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—
Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1535)

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee: Honourable members of the committee, I see that there is a quorum.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(1), I'm ready to receive motions for the election of the chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): I nominate Kevin Sorenson for chair.

The Clerk: Okay. Are there any other nominations for the position of chair?

Is it the will of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Mr. Sorenson is elected chair of the committee.

Does the committee wish to proceed at this time with the election of vice-chairs? I'm ready to receive nominations for the position of the first vice-chair in the opposition.

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): I nominate Dr. Bernard Patry.

The Clerk: Are there any other motions for vice-chair?

The committee has heard the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Mr. Patry is elected vice-chair for the official opposition.

I am now ready to receive motions for the second opposition vice-chair.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): I nominate Ms. Lalonde.

The Clerk: Ms. Bourgeois nominates Ms. Lalonde.

Are there any other nominations for second vice-chair?

The motion is that Ms. Lalonde be the second vice-chair.

[English]

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Thank you, committee. It is good to be back in the House and have our committees up and going again.

Our steering committee has met, and we may have an opportunity to—

The Clerk: This is the report from the steering committee.

The Chair: We do have a report from the steering committee, and we want to make sure that is passed out.

Madame Bourgeois.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Chairman, I would first of all like to congratulate you on your election as chair. You have our confidence once again because you have deserved it well.

Reference has been made to the report, which is quite lengthy.

[English]

The Chair: Madame Bourgeois, we are passing out a little brief—I guess it's almost like the minutes—that we went through on the steering committee. We just want to make sure you have that and everyone gets a look at it before we go into the study on Haiti.

Before we get to the study on Haiti, there's some housekeeping we want to take care of. We don't want to cut out a lot of time on the Haiti draft report. If you have any questions on what the steering committee discussed last week, you have the minutes before you. We also need a motion to pass the budget. It gives us the opportunity to bring in witnesses and proceed with our study this fall.

So you see the steering committee report in front of you. We're still trying to make some changes to our meetings. The committee will meet on Tuesdays rather than Mondays commencing October 17, 2006. That's one of the issues. We will continue our study on democratic development. We will move forward with the plan to travel to the Nordic countries from October 7 to 14.

We can come back to any of these points. I want to encourage all members of this committee to speak to their whips.

The purpose of this afternoon's meeting is to discuss the draft report on Haiti; that the Hon. Gordon O'Connor, Minister of National Defence, be invited before the committee on September 27, 2006, in regard to Afghanistan; that the committee set aside some time immediately after the break in October—that's after our travel week in October—to look at the situation in Afghanistan; that the clerk investigate the possibility of holding periodic joint meetings with the Standing Committee on National Defence to receive updates from the department concerning ongoing activities in Afghanistan; and that the committee invite witnesses to appear on the study of democratic development, beginning with the Minister of Foreign Affairs on September 27.

Point seven is that a proposed budget—that's what we've already talked about—of \$35,000 be adopted so we can send it forward to the Liaison Committee; and that the committee invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Cooperation to appear on its study of the estimates in the first week of November. That timeline is pretty well confined to the end of October, the first part of November. It has to be reported back to the House.

Mr. Van Loan.

• (1540)

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): I'd like to move adoption of the report.

The Chair: Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Congratulations, Mr. Chair, on your reappointment.

When we held the steering committee and were setting the agenda, it was noted that Bill C-293, which really concerns official international development assistance overseas, was coming before the House, but we didn't know the outcome at that time. It has now passed second reading, and this committee has responsibility to be seized with that legislation. I wonder if we can talk about the scheduling of that matter dealing with the legislation before the committee.

The Chair: You're correct on the timeline for when that needs to come in. The Speaker ruled that the committee will have some definite work to do on this, because the bill will need royal recommendation. So for a private member's bill to do that, it was somewhat flawed. It's a challenge to our committee to make sure that those issues are addressed. So I think it's fairly important that we look at when that bill can be brought to the committee.

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: I have a couple of things, Mr. Chair, and, again, congratulations on your—

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Keith Martin: —hard-fought win. You were sweating over there. I saw that.

On Bill C-293, I would echo Madam McDonough's comments. I propose that we bring this up as soon as we can after the first break week in October, so that we can start this process, which may take a little bit of time.

The second thing is that I had put in a request for three ministers to appear in front of the committee and I was very happy that

Minister O'Connor and Minister MacKay have chosen to appear. I would also ask that Minister Verner appear in front of our committee and that all three of these meetings be televised. It's important that the public have an opportunity to listen to the interventions by all three ministers on an issue we all know is very important to the Canadian public.

The Chair: I think the ministers are fairly open to appearing if the times are suitable. I know some are away. In fact, in the case of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is going to be appearing, I think we had to do a little shuffle, didn't we?

• (1545)

The Clerk: Originally I had requested the first week the House came back, but he wasn't here.

The Chair: We were trying to get them into time slots, and it's duly noted that all three ministers have been requested to come. I think that should be all right.

Hon. Keith Martin: Those sessions are to be televised, too.

The Chair: All right.

It's the availability, and that makes it a little tougher, to be honest with you.

We discussed it in our steering committee. Because of our meeting times, sometimes it's difficult to get the rooms we need. They can come and televise it in the West Block, even, with one camera sitting there, but it's not really the best. It'll probably be sitting there looking at the minister the whole time. It's not the best, but if we can facilitate it, the ministers are open to it.

Hon. Keith Martin: Good.

The Chair: Is that all right?

Madam McDonough is next.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: On the fourth recommendation, that the Minister of National Defence be invited to appear before the committee September 27—am I right in thinking we already had confirmation of his availability?

The Chair: No. In fact, we have a little problem with that date, and perhaps I really should have spoken to you earlier. We don't have anything on the final half of that date, but there is, as you know, another meeting that I think a lot of the committee would like to attend, so....

Ms. Alexa McDonough: That's what I was going to propose, actually, if we haven't had confirmation. We know that Afghanistan is an urgent priority, but if we haven't had confirmation and he's not available, it seems to me that it would be very well worthwhile for the whole committee to allocate the time to attending the session of the middle powers initiative on nuclear issues. In particular, I believe I'm correct that Hans Blix is delivering a public lecture later Thursday afternoon, so I wonder if we could agree to substitute that for the time slot we had suggested be allocated for the Minister of National Defence. It's all interrelated.

The Chair: I would suggest—take it for what you will—that one possibility is for us to conclude our afternoon with the minister, when Minister MacKay is here, and then encourage the committee to go over to the conference. I don't think we can say to the committee that we are going to have our committee meet at the conference, but certainly we would encourage everyone to do that, and I know that some are planning on doing that.

The Clerk: You might just amend the report to take out the dates.

The Chair: The clerk brings out a good point. I would entertain a motion, if somebody would so move, that we just amend point number four to read, “that the Minister of National Defence, Gordon O'Connor, be invited to appear before the committee as soon as possible concerning Afghanistan”, or you can put whatever you want.

Mr. Martin, will you move that?

Hon. Keith Martin: I so move.

The Chair: Madam McDonough has seconded it.

The amended motion would read, “that the Minister of National Defence, Gordon O'Connor, be invited to appear before the committee as soon as possible concerning Afghanistan”.

Madam McDonough, you have a comment.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I'm assuming we don't have any progress to report on the proposed joint hearings with defence, because it depended upon this committee to decide to pursue that course of action. But if we're going to adopt this, and if there is agreement that we move ahead to hold some joint meetings with defence, I wonder if we should also refer, in the context of the invitation to the minister of defence to come before the committee, to our following through on our stated intention to hold some joint hearings.

The Chair: Are you suggesting that if we are able to facilitate the joint committees, it would not necessitate his coming to a separate committee of our own?

• (1550)

Ms. Alexa McDonough: No, I'm asking whether, if we're proposing to go ahead as soon as possible, we can tie to it the preference to do that jointly with this committee and defence.

The Chair: Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: I would speak out against that. We have such precious little time with the minister of defence, and our committee—I'm sure from all parties—would like to have an opportunity to ask him questions. The defence committee can ask the defence minister questions on its own time, but since the time with us is so short, I would recommend, and I hope Madam McDonough would consider this, that we have the defence minister, the foreign affairs minister, and Minister Verner on their own, just with us.

I want to make two other points. One is that I'd like to request that a note for a speedy recovery be sent from all of us to Madame Lalonde. She's ill, and maybe collectively from the foreign affairs committee we could send a note to Madame Lalonde wishing her a very speedy recovery and saying that we wish to see her back here as soon as possible taking up her vice-chair position.

The Chair: We can all drop her a card or give her a call, or both. But one from the committee as a whole...?

Hon. Keith Martin: Because we have the staff... Everybody here is part of a team.

The Chair: Good. Thank you.

Keith.

Hon. Keith Martin: Lastly, when we parted before the summer, not so long ago, the issue Madam McDonough and I brought up was the issue of CIDA and international development.

It was my understanding that when we were starting off this process we were going to study international development and that democratic governance issues would be part of it. I hope we'll have an opportunity to merge that with CIDA's effectiveness. I thought that's what we were really going to do: look at the effectiveness of CIDA in carrying out its mandate in aid and development.

We've taken this ship down a road on an issue of governance, but I propose that we also add to it looking at CIDA's effectiveness in aid dispersal.

The Chair: Mr. Van Loan.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: I'm feeling as if it were Groundhog Day. We keep having this discussion every couple of months.

There was a clear sense that we were going to do a study on democracy promotion and democratic development. It was going to be focused. We've had this debate again and again. It's been settled. The witnesses are lined up. The briefing books reflect all that. We've agreed to it several times as a committee, as a steering committee, and I can't understand why we keep looking at this new direction every time.

If we want to study something in a focused way, we have to have some kind of focus. We're already looking at something that's going to extend well into 2007 before we get progress, based on the other work that's going to be in front of this committee, and if we expand it to a study of everything, there's not going to be much left at all.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Loan.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: I would also point out that the Senate committee is dealing with exactly what Mr. Martin is talking about right now.

The Chair: One other point to that is that as we look through the list of witnesses and those places we will visit in some of the Scandinavian countries, there are certainly those there whose expertise is in how they disperse humanitarian aid, so that is going to fit into it.

But I take Van Loan's point as well. We have discussed at great length the main focus, the main direction the committee is going in. We decided it would be two-faceted, that we'd have the spring study and the fall study, and now we're in the fall. There will be an opportunity to study it, but I think it has been very well decided a long time ago, a number of times, that the main focus should be democratic development.

Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Concerning Mr. O'Connor's notice, I too think that we should exert some pressure to obtain the viewpoint of the minister whose role is particularly important with regard to Afghanistan. I don't think we should make this a part of our committee work, but rather, we should insist that he come and meet with us.

[English]

The Chair: All right.

Go ahead, Madame Bourgeois.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Chairman, according to what I read in the briefing book which we were given concerning official development assistance, democracy and good governance this is indeed directly linked to the obligation's CIDA has to produce results because these budgets often go through CIDA. Without launching a whole new review of the need for CIDA and its objectives, perhaps we could nevertheless try during an hour or an hour and a half to review CIDA's principles on democracy, governance, etc. I know that you have said that we need to put some emphasis on one element and that we don't want to redo the work which was done previously, but in my opinion the objectives of the millennium are governance, and the democratization of states. Now all of that is handled by or goes through CIDA. We thus have no choice, and cannot avoid it.

I suggest that we devote a good hour to review the objectives and obligations of CIDA.

• (1555)

[English]

The Chair: I agree. I think that will happen. We will have the minister here. There will be opportunity for that, and more. To limit it to an hour and a half... I think we'll have more. I don't know if everyone has had an opportunity to look at the prospective witnesses we have in Norway and some of those countries, but aid and trade there, and how they deliver that aid, is linked fairly closely. So I can pretty well assure you that there will be an overlap. But the main focus, the main direction, the main road we're on here is democratic development. All these little things we can....

Go ahead, Madame Bourgeois.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: With all due respect Mr. Chairman there are countries that are not democratic which do receive money from Canada through CIDA and that are greatly helped by Canada. I am thinking of countries that are not democratic states, of countries where democracy is not being provided. I think that we must address this matter. Of course, you will be going on your trip, but there are all these other countries elsewhere. When Canada is providing \$300 million in aid the committee must examine the allocation of such a large sum to countries that do not have a democratic regime.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Van Loan, you're next.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: Obviously, a large portion of Canada's work on democracy promotion and democratic development is

delivered through CIDA, but not all of it is, and there are other formats and methods for delivering democracy promotion and democratic development. So I think it's obvious that through the study we will look at some of them. But in terms of doing a comprehensive study, we should also be going beyond the box of what just CIDA does.

I will point out, though, that we are going to have bill C-293 coming before us on development aid, and if one wants to talk about those issues and the effectiveness of CIDA and so on, that's a perfect opportunity for that.

The Chair: We'll have Mr. Obhrai and then Madam McDonough.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Chairman, first let me congratulate you for being in the chair. It's pretty heavy for me to say that.

If time is available, I don't see anything wrong in the committee looking at CIDA's contribution in its study. We have a full agenda, but if time permits, I think we should do it. There's nothing to hide. There are a lot of questions that have been asked about CIDA. You have our report here, and we have such a short session. But I don't see any reason why we can't, if time permits.

The Chair: I think the will is that if we have the opportunity... We don't want to change the main focus. I know that in opposition, the worst feeling you get is when you feel that somebody's trying to stop you from doing a study or stop you from looking at something.

I think we're going to have lots of opportunity to take a look at CIDA or to take a look at how we deliver humanitarian aid, and it's noted that this is the wish of the committee, and there will be that opportunity.

Now we go to Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I don't think we want to beat a dead horse here, but I think there's all the more reason to make sure we have a pretty sharp focus on ODA as part of our tool kit around democratic development, because we are now going to be dealing with Bill C-293. It would make a lot of sense for us to go to a number of countries that do this extremely well, countries that see dealing with extreme poverty and the inadequacy of public infrastructure and so on as key to being able to open the door to democratic development. For us to not use the opportunity to begin in earnest to do the homework to roll it back into the discussion about Bill C-293 wouldn't make any sense at all.

I don't think we have an argument here; I think we just want to make sure we don't bypass the obvious opportunity to really focus on this in a pretty serious way as part of our European trip.

• (1600)

The Chair: Norway, Ireland...some of these countries have just issued white papers in the last little while. Ireland did it last week, and copied Norway's way of doing it. We aren't going to Ireland, no, but we do have that available to us. They took Norway as a model.

I noted that when the list of witnesses for Norway, Sweden, and Finland was given out, the clerk took the liberty of putting down some of the individuals who were experts in delivery of humanitarian aid. I think that is great, because we'll know, going into that meeting, that when we meet with this individual in Norway, or wherever they may be, much of what we're going to talk about is humanitarian aid delivery. So I think there will be lots of opportunity.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I do think it's important that we focus. And on the issue of CIDA, I would agree with the speaker who indicated it with regard to millennium development goals. There's no question that CIDA has played and continues to play a very important role in terms of millennium development goals. We have signed on to that by 2015, and we need to make sure we have the right tools and are reaching those objectives—and they range from the environment, to empowerment of women, to democratic deficit issues. So I think it's important that we do that and not try to bundle everything together, that we do have very specific areas that we're going to deal with, and then go from there.

And I don't necessarily subscribe to the fact that because CIDA may be helping a country that isn't democratic.... Part of the work, say in Vietnam, is that it is helping to democratically develop the judiciary, bureaucracy, and other organs. That, I think, is important, and part of the focus should be on how we are measuring those goals in countries such as Vietnam.

The Chair: Thank you.

All right. So you have the report in front of you.

Could we just have a motion to adopt this? It has been noted, and I see the clerk is writing down here exactly what the intent of the meeting is on some of those issues. But we do need this to be adopted in order to proceed.

It's moved by Mr. Van Loan.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I just want to clarify, it seems to me what we need to do is amend the report to include Bill C-293, which has now been referred to the committee. And somebody who has a better handle on some of the process issues than I do, perhaps, can tell us for sure what the timeframe is by which we need to report back to the House.

The Chair: The last day to report back to the House is February 7, 2007, which doesn't—

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Okay. We're probably not going to spend January doing this, so we need to amend the fall schedule.

The Chair: No, my intentions are that we do not spend January going through Bill C-293, seeing that January is usually a time in our constituency. We can ask for an extension, but not really. We want to get that in there by February, for sure.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Perhaps the clerk can tell us how much time we estimate we will spend on this thing. If you have February 7, as

you said, as the last day, and we are mandated by Parliament to do it, then we should put it over here. There's no other choice.

How long will it take to do that process?

• (1605)

The Clerk: It's for the committee to decide how much time it wishes to take to study the bill.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: But I understood from the chair that there were some problems that needed to be resolved.

The Chair: Mr. John McKay—I don't know which riding is his or if I have to go by ridings—has acknowledged that there are ways he can change it and he has some ideas.

I'm sure the department is looking at ideas. Others may look at the specifics as to what the Speaker ruled was really not necessarily out of order but would require royal recommendation.

Mr. McKay has suggestions for our committee, so we will try to get Mr. McKay before the committee. We'll try to go through it as quickly as we can but not push through it.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: What timeframe?

The Chair: I would say that we want to leave probably three or four meetings in order to go through it.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: So we might as well put it in here.

The Chair: We could be looking at November or December.

One other thing we may want to consider, too—and this may really work, although it's going to take away time from the democratic development study—is that if we do meet jointly, how often are we going to continue to meet?

If we do a fairly comprehensive study on Afghanistan, together with the defence committee, are we still going to keep our Wednesday and Monday meetings? Then we'll be able to open it up a little bit more. If we're doing Afghanistan then, we aren't going to have to be looking at it any more in these meetings. We'll be able to fit in Bill C-293 in one of those meetings. But it may end up that our committee then meets four or five times a week.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Where did you get this joint committee meeting idea? I thought when you just said that it—

The Chair: It came out of our steering committee.

Let's add number nine here, that we ask the clerks to leave ample opportunity for the committee to study Bill C-293.

If Mr. McKay comes, it doesn't mean we're going to drop everything and only do that, but we can start putting together witness lists and things like that.

We have a mover. Do we have a seconder?

It is seconded by Mr. Martin.

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

The Chair: That's out of the way.

Will someone move that we send forward this budget to the liaison committee? I believe it's \$35,600.

It is moved by Mr. Martin and seconded by Madame Bourgeois.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will also entertain a motion to move in camera. We have a confidential report ahead of us. These report studies are done in camera, which means that members of Parliament can be here, and one worker—one executive assistant or legislative assistant.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Van Loan.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: Is it limited to members who are members of the committee? If there are other MPs, do they have to leave?

The Chair: I don't know. I'll get some clarification here.

The Clerk: The committee's motion, to be perfectly clear...

• (1610)

The Chair: I think any member of Parliament has...according to Derek Lee, anyway.

The Clerk: You can't throw him out, but in the committee's motion, I think they'll say that it's members of the committee. But I'll double check that.

In camera meetings: each committee member be allowed to have one staff person present at the committee meetings. It's silent on members of Parliament.

The Chair: I think it's probably allowable. It's silent on the fact of other members of Parliament, but I think it is confined to members of Parliament. All members of Parliament have certain rights, according to Derek Lee.

We will suspend and we will come back in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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