House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

FAAE • NUMBER 013 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, June 20, 2006

Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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● (1555)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): I call this meeting to order, seeing that we have quorum.

This is the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we have a briefing session on small arms this afternoon.

We are pleased to have with us a number of different witnesses from a number of different organizations. We welcome Ms. Holguin, the advocacy officer of Oxfam Quebec. We welcome Mark Fried, communications and advocacy coordinator from Oxfam Canada. From Amnesty International, we have Hilary Homes, campaigner for international justice, security, and human rights. From Project Ploughshares, we have Ken Epps, senior program associate.

Many of you have appeared at committee before, so this is not something new to you. We generally give ten minutes for each one who makes a presentation and then go to five-minute rounds of questions.

We have been a little late in getting started because of the votes, so we may try to extend this a little if that's possible.

Anyway, the time is yours, Ms. Homes—or are you going to start, Ms. Holguin?

Welcome.

Ms. Lina Holguin (Advocacy Officer, Oxfam Quebec, OXFAM): Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I would first of all like to thank you for allowing the members of the Control Arms Campaign and Oxfam-Québec to express their opinion on the subject of the proliferation of weapons and what Canada can do to counter this problem, on the eve of the United Nations conference responsible for reviewing the progress that has been made in the implementation of the Action Plan intended to prevent, combat and eliminate the illegal trade in light weapons in all of its aspects.

We have distributed documents to you in which you will find a report on munitions that was published this week, as well as a press release on a survey we carried out in six countries on the proliferation of arms and other basic information on the Control Arms Campaign and on the Million Faces petition.

The United Nations review conference will take place from June 26 to July 7 in New York. It will assess the implementation of the Action Plan on light weapons adopted in 2001.

Oxfam-Québec works in countries often hit by conflicts and armed violence. Our work has allowed us to ascertain that the trade in arms is out of control and the human cost immense. Today, there are more than 600 million light weapons in the world. Moreover, 14 billion bullets are manufactured annually, that is more than two bullets for every man, woman and child on the planet. Because of a lack of adequate controls, these weapons and bullets find their way into war zones and into the hands of human rights offenders.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Haiti, partners of Oxfam-Québec have told us that even though these countries do not manufacture weapons, they are rife on their territory. In these countries, armed violence has contributed to the exacerbation of poverty, discrimination, illness and malnutrition, and has limited access to social services. We see that every year, African, Asian and Latin American countries spend $22 billion on average on the purchase of weapons. Half that amount would allow for every child in these regions to attend elementary school.

In several countries, Oxfam has also observed that women and girls are the hardest hit by the direct and indirect consequences of the proliferation of arms. In Darfur and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, rape has become a weapon of war. In Port-au-Prince, in Haiti, most rapes that are committed are armed offences.

Our experience has also taught us that it is possible to reduce armed violence through development and human intervention. In Darfur, in several displaced persons' camps, we distribute wood so that women will not be obliged to leave the camp in order to gather any, at the risk of being raped. In Cambodia, Oxfam-Québec provides vocational training to anti-personnel mines victims in order to allow them to earn a living and to return to the community. In Nicaragua, we have worked for the reinstatement of former fighters. In Rwanda, we have contributed to the prevention of conflicts by ensuring that farmers have better access to land.

At Oxfam, we believe that development cannot be achieved in an environment made unstable by conflicts, armed violence and the proliferation of arms. This is why alongside Amnesty International and the International Action Network on Small Arms, we launched the Control Arms Campaign in 2003.

The goal of this world-wide campaign is to urge states to sign an international treaty on the arms trade that would govern all conventional weapons. The adoption of a treaty based on the principles of international law would allow for a reduction of the human cost of the irresponsible transfer of weapons and prevent unscrupulous arms dealers from finding loopholes in the system.

Almost a million people around the world signed Control Arms Million Faces campaign. These hundreds of thousands of people, including over 10,000 Canadians, some of whom are members of Parliament, are asking governments to make real progress at the review conference in order to fight against the proliferation of light weapons, which is a true scourge on humanity. The Million Faces petition will be presented on June 26 to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

OXFAM and the Control Arms Campaign expect that during this conference, governments will incorporate a development perspective in arms control and will agree on new global principles aimed at regulating both the transfer of light weapons and that of munitions to areas where they risk feeding conflicts and preventing development.

We urge Canada to show leadership at the review conference by ensuring that global principles on the transfer of arms be the subject of discussions and that they be included in the final review conference document.

Finally, we ask Canada to support the negotiation of an international treaty on the arms trade to show proof of its commitment to peace, development and human security.

Thank you.

● (1600)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Holguin.

Madame Homes.

Mrs. Hilary Homes (Campaigner, International Justice, Security and Human Rights, Amnesty International Canada): I'm going to elaborate a bit on the human rights impact of small arms.

The supply of weapons is an international problem with local consequences. Small arms are present in every country of the world. They are used in every single armed conflict, and exclusively in most. Unfortunately, the problems arising from an unregulated arms trade are not limited to times of war.

We've seen widespread abuses of human rights that are both directly and indirectly attributed to the proliferation of weapons. That's why Amnesty International joined with our NGO partners for the control arms campaign, which Lina described.

When used according to international law, arms can have a legitimate use, and we're not disputing that. But far too often international and regional embargos are violated, or export controls fail, and arms are misused.

Arms, including some those collected through DDR—that is, demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration—programs, flow through regions as conflicts subside in one area and flare up in another.

We found that the availability of arms itself helps to fuel violence. Many small arms can be used by anyone with very little training, including child combatants, and the lack of training contributes to misuse, including excessive use of force.

As weapons have developed in sophistication, their lethality has increased. A few well-armed individuals can now cause death, injury, and fear on a massive scale. Killing becomes easier; it can be done from a longer range, with greater detachment, and less effort. This is powerfully demonstrated in the armed violence that often persists after conflicts have officially ended, but in situations where security remains elusive.

Arms remain or get into the wrong hands—be they criminal elements, warlords, rebels, the ever-expanding private security firms, or corrupt officials within the state security forces. In this context, it is difficult to convince individuals to turn in the weapons, when they see them as their only form of security.

The culture of violence ends up feeding on itself. It becomes a truly vicious circle, as everyone seeks to take matters into his or her own hands. In short, arms in the wrong hands do not give human rights and development a chance. Instead of creating space for dialogue and tolerance, they help keep the setting both hostile and tense.

I'll run through a few patterns of human rights violations.

More than half a million civilians are estimated to die every year from the misuse of conventional weapons, and that's timed out at one person every minute. More are killed and injured by small arms than by heavy weapons.

While much of the discussion of small arms focuses on killings and injuries, the human rights impact is actually far broader. Weapons are used for torture, either literally as the means for torture, or by threatening the use of force through small arms.

Armed sexual violence is widespread in heavily armed environments. Weapons can be used to facilitate systematic rape, which Lina mentioned in the context of Darfur. It's a war crime that is used to hasten the expulsion of national groups, by degrading women and spreading terror, fear, and humiliation in the general population.

Those who find themselves in refugee camps or camps for internally displaced people may not see an end to fear and armed violence, because many camps have become increasingly militarized. They are sometimes used as hubs for arms trafficking, or they are used as a source of recruitment for rebel forces or in fact national forces.

Small arms are also used in thousands of disappearances over the world. For example, in the former Yugoslavia there are still over 20,000 people whose fate is unknown. They disappeared in a context where small arms was being used to facilitate that disappearance.

Political activists, journalists, trade unionists, and peaceful demonstrators are frequently attacked by governments or other armed forces seeking to deprive them of their freedom of expression and association. For example, elections have been disrupted by armed violence in Zimbabwe, Kashmir, and several other countries.

Arms in the wrong hands also impact on a number of social and economic rights. They prevent access to hospitals and productive land, thereby effecting livelihoods, education, and marketplaces.

In this context, we see short-term effects, such as malnutrition and higher rates of child mortality. In the long term, you see broader pattens of illiteracy, higher risks of disease outbreaks, and tremendous impact on poverty. Indeed, this extends to poor governance.

Lastly, armed violence, whether actual or threatened, prevents aid from reaching those who desperately need it.

Warring parties may purposely block humanitarian assistance, using food or medical supplies as a military tactic. Sometimes aid workers, their convoys, their offices, and their programs are specifically targeted. Right now, the example of what happens in Darfur fits this pattern considerably. Of course, I could go on with a very long list.

I'm going to pass it over to Ken to talk about some of the solutions we're proposing.

● (1605)

Mr. Ken Epps (Senior Program Associate, Project Ploughshares): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to the committee for inviting us to speak here this afternoon.

Project Ploughshares is an ecumenical peace centre of the Canadian Council of Churches, based in Waterloo. We have advocated and worked to advance stricter controls on the international arms trade since our founding 30 years ago. We are a founding member of the control arms campaign.

Among our publications, Project Ploughshares produces an annual report on armed conflict, the latest edition of which will report that in 2005 the world endured 32 armed conflicts in 27 countries. From our conflict research, we know that irresponsible arms transfers are a proven catalyst for conflict. They increase the incidence of conflict, they prolong wars once they break out, and they increase the lethality and worsen the human and environmental costs of war. As noted by my colleagues today, irresponsible weapons trading also undermines development and feeds human rights violations worldwide.

Despite these dire impacts of the weapons trade, especially the trade in small arms and light weapons, there are no global agreements to control transfers of conventional weapons. Governments bear the primary responsibility for weapons trading, and it is governments that must agree to proper controls. The control arms campaign is calling for government action, including Canadian action, along two tracks.

First, at the UN review conference on small arms—referred to earlier—that begins in New York on June 26, governments must agree to a set of global principles to govern each state's authorization of small arms transfers. These principles should be based on states' existing responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law. These principles, when included in the UN program of action on small arms, would hold all governments to the same standards when they approve the transfer of small arms.

Second, the campaign is calling for governments to begin negotiations on a treaty on the transfer of all conventional weapons, preferably through a resolution of the United Nations First Committee later this year. As a treaty, the convention would be legally binding on all states. With the assistance of international legal experts, the control arms campaign has created a draft of such a treaty, which we're calling the “arms trade treaty”, based on the same global principles we are advocating for the UN review conference.

It is important to note here that we see these two tracks as separate but mutually reinforcing. The expectation is that the legally binding convention on the trade in all conventional weapons will involve establishing a new UN process, and an arms trade treaty may take years to negotiate. In the meantime, we want to see government action on transfers of small arms and light weapons within the framework of the existing process on small arms—hence the attention of the control arms campaign toward the introduction of global transfer principles into the UN program of action on small arms. Moreover, if such principles were adopted by the review conference that's beginning next week, they would strengthen the case for including the same principles in the negotiations of a convention for all weapons transfers.

The Canadian NGO members of the control arms campaign are calling on Canada to take a leadership role along both these tracks. We are urging Canada to press for global transfer principles at the UN review conference and to co-sponsor a UN First Committee resolution in October to begin the negotiation of an arms trade treaty.

We were very pleased to note that last week the standing committee approved a motion calling on the government to support both these initiatives.

Canada is well placed to take the leadership on arms transfer controls because it is party to several multilateral agreements and conventions that, taken together, commit Canada to the core principles of the proposed arms trade treaty. These commitments range from the European code of conduct on arms transfers, to which Canada has agreed in principle, to the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, which legally obligates Canada to reports arms exports and imports each year. Canada would thus be calling on other states to make commitments it has already made and to adopt standards to which it has already agreed.

At the same time, to strengthen a call for stricter universal standards for the transfer of conventional weapons, Canada needs to make improvements to its own export controls. Indeed, although Canadian military export controls are stricter than many, they currently do not meet all the standards of its multilateral commitments. In particular, Canada needs to adopt arms export control criteria that recognize and are consistent with its responsibilities under international law, such as its obligation to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity.

● (1610)

Canada could also make significant improvements regarding the transparency of its arms exports, including a more detailed and a more timely official annual report on the export of military goods. It is of concern that a country with Canada's arms-control advocacy record last reported arms exports for 2002.

Perhaps most importantly, Canada could address the most gaping hole in its arms export controls by requiring export permits and documenting the sale of military goods to the United States. The U. S. is by far the largest military export market for Canada, but it currently does not appear in official records of the sales of Canadian arms.

Members of the standing committee, the arms control campaign has brought together hundreds of civil society organizations and a million individuals worldwide to call for action on the global blight of irresponsible arms transfers. We believe it is time for Canada to work with other governments to do the same.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Epps

Thank you to all our presenters.

We'll begin on the opposition side.

Mr. Wilfert, you have five minutes.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, you've made representations, I presume, to the government. What response, if any, have you received with regard to your proposal?

Mr. Ken Epps: We have made representations. In particular, we have had many of our own members and other Canadians from across the country send in an e-mail petition calling on the Canadian government to adopt the two-track process that I mentioned earlier.

At last count, I think over 3,000 Canadians signed that petition, and it called for those particular actions. We have certainly made known, through that, the particular things we want to see the Canadian government pursuing.

Mrs. Hilary Homes: Each of our organizations or our heads of organizations have written directly to the Prime Minister.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: What kind of response have you received, if any, at the present time?

Mr. Mark Fried (Communications and Advocacy Coordinator, Oxfam Canada): To date, we have not received an official response from the government, although we expect we will. The minister has not had the opportunity to meet with us yet. We've requested a meeting.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, we know that when Canada put its mind to it, it showed tremendous leadership on the issue of land mines. The Ottawa convention had tremendous leadership in the past, and it would clearly seem that on an international arms trade treaty, you're looking for the same kind of leadership.

We talk about nuclear weapons, and we talk about other weapons that are out there. But I think the figure of 600 million, one for every ten people, is probably the most alarming and obviously leads to the type of instability that we've seen in places like West Africa.

Can you tell me, for example, what kinds of elements you'd like to see in the treaty? What kind of consensus do you see, if any? I've met with some representatives in the past. Is there any kind of formation of an international consensus on some of these elements that you could in fact inform the committee about?

Ms. Lina Holguin: Up to now, 45 countries have supported the idea of negotiating an arms trade treaty. There have also been a number of countries—I think it's over 68—that have agreed with the idea of global principles on transfer. Yes, there is an agreement.

Mr. Ken Epps: In your information, I think there is a list of the global principles we are talking about.

● (1615)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Yes, I saw those.

Mr. Ken Epps: As I mentioned, those were assembled with the help of international legal experts who drew on existing international law.

A basic point that we are making about those principles and the arms trade treaty more broadly is that we're essentially calling for states to follow existing commitments under international law. We aren't asking them to do anything beyond that. We are asking them to apply that to decisions on arms exports.

From our viewpoint, we do not see this as asking for something states haven't already committed to. It's only a matter of pointing this out and hopefully a recognition that this is an important process they need to undertake.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Given that all states act in the national interest and given the fact that you're asking them to do what many have already in principle agreed to but not applied, what do you think the reason is for the failure to actually implement?

Mr. Ken Epps: I think this could be a lengthy discussion. There are many elements, but certainly one element is that arms control negotiations generally have always been difficult for states, because they are so basic to states' interests. So anything that's being introduced, particularly from civil society, into that forum is seen with a certain amount of suspicion as interfering in the typical area that states negotiate themselves.

I think there are also industry interests that potentially can be problematic here. We know that the global arms trade at the moment is actually increasing, according to the latest results we've heard from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. It's now up somewhere in the neighbourhood of $50 billion a year. So there are significant industry and economic interests at stake.

We know there are political interests at stake. Arms, for the longest time, particularly during the Cold War, were seen as a way of influencing other states. During the Cold War, of course, they helped with the whole system of proxy nations, and I think there's some legacy of that.

There are a number of different possibilities, and I've mentioned only a few of them.

The Chair: Mr. Patry, just a comment, please. There won't be time for a question.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I just have a comment, because I was reading that in your targeting of one million signatures, you have just 12,000 in Canada. Is that correct?

As for myself, I'll be ready to sign it today, and maybe all the members of the committee will be ready as well. That's my comment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patry.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): We have done so. You can go get your picture taken. There is no doubt that we could contribute to a broader campaign of support.

My question is in the same vein as the last one asked and the response given by Mr. Epps. It is certain that states, and particularly the most powerful ones, consider that the transfer of weapons is a component of their foreign policy. This is obvious. How do you tackle the issue of the absolutely staggering stockpile of weapons that exists today? I did not have time to read everything in your document, but the existing stock of weapons represent an enormous problem, and we must avoid adding to that. You are making proposals and these should be part of a treaty, but what are we to do about the weapons that are currently in circulation?

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Epps: Certainly within the program of action on small arms and light weapons in particular there is attention to the issue of stockpiling and the need to ensure that stockpiles are well regulated and controlled and do not leak into the illicit side of the arms trade. What I don't think has been tackled and needs to be tackled, as you pointed out, is the situation of surplus weapons, which, again, particularly after the end of the Cold War, tended to be passed on. Not enough attention was given to actually destroying surplus weapons, which I think we need to see more of.

There has been a historical tradition of transferring on old systems when new ones are purchased. I think we need to break that cycle at some point so that it's understood, by states in particular, that as part of the process of getting rid of weapons that are problematic, they need to destroy them when they've stopped using them and not pass them on to others.

● (1620)

Mrs. Hilary Homes: What I would add to that is we do know that in this context and several others, in some countries technical assistance capacity to do this is a real issue, whether it's simply having the capacity to properly run DDR programs and gather the arms in the first place and safeguard those stockpiles, but then also carrying through with a process that truly does adequately destroy the weapons. People lack that capacity. One of the reasons you see, in a context like West Africa, that arms keep moving around is those that are gathered up don't always stay where they were supposed to until they could be destroyed or otherwise dealt with.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lina Holguin: When we talk about the importance of making a connection between development and the issue of arms proliferation, that means that we have to make greater investments in poverty eradication programs and take into account the presence of weapons. When we talk about development, this must be taken into account and we must support initiatives at the community level, at the local level where people are tackling these problems.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: In Haiti, for example, one of the major problems since 1994—and it has never been resolved—is precisely that there are more and more weapons that feed the conflicts and are supplied to crooks. And yet, a serious disarmament program has never been set up. A serious program could allow people to earn a living by other means than theft and the use of their weapons.

This could be seen as part of the problem you have been explaining.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Fried: If I could add, the one bright light in this is the effort by the west African countries that have declared their own moratorium on producing and importing weapons, small arms and light weapons. They've just made that permanent, which is something we applaud. It's an example to the rest of the developing world. I should say, for the entire world.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

To Mr. Van Loan.

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Thank you very much.

There has been some question of the government's position. Just so it's clear on the record for everybody, the Bloc has asked about this a couple of times in the House, and we have made it quite clear that this government is obviously interested in moving towards a small arms and light weapons treaty, if that can be achieved. The government will be working towards that in the round in June on the review of the program of action.

Obviously, we see significant problems caused by small arms and their widespread availability in conflict areas, in troubled areas around the world. Anything that can be done to reduce that is a positive thing. Of course, I don't need to tell you of a lot of the practical problems of hold-out countries going into that kind of a treaty.

It's one thing to have all the good guys play ball, but when the bad guys don't, that keeps things happening in illicit trade. Here you have illicit trades that aren't just state illicit trades, but you can have a lot of private individual actor kinds of illicit trading going on. Canada can't even control the illicit small arms trade into Canada by organized crime. So we see the problems at that level too. Those things are all practical.

I was hoping you could give me some hope that those problems can be overcome or at least positive progress can be made by pointing to stuff that has come out of that 2001 program of action. Are there any successes you can point to, where good things have happened in the world as a result of it?

Mr. Ken Epps: I can point to a very specific example, because it's one Project Ploughshares has been involved in. The Nairobi declaration and protocol process that emerged essentially since 2001 has drawn together east African and Horn of Africa countries to look at a regional approach to addressing small arms and light weapons. As a result of that, they've come to some standards on how to deal with movements of weapons in their region.

They now have a set of national focal points within their governments, which they didn't have previous to 2001, where there are people who are explicitly given the task of monitoring certain aspects of small arms that correspond to commitments under the program of action. There is also a regional office that is in communication with all those national focal points. There is a civil society network that's following and monitoring how these national focal points and the regional office are operating, which I think is equally important.

I think there we see a situation where a number of groups that now have some expertise in arms issues that didn't exist a few years ago are starting to work with local governments to try to address the small arms problem. So that's a very specific example of where there has been some movement forward since 2001.

● (1625)

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Notwithstanding the government's position, it will be interesting to see how you could achieve this. The concern would be about repressive regimes and others using this small arms control to repress further on that.

What are the safeguards to ensure that the pendulum does not swing to the other side? It's great to say that we're going to have a small arms UN convention. Everybody agrees with that. You appropriately highlighted all the damage it does and all the conflicts it causes. But we don't want to go where the pendulum swings slightly on the other side; we don't want oppressive regimes using this. What safeguards are you proposing or do you think your group can propose to ensure that we have a good arms control regime, not one that can be hijacked?

Mr. Mark Fried: I wonder if I understand your question properly. You're suggesting that people living under a repressive regime should get guns in order to rebel and fight against a violent revolution?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No. I'm asking for.... You see, in a fair exchange you can use exactly what you just said, but that's not what I'm trying to get at. I'm trying to get at what the safeguards are. Let's be realistic: we're not living in a dream world here; we know that it can be used. What are the safeguards in this arms control deal so that they're not used in a repressive manner?

Mr. Mark Fried: What these global principles would do would be to set an international standard by which national governments could be held to account. They would be held to account only to the degree that people in their own countries are going to hold them to account. Global standards will give a tool by which civil society movements in each country can insist that their governments live up to these agreements. The only real safeguard is a strong peoples' movement that is insisting on no more guns, or insisting on some control of these guns. That's part of the work we're involved in, supporting organizations overseas to do that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fried.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know the time is short.

I want to congratulate all three, Oxfam, Amnesty International, and Project Ploughshares, for the real leadership you provide around increasing public awareness.

I have some quick questions, as I know we're going to need to wrap up

With respect to the upcoming UN review conference, is there an NGO component, as is traditionally the case with most UN conferences like this one, and will your four organizations be represented?

Next, following the 2001 conference, there was the customary report from the Canadian government about its current position. I know I should really be asking the government this question, but I don't get to ask the government, so I'll ask you whether you've been consulted on that, which is also a fairly traditional approach.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think Canada is a big manufacturer of small arms and light weapons. What I believe we are, though, is a big manufacturer of a lot of bullets. I'm just wondering if you could speak to that issue about whether the ammunition is fully captured in the discussion about treaties and controls and so on, and whether there are things that Canada should be taking more seriously in that regard.

Finally, I wonder whether there is a possibility of your supplying some further information to the committee. I'm very concerned about your brief comment concerning Canadian exports to the U.S. escaping all transparency. I would ask you to comment and enlighten us in any way you can on that.

● (1630)

Ms. Lina Holguin: On the question of NGO presence at the UN, yes, there is going to be a huge NGO presence from all the different members of IANSA and representatives from many, many organizations. I'm going to be there for Oxfam Quebec and Oxfam Canada. There are many, many NGOs coming from all over the world, and there are going to be many activities.

As I said in my presentation notes, we're going to be delivering the "Million Faces Petition". I don't have time to circulate it, but here is the "10,000 Faces of Canada" part to Kofi Annan.

Mr. Ken Epps: You'll have to remind me of some of the other questions, starting with the exports to the U.S. Were you asking for further details on that?

Ms. Alexa McDonough: In terms of the transparency and disclosure of that information, could you comment further? And if you possibly have some further information, you could share it with committee members in writing.

Mr. Ken Epps: The situation is that there's a special arrangement between Canada and the U.S. in terms of military trade. As a result, there are no export permits required for the transfer of military goods across the border. Because the current process of monitoring arms exports in Canada is based on following export permits, that is why that particular trade cannot be monitored.

Project Ploughshares has tried to estimate that trade, based on other sources, including the Canadian Commercial Corporation, which operates as a go-between for quite a number of the contracts for military goods between Canada and the U.S. That's why we know those exports are such a large part of Canadian trade. We can estimate the size of that trade at about twice the volume to all other countries combined, so it is a very large component of Canada's trade.

On the issue of bullets and ammunition, that certainly is something we would like to see covered by an arms trade treaty, and a small arms agreement on transfers as well. It's currently being left out of negotiations in the UN process, but there are governments —and certainly NGOs—who want to see that back in the negotiations and dealt with.

In terms of NGO input into the national committee's report and Canada reporting on its commitments under the program of action, yes, we did have input into that process. In fact, the three of us here were represented at the national committee meeting, where we had input. That tradition is being maintained.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: But at this point, do you know what the report and recommendations of the Canadian government are, or do you go to the review conference to find out?

Mr. Ken Epps: That's a good question, to which I don't have a full answer. We certainly saw the draft report as part of that process, and our understanding is that there will be some amendments to that draft report, but not significant ones. We haven't actually seen the final document. I can only assume that it will be tabled at the review conference.

● (1635)

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your presentation.

When you're speaking in the same breath about Canada, Guatemala, and Haiti, and are talking about problems with arms—with your statistics saying that some 68% of people in Canada, or 92%, think there should be better control of arms, even in Canada—I think we should really be looking at apples and oranges when comparing the two. Here in Canada, we have very tough and stringent laws for licensing and training to be able to have a firearm, and we have limitations that you can't have automatic weapons and assault weapons unless you have specific licensing for them. But when you're talking about six out of ten people thinking it is too easy to obtain a gun in Canada, is this statistic intended for the legal attainment of firearms or their illegal attainment?

Mr. Mark Fried: I'd be happy to answer that, because this is a poll we commissioned. It is an opinion poll of people's sense of things. Presumably it refers to illegal and legal, but people sense that it's too easy to obtain a weapon. In each of those countries, people overwhelmingly felt it was too easy to obtain a weapon.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I think you know we well recognize the fact that there has to be a curtailment of the illegal firearms coming in across the border.

Also, when you're talking of the second of your accepted principles, including the "prohibition on the use of arms that are of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering", or the "prohibition on weapons that are incapable of distinguishing between combatants and civilians", are those not really all forms of rifles, shotguns, handguns, pistols, and not just limited to military-style assault weapons? You're really talking about a virtual ban on every form of firearm that is made.

Mr. Mark Fried: First, we're not talking about a ban on the manufacture of weapons; we're talking about regulation of the transfer of weapons.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Transporting and shipping between countries.

Mr. Mark Fried: We're saying that for arms that are going to violate international humanitarian law, which particularly applies to conflict situations, there should be regulation of the transfer of those sorts of weapons into conflict situations.

Mr. Peter Goldring: When Canadian sportsmen want to buy new shotguns or deer rifles—those, of course, are imported from other countries—does this not apply to other countries that are shipping these sports weapons into Canada?

Mr. Mark Fried: I'm quite certain that any global principles that are adopted would allow sportsmen to obtain whatever rifles they wished.

Mr. Peter Goldring: As well, Oxfam was involved in the Haiti interim cooperation framework. This was done several years ago, in 2004. At that time it identified the disarmament and collection of what looked like 25,000 weapons to be collected and destroyed. Do you have any idea how many of those were actually collected and destroyed? What is your opinion on the progress of that?

Mr. Mark Fried: We'll have to get that information for you.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Can we assume not very many?

Mr. Mark Fried: Do you know?

Ms. Lina Holguin: I don't have the answer to that.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Are you aware of the estimate as to how many rifles and assault weapons there are in Haiti? Do you have some kind of estimate for other parts of the world?

Mr. Mark Fried: There are lots of them. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but certainly there are plenty of weapons.

Mr. Peter Goldring: If you're going into the same numbers you were before, which is about one weapon for ten people, that would seem to suggest there are 800,000 there, and removing 5,000 would really be a drop in the bucket, wouldn't it?

Ms. Lina Holguin: We published our report in January specifically on Haiti and the presence of arms there. Unfortunately, I can't remember the numbers from that report, but we can certainly send you the report we produced on Haiti.

Mr. Peter Goldring: If the number is that high, producing a report here with a goal of removing only 25,000 would hardly have any effect on the situation at all.

Mrs. Hilary Homes: It is a challenge to start to do disarmament and gathering, particularly in a context like that, where capacity is a question.

I would remind people, in the context of the land mine campaign that was mentioned earlier, the scale of land mines within the world meant that it was going to take a period of time to start to eradicate them. Initially, there were particular targets set to demonstrate there was political will in the building of capacity.

I think when we look at it in a context like Haiti, it isn't going to happen overnight, but it's important to have those benchmarks. We could say progress is finally being made, in that capacity and political will is finally there. It's going to start with a small amount, and that's a particularly challenging national context.

● (1640)

The Chair: Mr. Fried.

Mr. Mark Fried: I think it's important not to be overwhelmed by the numbers and the size of the problem. We're not going to fix this problem at this UN conference, but we have a unique opportunity to make some progress, to begin to set some standards that can then be carried forward. I think it gives us a step forward that we can carry forward and begin to tackle this. It's an overwhelming problem, but we have to move forward, and here we have a unique opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: If I may, Mr. Chair, I think you're running into a problem that this committee has for some time been studying Haiti and we've heard evidence that one of the biggest problems they're encountering there is the question of order and arms in places like Cité Soleil. According to the police we've heard from, very little progress has been made on disarming. That's why there's some frustration here, and you just happened to run into that.

The Chair: Unfortunately, our time is out on that.

Madam Guarnieri.

Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator Dallaire has written that no one should live in fear of armed violence, yet guns and small weapons are readily available in country after country. Simply put, the arms trade is out of control, fuelling conflict, poverty, and human rights abuses worldwide. His view is that we have to do something to help change that, which certainly highlights some of the frustration the committee feels. That is the reason why Senator Dallaire has lent his support to Oxfam, Amnesty, and Ploughshares in their certainly commendable efforts.

In Canada, we have spent something close to $1 billion on gun control, yet very little has been spent on controlling the flow of arms to developing countries, where thousands are killed.

You talk about standards, regulations, export permits. Can you give us some idea of what specific things you think Canada should undertake in order to stem the tide of arms and the volume of tragedy they cause?

Mr. Ken Epps: There are some specific changes we would like to see in Canadian export controls, and I made some reference to those. I think it would serve Canada well, not only for making sure it isn't contributing to the problem, but also for setting a standard for others. We look to Canada to do that, as it has done with the land mines issue.

There is also quite a range of areas within the UN program of action that could help with this. In particular is the whole issue of international assistance and cooperation, which many developing nations are calling for. They're saying “We have a problem. We know it's there. We want to try to deal with the weapons that are circulating in our region or our country, but we just don't have the resources to deal with it. We need assistance.”

That's also where Canada could contribute. It could contribute directly through its own programs of assistance, but also through multilateral programs and institutions like the World Bank, and so on, where it has some influence.

Hon. Albina Guarnieri: Our research notes say that in March 2006 you wrote, “In the international arena Canada has been an exemplary and consistent advocate...”. Then you went on to say, “In its own house, however, Canada has been less than thorough...”.

Where are our failings, and what would you want us to look at and address to overcome these failings?

Mr. Ken Epps: I would just repeat some of the things I said earlier. Canada's export controls need to be tightened up, and I've listed some of the areas in that paper where that could occur. But Canada can also show some leadership on this issue, because it does have a well-deserved reputation for dealing with arms control issues in the international arena. It has the land mines treaty as an example of where it has done some exemplary work. So quite apart from the issue of getting its own house in order in dealing with the export controls, there is also work to be done by becoming an international leader.

● (1645)

Hon. Albina Guarnieri: Would anyone else like to add to that?

Ms. Lina Holguin: I just would repeat what all of us have said already, that at the next review conference at the UN Canada should show leadership and ensure that the global principles and transfers are inserted in the final document, and that we finally hear a statement from Canada on an arms trade treaty.

We understand that Canada supports it in principle, but we haven't heard any statement from Canada. We have a specific opportunity at the UN, but the G-8 is also coming. At the last G-8, at Gleneagle, there was talk about an arms trade treaty, so hopefully in July we will have a wonderful month of good news related to dealing with the proliferation of arms.

The Chair: Thank you.

Just to correct the record, Mr. Epps, you said that this committee passed a motion last week supporting the control or even banning of small arms trade. Were you making reference to this committee?

Mr. Ken Epps: Yes.

The Chair: I think that motion has been put on the order paper but it hasn't been brought forward. Is that right? Yes. So just to correct the record there, we have not passed any motion at this point.

Mr. Fried, you made reference to public opinion in Canada and the question that was asked. What was the question? It was on the acquisition of firearms in Canada.

Mr. Mark Fried: Yes. We did an opinion poll over the last couple of months in six countries on people's attitudes toward controlling the international trade in small arms and light weapons. I'll dig out the actual question itself. There were a number of questions. One was, "Do you support better controls on arms coming into the country?" In Canada, 92% supported better controls on that.

Another question was, "Is it too easy to obtain a gun in a country?" On average, 62% of people in the six countries said they thought it was too easy to obtain a weapon.

There were a number of questions.

The Chair: Do you believe it's too easy in this country to legally acquire a firearm?

Mr. Mark Fried: I really don't know; I've never tried.

The Chair: Canada is probably one of the toughest countries in which to legally acquire a firearm. You need to have a criminal check. You have to pass an exam on firearm safety and receive a possession licence.

So I wonder to what end questions like that would be asked.

Mr. Mark Fried: Apparently, very many people think it's too easy to obtain one. They may be referring to illegal ones, because there are many illegal weapons circulating, as we know.

The Chair: I think we would all agree that it's illegal, but the problem is that the question didn't specify that.

Madam Holguin.

Ms. Lina Holguin: I am Colombian. About the poll, it is people's perception. Lately we've been hearing a lot about Toronto and guns, so people's perception is that guns are available, and they fear that.

I come from a country where you live in constant fear of guns. You know that you cannot drive back there and say whatever to the other driver because you could be killed just for that. So I think it's people's perception of that.

As a Colombian and a Canadian citizen, I'm very glad to be living here without having the fear of guns being present.

The Chair: We want to thank you for being here with us today.

We will suspend, and then ask our next group of witnesses to please come to the committee table.

● (1649)

(Pause)

● (1655)

The Chair: We're going to resume our afternoon session.

Today we are pleased to have, from the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation, Pierre Racicot, chair of the board of directors. We also welcome Michel Chaurette, the executive director, and Thérèse Bouchard, the director of the human rights, peace, and democracy unit.

We will give you ten minutes to make your presentation, but I just want to make sure you are able to stay a bit past 5:30. Thank you so much.

The time is yours. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Racicot (Chair, Board of Directors, Centre for International Studies and Cooperation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I thank the members of the committee for having invited us to participate here today.

First of all, I would like to say, on behalf of the members of the board of directors of the Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation, the CECI, that we strongly support the efforts of our organization to assist Haiti in its sustainable development. CECI is the most committed Canadian NGO currently in Haiti. From the perspective of the board of directors, this position includes certain risks, because it is very difficult to do sustainable development in Haiti, but we unconditionally support it and I wanted to say so today.

The second thing I want to mention—and I am speaking as an individual—is that in a past life, I was a CIDA vice-president. For a four-year period, from 1993 to 1997, I was vice-president for the Americas. I was therefore personally involved in the whole crisis that resulted in the landing of the American Marines, the return of Aristide, and the election and swearing in of Préval. These are all events that I experienced.

At that time, when I was responsible for the implementation of a Canadian program of cooperation with Haiti, the challenge was enormous. We were not altogether sure how to handle the dynamics. Even today, now that I have somewhat left those issues behind as president of the CECI board, I ask myself the same questions. It is extraordinarily difficult to carry out sustainable development projects in Haiti. It is possible to offer humanitarian aid. We are able to do that almost anywhere. But to do sustainable development, that will bring about the transformation of Haitian society and its values in order to create a society that will move towards sustainable development, is extremely difficult.

However, I do not think that Canada can choose not to act in Haiti. We have an aid program, and Haiti is the poorest country in our own hemisphere. I believe that Canada has particular obligations as far as Haiti is concerned, of which we cannot free ourselves. We are in a difficult situation where we are trying to find a way to help Haitians to develop sustainably. Based on my 30 years' experience at CIDA, I believe that the only way to do so is to be patient, because there are no shortcuts. We will have to work quietly with the people in order to try and empower them. In English people talk about empowerment, and I believe that word best expresses my thinking. Through a slow partnership process, we will be able to get them to see the capacity that they themselves have to take the situation in hand and very slowly establish a true democracy.

We currently have in Haiti the mechanisms of a democracy. However, we do not have a real democracy in the sense that the people do not have a broad enough base of knowledge and the capacity to get information. They do not feel empowered to vote, to make decisions, to do what we as a civil society are doing by meeting with you today and answering your questions. This does not exist in Haiti, and it is something that NGOs like CECI can contribute. This is why the board of directors unconditionally supports CECI's efforts in Haiti.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Racicot.

Madame Bouchard.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Thérèse Bouchard (Director, Human Rights, Peace and Democracy Unit, Centre for International Studies and Cooperation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have just returned from Haiti, where I was providing training on negotiations to farmers in a particularly violent area. I have been going to Haiti since 1965. So it is a country that really speaks to me and that very often requires having the courage not to lose hope. I would like to talk about the political environment and stabilization, as well as some development challenges.

As regards the political environment, I would like to start by saying that there is currently a disagreement or some ambiguity about Canada's relations, or the perception Haitians have of Canada, and the perception some Canadians have of Haiti.

There are two aspects. Canada has always been well perceived in Haiti, but there are two aspects that are perhaps the nature of the perception, or of the decision-making, that have led some people to think that Canada played a role in what they call the coup d'État that forced Aristide out of power. So for some people, it was a coup d'État, and Canada does not normally act that way. Perceptions are very important in Haiti, and that is something we will have to manage.

I ran right into the second area of disagreement when I was in Haiti, when I was told that Canada was going to accuse Jacques Édouard Alexis of crimes against humanity. I think Canada should clarify those aspects. As a human rights activist, I find that we must avoid misusing the term “crimes against humanity”, as it is a very strong term. Yes, we must pursue people who have committed crimes against humanity, but we must be very careful when using terms like that. So that should probably be clarified, as there are people who are going to throw that back at us in the context of our relations with them.

As a Canadian NGO, we have always benefited from Canada's good image, but we can also suffer from ambiguous perceptions that Canada is encouraging with this message. Therefore, Canada must clarify its position, and that is perhaps a challenge for it.

The CECI did a two-year political dialogue project, in 1997 and 1998, with the leaders of the most important political parties in Haiti. That enabled us to become quite familiar with the political class in Haiti and the existing challenges. If it is possible to highlight something positive following the recent elections, it is the stated willingness to include different political parties. I think that is a positive aspect that we can support. Even if there were 30 presidential candidates — finding 31 potential presidential candidates in Haiti seems like quite a challenge to me — we saw several political parties merge for the election, which is already a step in the right direction. At least five or six political parties are now represented in cabinet. That is something that the Canadian government and Canadian cooperation should encourage.

The Parliament does not have well-established customs and a political operational culture. That is another challenge, and we should support the Haitians in their efforts to deal with it. Since we have supported the efforts for democratization and since Haiti is returning to constitutional normality, it is important for us to put in place the necessary means for that to succeed. In a democracy, that must mainly be done through the jurisdiction of the elected officials in the Haitian Parliament. And that is an invitation to do development work.

I would also like to talk about what I see as the greatest challenge in Haiti: stability. The previous group spoke with great expertise about security in Haiti, but I believe that the greatest barrier to security is poverty. That is why development programs must have objectives that include justice for the poorest people, who are manipulated from elections to coup d'État, who are always targeted by charismatic speakers. The time has come to take that action, as I do not know how long they will remain peaceful. Haiti has a culture of violence and the poorest people are still subjected to it. It is very important, for the long-term security of the country, to work on curtailing the causes of violence.

● (1700)

There are also armed gangs. The situation in Haiti is quite paradoxical. There are lots of weapons in circulation, and it became an “attractive” industry in about 1995. The industry is doing quite well. When your business is to provide security guards, it is to your advantage for there to be insecurity. It creates jobs. That must also be looked at. It is linked to the issue of job creation and the challenge of finding employment. The job is interesting and stable and comes with some power: security guards wear a uniform and carry a gun. So insecurity leads to job creation, but there is always insecurity. I would say that even if there are a lot of weapons in circulation, very few people have them. There is considerable insecurity in Haiti, but do not be led to believe that the majority of Haitians are the source of insecurity. It is a small group. We know where they are and what their interests are. That is the big paradox.

Under MINUSTAH, armies from around the world are there but have not yet started disarmament. What are we waiting for? It is very important. And we know where the gangs are. There are even streets that are points of entry in these neighbourhoods. I am not saying it is easy, but these people are prepared for war. What are they waiting for? What mandate have they been given? That is the big debate among the police forces, who are frustrated. The international police force intervenes, and the national police force is doing its best. It has gone through different stages and is now well supported by the international police force. Canada has done good work in that area.

What mandate has MINUSTAH received, and what are people waiting for to take action? The ambiguous role of MINUSTAH is one of the things that is discrediting the international community, including Canada. People are wondering what they are doing.

We saw that here, when a Canadian citizen was killed and someone from MINUSTAH was photographed at his side. That is a source of shame here, but imagine it there, in that country, when people see MINUSTAH's lack of authority every day. I think we must ask ourselves some questions, and we can come up with the answer. It is the duty of the international community to intervene to protect the people, and it is a good thing that the United Nations is doing that, but one might wonder if it has not just become a manpower placement industry for the poor countries that send soldiers. Regrettably, I must say that these are people who, in their own country, are not efficient and who have now been given the mandate to protect the Haitian people. Haitians must not be considered less than nothing. They deserve security as much as anyone else. We must send them competent people to do that job. In summary, MINUSTAH must have a clear mandate, and the personnel assigned to the task must be competent. So with political will, there is a way of stopping the armed gangs.

One of the issues that must be considered in the short term is integrating the Famille Lavalas into politics. We know that Aristide is abroad and that he still has substantial amounts of money to keep lots of people busy. Some members of the Famille Lavalas think they have come out ahead with the current government. Even former President Aristide believes that, even though another person, Mr. Bazin, was supposed to represent his party. There is ambiguity among Aristide's supporters: they wonder if this government is theirs or not. They will find out when the decision is made regarding Aristide's return.

● (1705)

That is not a decision that Haiti can make on its own. It is not that the Haitians are unable of making that decision alone, but the international community will undoubted get involved.

Canada must give considerable thought to integrating all Haitians into Haitian political life without provoking renewed chaos. In that regard, the whole issue of impunity must also be examined. It is very important to take steps that are justified, and law-based, and not to take sides. Impunity has reigned in Haiti for a long time. The justice system is very weak. Therefore, for the security of the country, it is important for people to know that the decisions that made are based on the law.

And then there is a former prime minister, Mr. Neptune, who has been rotting away in prison for more than two years, I believe, and who has not yet been tried. We must look into that. Is he paying for others? Are there valid reasons for keeping him in prison? To stabilize the country, justice must be done to the Famille Lavalas and to the people who stand accused.

Allow me to go back to the issue of development challenges. When we talk about development, we talk about social and economic development, which is important, but we forget about culture. When we talk about development, we think about change. Sometimes, some aspects of culture must also change. Mr. Racicot said that we had to stay in Haiti for the long term. I would say that we will have to remain there for the very long term. We are thinking about reinforcing government institutions and state institutions. That is important, but we must also work on structural attitude change. I will venture an interpretation of some cultural aspects in Haiti. Haiti is proud, rightly so, of having been the first black republic to be emancipated, and the first country in the Americas, after the United States, to have achieved independence. But the winning strategy has become mythical over time. What was, at one point, a good strategy has become a myth. It was based on what we call marronage, in other words and escape. If we want to build democracy in Haiti, we must first build on trust, on the trust of people who talk to each other, who tell each other things even if they disagree. What has become mythical, what we call marronage, is the art of evasion, and that is highly valued in Haiti.

Imagine the challenge! If we want sustainable development in Haiti, we must also deal with certain cultural structures, and that will be dealt with in the longer term. I said that one of the causes of instability and insecurity is poverty and that we therefore need to work on development. Decentralizing to focus on local development, which is one aspect of the plan introduced by the new prime minister, appears to have some advantages. Decentralization began in Haiti several years ago, but the necessary material resources were not allocated to it. It is very important for the local governments have the resources they need to take action and show the people in their communities that changes can be made.

I think that we must also have a long-term approach to education, both to train the trainers and for primary education. We have projects like that. For example, we help children to resolve their own conflicts in school; children act as mediators among each other. We are trying to develop a culture of dialogue, a culture of trust, a culture of openness, and a culture of negotiation.

● (1710)

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Bouchard, we just want to make sure we leave enough time for questions.

Does Monsieur Chaurette have a comment too? Do you want to sum up in a minute?

Mrs. Thérèse Bouchard: No, I'll leave Monsieur Chaurette to sum it up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Chaurette (Executive Director, Centre for International Studies and Cooperation): I am going to make four recommendations.

Here is the CECI's first finding. Since the 1970s, we have been present in Haiti continuously, and we have seen four rounds of bilateral negotiations between Canada and Haiti. When the government is elected and legitimate, all of the attention is focused on the relationship with the government. When the country is in crisis, the attention is focused on civil society. We are taking the liberty of telling the Canadian government that it must recognize that a long-term relationship with Haiti must include both the government and civil society. We must stop thinking that the country is not in a crisis because there is an elected government. Haiti is a country in crisis, and it will continue to be that way for a long time. Electing a government will not change anything. That is our first finding, and I would like us to discuss it.

Secondly, real action must be taken at the local level. Despite the embargos and the crises, CECI has always been successful in Haiti, because it made a decision to act at the local level. It is very important to maintain action that supports local development. That is also where you find the training grounds for democracy. In the short term, it is not Parliament, but organizations that will enable people to develop self-esteem, a sense of cooperation, and, projects. These are organizations that are currently involved at the local level. That is a dimension we are proposing.

Thirdly, we must focus on women. Based on our experience, our involvement in support of women's organizations has been much more successful, even during times of crisis.

Finally, there must be an economic project; Haitians must have employment. Too much attention is given to politics and not enough to employment. Therefore, in the short term, let's support the strategies of the government, that wants to put in place a program for social appeasement, an employment program — we have already talked about security — and let's put in place measures to support and protect the Haitian economy.

We work in Artibonite, in the area where rice is grown. As long as the United States continues to dump subsidized American rice, appeasement and peace in Haiti will be impossible. Transposing the international economic model on Haiti will lead to failure, to an economic disaster. Special measures are required to protect Haiti's economy.

Thank you.

● (1715)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Chaurette.

We will go to the opposition side first.

Mr. Patry, you have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you very much for being here.

My first question is to the three representatives from the CECI. You got some help from Luck Mervil, who raised money in Quebec, during the natural disaster. Can you provide the chair of the committee with a list of all the locations where you work in Haiti, in all areas?

You talked about negotiating with farmers. You also talked about training. Can you tell us what specific areas you are involved in in all regions of Haiti? I do not want to know that today, because it will take too much time, and I want to ask some questions.

My second question is for Ms. Bouchard. You talked about two aspects of the perception of Canada. You talked about Aristide. Was it a coup d'État or not? We know full well that Aristide filled his pockets well and that especially in the greater Montreal area, he is supporting people who are advocating his return to Haiti. You said that we should support the Famille Lavalas' return to politics. These people ran in the election, and only some members were elected. They are not part of the government, because they did not elect enough members. You said we should think about the return. Do you not think that if Aristide were to return to Haiti, to Port-au-Prince, it would instead represent a return to chaos?

Secondly, regarding Prime Minister Jacques Alexis, you said that we needed to be careful with the way we use human rights. Given the way that you stated that, I gathered that you disagreed with Canada's decision to not allow him to come to Canada, not as prime minister, but as a citizen to visit his family in Montreal. I got the impression that you disagreed with the government's decision. I do not know why he was not allowed to come. We made that request two years ago, and it was refused. Do you know something about that that we, as parliamentarians, do not know?

● (1720)

[*English*]

The Chair: Maybe we'll get our guests to answer the question. If there's time we'll go to Mr. Martin, but if not....

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Chaurette: I will try to be brief. The CECI works mainly in the Artibonite, Gonaïves, and Saint-Marc regions. These regions, along with Port-au-Prince and the northeast near the Dominican Republic, are part of the hottest regions in Haiti, politically speaking. We also work in Port-au-Prince.

We work primarily on local agricultural development programs with groups of agricultural producers. We are also working on the local governance plan with local elected officials and various local governance structures. That is our range of activities. As part of this range of activities, we also sometimes provide humanitarian aid, if there are crises. We do major campaigns at that level. Each year, we mobilize considerable resources for Haiti, in other words, money and volunteers to work in Haiti. These volunteers provide assistance not only for local development but also to Haitian institutions. One of the strategies is to support civilian organizations and decentralized state institutions in regions that are extremely impoverished and very weak.

We are also involved in the areas of democracy, culture, peace, mediation, and conflict prevention. We work primarily with human rights advocacy organizations. Moreover, we also work within structures that provide training, like Université Quisqueya.

Our third area of activity is health care. We work in particular on AIDS prevention and developing the Ministry of Health.

Our action is quite diversified and broad-ranging, since we work with funding from various Canadian sources, the World Bank, funds from Europe and the government. Our NGO is very operational.

I would like to conclude by saying that we often do short-term reconstruction work as part of what we call the Employment Intensive Investment Program, or EIIP, to create jobs in the short term for the people. That has enabled us to do rural infrastructure work and work in the area of building social infrastructure.

The CECI's action is highly symbolic. The theme of our annual report this year was Haiti. Our patron and the main spokesperson for our work is a Haitian-Canadian, Luck Mervil. Haiti is extremely important for us. The work that we do there inspires what we do elsewhere, and what we do elsewhere inspires our work in Haiti.

For example, we have done work in community security in Central America, and we hope to be able to repeat that in Haiti. The military approach to security in Haiti has proven a failure. It did not work with MINUSTAH and others, but it will perhaps work with the people.

[*English*]

The Chair: Very quickly.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Thérèse Bouchard: Thank you for your question. It gives me an opportunity to clarify what I said. While I said that the issue of Aristide's return needs to be dealt with, it is not necessarily to enable him to return. In fact, personally, I believe that would lead to chaos.

However, a trial must be held, the situation needs to be clarified. That is what I meant when I talked about impunity. We must know why he was ousted. The trial must be conducted. It would be a good reason for him not to return. I am not sure that many people want him back, but his supporters are very virulent when they speak.

That is what I mean when I say we must look at that. It does not mean that he should go back. However, the situation needs to be looked at in accordance with the law.

As regards Mr. Alexis, like you, I do not know why... I worked with Mr. Alexis on two occasions when he was a professor at Université Quisqueya. He worked with us putting in place a negotiation program for conflict prevention. Based on my experience, he was someone who sought dialogue and non-violent solutions to problems.

I would like someone to explain things to me. As a Canadian citizen, I do not like being told that I cannot be given the reasons why.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Bouchard.

I'll go to Madame Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I would like to clarify some small things. A little earlier, you talked about armed gangs. You said that these people were involved in a flourishing industry.

Over the past month, witnesses have told us that they are working very hard to provide security. These people, of course, are part of MINUSTAH, or are helping it. I do not understand. Have you told the people working for the UN or other countries that MINUSTAH was somewhat ineffective in dealing with armed gangs?

You asked what MINUSTAH was waiting for to react. You do work for the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation, you are not idiots. Did you meet with people to tell them that the armed assistance that is being provided to establish order has yielded no or almost no results? Have you done something?

● (1725)

Mr. Pierre Racicot: I would like to comment, since I went to Haiti on a mission. I had an opportunity to discuss the situation there with Quebec police officers.

The situation is this: they are grappling on a daily basis with not a peace-keeping, but a peace making situation. All they have is a small kevlar vest and a handgun. They are not armed to deal with bandits who shoot at them with Kalashnikovs. They must therefore call upon MINUSTAH when they encounter a blockade where there are people with rather heavy weapons.

A police officer told me about situations where he and his fellow officers had to wait two to four hours, lying behind their truck. He told me that if the Haitians had really wanted to take him out, they could have done so. They had simply decided that it was not in their interest to kill him at that time. The fact remains that shots were being fired around him for three hours.

I have heard on several occasions that MINUSTAH, a complex United Nations organization involving several nationalities, is very slow to react, thus placing police officers in a military role for which they are neither trained nor equipped.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Are you not under the impression that you're caught in a vicious circle?

I have become aware of some remarks on the subject of a decade of difficult partnerships. I imagine that my colleagues have done the same. The issue is Canadian cooperation with Haiti. The Canadian International Development Agency has worked on this. I was flabbergasted to discover the "disappointing results" of Canadian assistance to Haiti over many years. These are the terms that were used. An assessment was done and apparently, of 450 projects, almost none worked, for all kinds of reasons.

There is currently a Canadian military presence in Haiti. We are also part of a kind of organization that should ensure or maintain the peace, or bring it about. But you are telling us that there is none. There are armed gangs but there is no security. It may not be the entire population, but the fact remains that this small group does whatever it wants.

I cannot understand why organizations like your own do not sound the alarm with all these wonderful people who testified here and who came to talk to us about all of the huge efforts being made, asking us to renew their mandates. If those are the results, we will not renew them. All that costs money.

Mr. Michel Chaurette: I would like to make a few quick comments, if I may.

I was in Brasilia with a Haitian delegation. We were meeting with the Brazilian heads of the MINUSTAH of the time. I will share two comments with you. First of all, the Haitian civilian organizations unanimously stated that they needed this intervention, but that the MINUSTAH did not intervene. We have therefore done important work in pressuring MINUSTAH to act. The Brazilians responded that they had a vision for the role of MINUSTAH according to which they had to further development and security at the same time. Unfortunately, the international community did not respect its financial commitments, particularly in the area of development. They therefore stated that their hands were tied. They said they were waiting and did not wish to act only in the area of security.

I can testify that the international community, having committed to reviewing its aid mechanisms in Washington, in order to deliver assistance rapidly to Haiti, was not successful on the ground. The major international banks, amongst others, were not successful in delivering assistance to Haiti quickly.

Canada was the most effective, in other words the most rapid, in delivering assistance.

That is one of the explanations. The other is the will to act differently, but that did not work. We did not want to push people, but Haitians were waiting for such action. That is the message we are here to send, and it is not the CECI's message; it is the message of civil society stating that this action needs to be taken.

● (1730)

Mrs. Thérèse Bouchard: I would just like to clarify one thing: when we criticize MINUSTAH, we know that there are several stakeholders involved, and we are not singling out the Canadians. I think that is very important. The Canadians are professionals, whereas some of the others are not prepared to accomplish this task and are not really properly trained in their fields.

I think therefore that one must differentiate between the Canadians who report back to you and the overall picture.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Bouchard.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Madame Bouchard, you're identifying security as being the major impediment to moving forward in Haiti. From our meetings there, this has been suggested and confirmed to us, from the lawlessness in the Port au Prince area, the red zone, to police commenting that yes, they're there as advisers, but they're not there with authority to do the policing.

With that in mind, if MINUSTAH is perceived to be a problem, is somebody else or another authority directing MINUSTAH? Are they holding it back, or is it right within the command structure of MINUSTAH itself?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Thérèse Bouchard: I am not a specialist as regards military forces. As Mr. Chaurette said, I don't believe that Haitians want MINUSTAH. However, we want it to be effective.

Is it an issue of the terms of reference, the interpretation of that mandate, of political will or of ability? I am not in a position to do the required analysis. However, if we consider the size of the forces and the investment they are asking for, we can say that the results we might have expected have not been achieved.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Goldring: So when we look at the interim cooperation framework report, about the projected plans in Haiti that were to be completed over the years leading up to and including September 2006, what percentage have been completed? How many failures to perform are there in here? Would you have any?

You were a member of the group that put this together—the name of your association is in here, among the 50 or so organizations. Would you have some idea of what the failure to complete the projects would be in there? Is it because of the lack of security, or is it because of the organization of the various groups?

Mrs. Thérèse Bouchard: I will pass the....

Mr. Pierre Racicot: Maybe I can comment on this one, because last fall I was evaluating some projects in Haiti in another capacity.

The first reason we see partial failure is because people are seeing a result in too short a term. Trying to help a community, to empower them, is not something that is going to happen in a five-year span. You can make some progress if you keep going at it, but given the way we measure results in a situation like Haiti, in my opinion, it is very difficult to show positive results in the relatively short term. We've always had this difficulty. The poorer the country and the more complex the crisis, the more truth there is to what I just said.

Mr. Peter Goldring: When you're speaking about 20,000 improved houses, you're speaking about rehabilitating 43 universities and 2,700 schools, somebody had to come up with those numbers. I would think it would be a fixed number, which could be moved relatively forward over the period of time that this was. Are you suggesting that other factors are impacting why they didn't move forward?

Mr. Pierre Racicot: I believe that the way you asked the question, it should be asked of CIDA, because we're in no position to give you an answer to that.

● (1735)

Mr. Peter Goldring: The project you mentioned about part-time jobs, which you've been creating, is one that you've been.... How many man-hours or man-days—I'm not sure how they classify them here—of jobs have you been able to produce?

Mr. Michel Chaurette: I can't answer that precisely.

[*Translation*]

In the agricultural area, the Department of Agriculture had prepared 60 projects for Haiti under the Interim Cooperation Framework. Two years later, it had been unable to implement a single one. It is just beginning to do so now.

Significant progress has been accomplished with these programs this year. The results, in terms of job creation and investment, are starting to be felt. But during the first two years—and that was the projected length of the project—very few initiatives were undertaken. The delays are therefore what is causing a problem.

In order for the stated objectives to be reached, it is clear that the duration of the Interim Cooperation Framework must be extended. I do not have detailed statistics in hand, but based on the experience of the Department of Agriculture, I would say that less than 10 per cent of the objectives have been achieved.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Goldring: For how long?

The Chair: Yes, for how long would you think they should be extended? If for two years you have 60 projects and there's no fruit from the labour, then how long would you wait?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Chaurette: When the NGOs analyzed the ICF with a view to the Washington consultations two years ago, the conclusion was that we were discussing a 10-year plan, or more that the international community and the government wanted to achieve in 18 months. More than 18 months were required only to mobilize the resources.

We are of the opinion that this plan, which is supposed to be an interim plan, is in fact a long-term development plan. It will take at least 10 to 15 years before results will be achieved. This was the generally held impression, of the civilian organizations.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Goldring: How would those numbers be put together then? And how would that look if it were to be a comparable proposal to this? Somebody had to put these numbers together as to expectations. In here there are 335,000 man-months of temporary jobs, and what you're saying is that you can't tell us how many man-hours of jobs your organization has created. Yet the entire basis for these reports seems to be in very hard numbers, and I would think somebody had a plan on how they were going to be proceeding with it. What happened to the plan?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Thérèse Bouchard: When we say that we cannot specify the number of hours, it is just that we do not have that information in hand today. This does go back in time to some extent. The fact is we could provide this to you.

I will give you an example. I do not want to generalize, but this example speaks volumes.

One month ago, when I was in Haiti, a bridge was undergoing repairs. Part of the work had been done, but the process was endless. This bridge spanned a river. The repairs to the left side of the bridge were completed, whereas those on the right side were not. For some time, the cars and other vehicles had had to cross one at a time. The farmers were so exasperated by this situation that they broke—

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Goldring: But these are normal scenarios with any construction project. As somebody who has been in the Amazon, you would be aware of that.

Mrs. Thérèse Bouchard: Yes, but the people just broke the good part of it. That's not the usual way to....

Mr. Peter Goldring: I have one final question. What would you describe as the will that would be holding back the security or the projects that are under way, which might themselves be held back by security?

The Chair: You'll have to sum it up, Mr. Goldring. You're over your time.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Would you say that the will is from the government itself, or is it within the MINUSTAH?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Racicot: The answer to your question is incredibly complex.

Beginning the implementation of a project is a very long process in Haiti, because the government of that country is not very effective. This is part of development. When after 18 months, something seem on the verge of starting up, a new political crisis arises and everything grinds to a halt.

For this reason, the projects that have the best chance of standing the test of time in my opinion are those that call on the cooperation of Canada or another country's civil society and Haitian civil society. In that way, it is unnecessary to go through all of the levels of government.

That is a simplistic answer, but in reality, when you are working with the Haitian government, it is a very long and difficult process.

● (1740)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Racicot.

Madam McDonough, go ahead, please.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: It's going to be really tough, because I think we have an awful lot of unanswered questions that we'd like to pursue.

The first question is a straight factual one, and maybe anyone around the table could answer.

There was to be an international donors conference, where there was hopefully going to be a serious commitment and engagement by the international community to do what I think was identified by President Préval when he came to Canada recently.

For those of us who went to Haiti on a parliamentary mission, the same thing was identified as the critical pressing priority, which was major economic activity and movement for people to have a sense there was a possibility of actually getting up off their knees economically and making some genuine progress to improve people's lives. Can you tell us whether that has happened and with what results at this point?

Secondly, Madam Bouchard, you spoke about how perceptions matter. I have to say that one of the things I found extremely difficult to deal with when I was in Haiti was on two perceptions. One was what I would call the "elephant in a room syndrome", where everybody knew there were huge problems that were unanswered, unattended to, and unresolved around political prisoners and other kinds of prisoners who are detained, incarcerated, face no charges, and people don't even know what they're doing there, and so on. Again, there was a sense that somehow this problem was going to resolve itself.

But you have the political leadership from Lavalas still imprisoned, in some cases, and Mr. Neptune himself, the former prime minister, instead of seeing some progress in dealing with this, which I would broadly characterize as a kind of truth-and-reconciliation process. Talk about a perception problem.

Canada is closing the door to the new prime minister coming into Canada. Why is that? Is it because of close ties to Lavalas? We haven't heard any allegations on why we've taken this position. So we become implicated in that.

What can Canada do and what does Canada need to do? What must Canada do to deal with these perception problems, if not international legal problems? They must be addressed if our hands are going to be clean and if we are going to be seen as an honest broker and a genuine partner with a new Haiti under new leadership, elected with an amazing and a very strong mandate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Chaurette: As far as the first question is concerned, as to whether the international community has managed to respond rapidly to the priority issue, creating jobs to stabilize the country, I must say that my assessment is very negative. This was the main request made by the Haitian government in Washington.

In my opinion, this can be explained by the fact that none of the major banks, whether from Europe, Canada or from the United States, have found the appropriate administrative mechanisms to do so. Haiti's requests are dealt with like any other international investment, which takes a long time and is often poorly adapted to the situation.

I will give you a single example of the results that this entails. In Artibonite, we were helping farmers' associations to manage their water under the framework of a program. At the very same time as we were mobilizing people with a view to improving water management, we were awaiting investments from the Inter-American Development Bank intended for the repair of canals and the irrigation systems. So long as those funds were not there, everything that we were doing on the social front was useless. And what is even worse is the fact that when these people do not get that funding, this results in tensions and violence.

All of these delays and mechanisms do not square with a short-term investment strategy. That is the kind of strategy that must be used in Haiti. I can assure you that it is important to do so. It would help appease social problems.

Canada could help the situation by encouraging these banks to develop adapted administrative arrangements.

Thérèse could speak to your other questions.

● (1745)

[*English*]

The Chair: Very quickly, please. We're at five minutes.

Mrs. Thérèse Bouchard: I don't have the answer.

[*Translation*]

As to how Canada should behave in order to change perceptions, I believe first of all that it cannot act alone. Local justice has to intervene as well. Besides, Haiti really has to settle the issue of impunity. Finally, Canada must explain its positions. If there is no explanation to be given regarding Mr. Alexis, he must clearly state that an error has been committed. He must put an end to this saga and recognize his errors, if indeed there were any. That would be better than maintaining silence. If Canada's grounds are valid, they must be expressed and Canada should be consistent enough to turn to the courts, so that the legal basis of the accusations can be proven. Crimes against humanity are indeed a very serious issue.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Bouchard.

I'm going to go to Mr. Martin. The government side went a little long the last time.

Mr. Martin, a very quick question.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I have a very quick question. We have heard here in this committee that in an environment where there is endemic corruption, endemic violence, things are getting much worse, not better.

I know, Madame Bouchard, you said you must have hope. Hope is one thing, but we have to be able to move things forward.

I would submit to you that the crux, one of the issues that absolutely has to be dealt with, as we've heard, is corruption. That is the fulcrum upon which we can do development: security.

What suggestions can you give us, with your vast experience, specifically, that Canada can adopt to be able to deal with the corruption issue and ensure that the aid moneys we're putting in there are going to have long-term traction and we will see improvements on the ground in terms of education, in terms of development, in terms of the economy, and in terms of the millennium development goals, which we've signed on to?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

A very quick response.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Racicot: The question you are putting to me is huge. I worked in Africa for 19 years. As you can imagine, the problems were similar.

The mechanisms Canada uses to execute projects in Haiti ensure, in a reasonable way, that the funds are spent as Parliament intended, that is to say to assist the poor of the third world. Very rarely in the course of Canadian history and within the framework of CIDA budgets were significant amounts diverted from their primary objective or used for corruption. It would be quite easy to verify those facts.

Whether or not our projects are protected from corruption, this is irrelevant if the society within which we are implementing them is completely dysfunctional by reason of generalized corruption. What can we do to fight against this corruption? In my opinion, the only thing we can do is to force transparency through democratic avenues. There are other ways of making people aware, but I believe that the most important thing is to educate the public and to force people to be accountable.

In Africa, I observed some very interesting phenomena. As soon as a dictatorship fell and a more democratic government took power, transparency would suddenly result in the truth coming out.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Racicot.

We will have a very quick question from Mr. Van Loan, and then we will break. We have some committee business, I remind you.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The real purpose for this study is that we've been, as a country, very committed to Haiti over some time, and we keep seeing the same record play over again and skip over again. We invest a significant amount in that country, and at some point people are going to conclude that good money is going after bad unless they begin to see significant improvements.

What is it, in previous interventions, that has been failing in Canada's effort, or what are the problems that cause us to have to be coming back to square one every time? What can you point to in Canada's efforts in the past that has failed?

Mr. Pierre Racicot: One reason is, as I said earlier, that we expect results in too short a term. Sometimes we fail to maintain our efforts because there is a political crisis and then we can't live with the new government or lack of government. We sort of withdraw, and then we start again.

I think we'll have to take a very courageous position that Haiti is a special case. It's in our backyard. We have no choice but to help that country out of its predicament. We're there for the long term, and we're going to work with the institutions and with the civil society for the long term and tough it through. I believe basically that's the only attitude that's going to win, unless we decide to put a blockade around Haiti and forget about it, which I think is not a real solution.

The other one is that we have to help. We have to find a way, and I believe the way is to be patient, to go in and stay for the long term.

● (1750)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Racicot.

I have a very quick question. How many different countries is the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation involved in, and how much money do you get from CIDA? You talked about the World Bank and other European donors. What percentage does CIDA and any government funding represent in your total budget?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Chaurette: We have a presence in 20 countries. CIDA funding represents about 55 per cent of our resources, and our annual budget is in the order of CAN$32 million.

One third of our international program budget is currently devoted to Haiti, where there is funding from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Fund and USAID. So it is very diversified.

What is the common thread among all of the countries that provide funding for Haiti, including Canada? They all use the same development tools. They begin with calls to tender, and operate with the same mechanisms that would apply for any regular situation. They don't try to identify who would be best suited to act and to make a difference. This is repeated in any number of countries. We are currently in Nepal, Guatemala, and Bolivia, and the same behaviours occur whenever there is a conflict. The international community does not yet have a mechanism that can be used in countries undergoing a crisis. This is what Canada is now doing in Haiti. We are seeking proposals instead of trying to determine who would be the best one for the job.

That is part of the response, and part of the inefficiency inherent in cooperation mechanisms as they apply to countries in crisis.

[*English*]

The Chair: You're in 20 countries. To be honest, every group that comes forward here is just frustrated with what's happening in Haiti, and they aren't certain they're delivering in the very best possible way.

What countries would you say are the model countries? I know every country is different, and you can't say this worked in Bolivia, so it's going to work in Haiti. But what countries are the big success stories for the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation?

What area of expertise...what area were you involved in? Was it agricultural, or...?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Chaurette: I must first tell you that Haiti is the most difficult country that we are involved in.

Second, one of the countries where we have been most successful is Nepal. We managed to work in the areas under Maoist control. How did we manage? Two reasons. First, our programs are based on the needs of the people, are something that the people want, and in which they are willing to take part. That is what good development is all about. A good approach to development is also possible in Haiti.

I explained the problem earlier: the aid structure destabilizes programs that have been successful at a local level, because they are constantly aligned with ever-changing governments in crisis. In Nepal, we managed to work with local communities while influencing national policies, government crises notwithstanding. But it requires a great deal of continuity in our actions.

So we need local participation and a strategy, along with what I would call policy feedback. How did we manage this at the local level? For example, this experience allowed us to influence the national irrigation credit policy. Our success also helped us to influence the Asian Development Bank in its approach to Nepal. I would say that the secret to our success in Nepal lies with the people, including the Maoists, who acknowledge that the project works well and provides results, and who want it to continue.

Were the people of Haiti allowed to tell the international community that a given local project is important and that they wanted it to continue? No. The dialogue is always with the governments whose agenda is very different and who shut out the local communities.

That is what I would like to impress upon you: the success of the CECI, throughout the world, can be attributed to its close link to the communities. Over the long term, that is what ensures development and builds civil societies and provides for reasoned development, and a return to government. These populations eventually have something to say to their government. They have gained a means to influence and to dialogue and are worthy of consideration. That was accomplished through literacy programs for women.

I will tell you a brief story. In Nepal, a woman told me that she really began to exist after she learned to write her name. That is what I am talking about. That is development, and not economic growth. We are talking about developing the people. I think this recipe can be used in Haiti. It is possible to work in Haiti if the international community allows it.

● (1755)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mr. Chaurette.

We aren't going to suspend or adjourn; I'm just going to ask you to perhaps feel free to leave. We have a little bit of committee business. But we do want to thank you for coming. We learn so much from every person who comes here.

I think all sides of this issue get frustrated when we see a country that we want to see develop, have their democracy develop—all aspects of the country—and it just seems to be stalled. So we thank you for your work and for coming here today.

Committee members, please stay. We'll go very quickly to a very brief piece of committee business, one motion.

We have a notice of motion brought forward by Madame Lalonde. The proper timing has been given, and Madame Lalonde will not be here tomorrow, so she has asked that this be brought forward today. The motion is as follows:

> That the committee recommends that the government join the 45 countries in favour of the negotiation of an international treaty on arms trade and clearly indicate its support for the adoption of global transfer principles at the next United Nations Conference on small arms and light weapons, scheduled to open on June 26.
>
> The committee recommends that the government asks Canada's representative present at that same conference to take up the matter strongly with other countries on the considerable and negative impact the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has on the development of countries affected and on human rights.

Madame Lalonde, do you want to speak to your motion, very quickly?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you.

It is a simple motion that does not represent a great commitment for the government. It says what should be said, and I feel that it represents what the people from the coalition have told us. They are expecting Canada to take a firm stand in the preparation of a treaty to prevent the proliferation of small arms. That is all I have to say.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Lalonde.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: My colleague Peter Van Loan just went to the washroom, so I guess I will have to take his spot.

● (1800)

The Chair: Here he comes.

Thank you so much, Mr. Obhrai, for summing up Mr. Van Loan's position on this.

[*Laughter*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Peter, on the motion.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: We're obviously comfortable with the motion. I think we've said that before a number of times.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Just for clarification,

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lalonde, I would like the following words to be added to the end of the first paragraph: “2006 in New-York.”

[*English*]

We would add in “2006 in New York”. It's just to be specific. I mean, if you read it in a year or two....

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: As usual, Mr. Patry, you are absolutely right.

[*English*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: That's fine. That's the only thing.

It's fine, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right. Are we all in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Lalonde, for bringing that motion forward.

I understand Mr. Martin is tomorrow.

We're adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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