in May 2004, both the U.S. and Japan voted—

Mr. Stockwell Day: I think Mr. McTeague is on the wrong motion.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Oh, you're doing Israel. Sorry about that. I went immediately to Taiwan.

Thanks, Stock.

The Chair: It's okay.

It's on Israel. Are there any comments concerning Israel?

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chairman and colleagues, I had some research conducted for me. I was informed that Israel was not treated differently from other nations. I would like to ask my colleague what it is he is looking for exactly.

[*English*]

The Chair: She asked you a question, Mr. Day. Go ahead.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chairman, the regional formations at the United Nations are allowed to choose from among themselves who will represent them on various committees or commissions. Israel, through its particular regional body, happens to be consistently outvoted by non-democratic nations—they are one of the only democratic nations in their particular regional body—and that effectively bars them from participation.

Now, the United Nations has another grouping—of western industrialized nations—that from time to time can allow another nation from another regional grouping to be part of their group. But it's a provisional thing; they don't have the same types of capabilities other nations do.

This is simply a recognition that anything that would bar Israel from being a full participant would only be a procedural item any other country would face, but there would be no other normal impediment to their participation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: In that case, Mr. Day, could you reformulate your motion? I understand that this is not a matter of law. I believe that because of those regional organizations which, I am told, are not institutional but informal, Israel has been deprived from the opportunity to participate and not from the right to do so. I would agree if you reformulate your motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Torsney.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: I was pleased, once again, that Madame Lalonde asked the question.

Of course, I'm inclined to support this, but it means nothing the way it's written. If the issue is what's happening within that geopolitical group, we should call it what it is.

The second thing is, if the subject of the motion is really to ensure it has access through WEOG, then make that the subject of the motion. Right now it's pablum.

I would love to be able to support it. I wish they had full participation, but I don't know that this has any meaning or any substance. If it's to chastise another geopolitical group, if it's to ensure full participation within that geopolitical group, or if it's to move participation within a geopolitical group, great. But let's make sure, for when the public reads this, we know what we are achieving as a committee.

● (1055)

The Chair: Mr. McTeague.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dan McTeague: I support the comments made by Ms. Lalonde who asked that the motion be reformulated and also the comments by Ms. Torsney concerning this request. We cannot ask for something that we already support.

[*English*]

I understand Mr. Day's motion, but it is already Canadian policy that Israel be able to exercise its full rights, so the demand is really for something we already support. It's what we call a practical tautology; it really means reinforcing what is already there.

I would be in complete agreement with Madame Lalonde's comments with respect to further clarity. I don't think we need to demand something we've already taken action on specifically and very clearly.

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm a bit confused myself by the motion in that the question still remains. We're talking about a United Nations body. This might be a specific motion that, if amended, would be more appropriate, but it is vague and casts judgment on the United Nations in its entirety. Given that, I'm concerned about the wording of the motion. We may be talking about a specific issue, but it's not there. What's here is a judgment cast upon the entire United Nations. I'd be concerned about that.

The Chair: Mr. Day.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chair, first of all, there is no attempt to chastise other geopolitical formations or the UN itself, as a matter of fact. Sensing the spirit around the table to embrace this as a notion but some difficulty with specific wording, I'm willing to look at some reformulation with Madame Lalonde as to some more specifics. I'll do that within the usual 24-hour time period so people have notice. I'm willing to table it at this point and work with Madame Lalonde on wording that makes it more acceptable.

The Chair: Ms. Torsney.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: The way it's written now, I'm not sure who we're demanding this of. I'm happy that the government should demand full participation, but who is it addressed to?

The Chair: That's good. I think Mr. Day understands. We have cooperation among all members and all parties, and I think it would be good to have it redrafted.

Now we have the last motion, again by Mr. Day, that the committee adopt the draft Taiwan-WHO report as its report to the House and that the chair present the said report to the House.

You have the draft motion. Are there any comments concerning the draft motion on the Taiwan-WHO report?

Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Thank you, and my apologies to Mr. Day. I was caught somewhere in the middle of the pages there.

I just want to go to the part of the motion that seems to give the impression.... It's the fifth paragraph and it says:

> The Committee also recalls that, at the World Health Assembly (WHA) meeting in May 2004, both the U.S. and Japan voted to include the Taiwan observership question in the WHA agenda, yet Canada on the contrary, despite the three above-noted resolutions, voted to exclude it

Canada does not sit on the steering committee of the assembly; it merely has a vote. When no consensus could be arrived at, Canada simply supported the obvious, and there was no consensus. This, however, does not preclude us from engaging in working with the WHO, as far as the international health regulations are concerned, to ensure there's a better exchange of information, both independently and bilaterally, between Canada and Taiwan that's already ongoing.

An envoy was sent recently to deal with the issue of SARS. We've met with epidemiologists from the public health agency to visit the centre for disease control. More important is the decision by the WHO to move this month to improve regulations that would have the effect of a universal clause of application, encouraging representatives of China to accept this proposal, and of course trying to find a pragmatic solution as to the adoption of allowing Taiwan.... I think that would be the right approach.

I will mention at the outset it's not completely clear how we will attain health information for Taiwan. In fact, Taiwan is merely seeking observer status. I want to make two points on the record, Mr. Chairman, for Mr. Day's benefit.

On April 21, the president of the Foundation of Medical Professionals Alliance, which rallies international support for Taiwan's WHA bid each year, was quoted as saying that entering the WHA under the name Chinese Taipei, or gaining observer status, simply overlooks Taiwan's sovereignty. This view was reinforced one day later when Taiwan government officials at the ministry of foreign affairs were quoted as saying that Taiwan "cannot accept any reduction in its status...even for the purpose of participating in the WHO".

These are fairly credible sources. Their position differs rather markedly from the past motivation for WHO representation, which of course is a matter of human rights. It's not a matter, in my view, of politics.

It would therefore be very difficult for the government to support a motion when the people it's designed to support are not entirely sure of what they want or why.

My concern is again about the resolution. Canada does not support the sharing of public information. We are trying to find a means by consensus of getting Taiwan to be in a position where they are not left out from international health regulations. For this reason I think it would be fair to say we are engaged with Taiwan to ensure it gets what it needs and its health capabilities are addressed, particularly at a bilateral level.

I will not support this.

● (1100)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McTeague.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Canada does not not support.... I lost the rest of the sentence, but it confused the heck out of me.

I support this motion. I'll second the motion on behalf of my party. No, it wasn't the translation; it was incomprehensible in English as well.

This is a question of public health. It makes good sense. We've had this committee already take a stand on the issue. We've had the House of Commons and the Senate take a stand on it. It is long overdue, and it is a question of public health concerns.

We had an avian flu outbreak last year in British Columbia that could have turned very ugly, and I think it is incumbent upon Canada to take its responsibility and support Taiwan's observer status in the WHA.

I would like to come back to an issue that arose earlier around Taiwan at this committee and just say for the record that last September Taiwan's foreign minister, Mark Chen, requested a transit visa via Vancouver on his way to the United States. Canada denied that request, and that visa was never issued. That was last September. That certainly contradicts comments that were made earlier at this committee.

The Chair: We'll find out the reality one day.

Mr. Peter Julian: The facts are quite different from the reality. So having clarified that, I support this motion, and I hope the committee will adopt it and move on.

The Chair: Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I also support this motion in the interest of public health in Taiwan but also in the interest of the province of Quebec and Canada. I think that it is in Taiwan's interest, but also in everyone's interest that they gain observer status. I believe that this is possible. Any way, as we have been reminded, the House has already spoken on this issue and I hope that a minority government will accept the opinion of the House and the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have all made comments on the motion of Mr. Day concerning WTA and Taiwan. All in favour of the motion?

(Motion agreed to on division)

● (1105)

The Chair: Mr. Cannis, the chair of the subcommittee on international trade, wants to say something.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I apologize. I'm here to present the report of the subcommittee on international trade on chapter 19 of NAFTA. If I may just add, it was unanimously approved at our last meeting by all the members, and with your permission I'd like to....

The Chair: I accept it, Mr. Cannis, but we discussed it earlier before your presence, and one of the members, Mr. Menzies, was not present when it was adopted at your subcommittee. Mr. Menzies would like to bring some amendments to the report itself. He's going to draft some amendments and we're going to discuss them at the next meeting, probably this Thursday morning.

Mr. John Cannis: May I respond Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Sure, you can respond.

Mr. John Cannis: I can appreciate that members have their privilege, but I'm puzzled, because in our last meeting we went through the report. I know Mr. Menzies wasn't available, but Mr. Obhrai was there. I'm inclined to believe there was a discussion. Knowing very well that the report was coming forward, all the issues were discussed and thoroughly covered that day, to the satisfaction of not just Mr. Obhrai. Mr. Peter Julien was just a little bit late due to unforeseeable circumstances, yet again we went through it to his satisfaction as well. We addressed some of his concerns—Monsieur Paquette's as well. We had unanimous...so I'm really puzzled at this.

The Chair: I understand, Mr. Cannis, very well, but we discussed this previously. It was adopted by the main committee unanimously. We're going to come back this coming Thursday on this report, because Mr. Menzies didn't read it. I would like to get, if possible, unanimity of the committee on chapter 19 of the report, because it's a very important issue.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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