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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): *Bonjour.* Welcome.

It being 3:30, we will call this meeting to order.

This is the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, meeting number 18. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing our study on democratic development. This is the committee's major study of Canada's role in international support for democratic development around the globe.

As you know, we are examining all aspects of Canadian policy and activities in the field of democracy assistance in the light of the international challenges of democratic development. The study will also examine international democracy assistance in a comparative perspective, with a view to benefiting from the experience of other donors and other donor countries.

The committee is particularly interested in learning about approaches to support for democratic development that have shown demonstrable success on the ground.

The purpose of the committee's study is to submit a report of its findings, with recommendations to the Canadian government on future policy directions in this area.

That being said, today we are very pleased to have with us Madam Maureen O'Neil, president of the International Development Research Centre, as well as Jean-Louis Roy, president of Rights and Democracy, the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development. We welcome you here.

As the committee knows, we are having two meetings. This first portion goes until 4:30, at which time we will suspend and welcome some other witnesses. At the end of that period, we want to reserve 15 minutes for committee business.

First of all, we welcome our witnesses. You have the floor. If your presentation is more than ten minutes, we'll try to jerk you back a little and go into a line of questioning.

Welcome here.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Maureen O'Neil (President, International Development Research Centre): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I am delighted to appear before your committee today. And I am pleased to have the opportunity to tell you about the important work being done by Canada's IDRC—the International Development Research Centre.

IDRC is a crown corporation that reports to Parliament through the Minister of Foreign Affairs. An international Board of Governors, consisting of 11 Canadian and 10 international governors, eight of whom are from developing countries, is appointed by the Governor in Council on the advice of Cabinet.

For 35 years now, IDRC has been all about applied research in the natural and social sciences and finding innovative yet practical ways to help those in the developing world help themselves. IDRC is not about wishful thinking. It's about hard data and results.

For example, a major development problem related to agriculture is the low technology adoption rate among poor farmers. IDRC has for over a decade supported an approach that works to address this problem. Called participatory plant breeding, this method brings together the scientific expertise of agriculture researchers with the traditional knowledge of local farmers in order to improve plant yields, while at the same time conserving biodiversity. Results help improve food security for countless rural areas.

You will find more details about our results in the information kits we have provided you today.

My main message today is that research in developing countries can foster democratic development. It does so in four ways.

First, research is the foundation for open inquiry and debate. Freedom of expression, inquiry and open debate are the foundations for a vibrant democracy. The freedom to conduct and publish research, and have it publicly debated without fear of reprisal, speaks volumes about the state of democracy and human rights in a country.

Freedom of expression and inquiry are also crucial for encouraging the innovation that every society must create in order to have long-term development and growth. Societies cannot benefit from technologies developed abroad unless they have their own research capacity.

● (1535)

[*English*]

Secondly, research expands the range of practical solutions to enduring problems. Research broadens the range of practical solutions available to citizens, organizations, and policy-makers. Research highlights trade-offs, maps the complexities of problems, and gives voice to different perspectives. Research inspires debate and helps citizens think through difficult questions. Research feeds innovation.

For example, an IDRC-supported study by Tanzanian researchers on the introduction of insecticide-treated bed nets for malarial control—even before Sharon Stone publicized it—and improved allocation of health care expenditures saw a 40% fall in child mortality. The tools developed by the project researchers and piloted in health units in two districts are now being applied all across Tanzania.

IDRC also supported policy research in South Africa to help its transition to democracy. This included supporting research by South Africans on writing a constitution, on local government, and on trade and competition policy. Several of the first cabinet ministers in the newly democratic South Africa were involved in this research, including Trevor Manuel, now the minister of finance.

Funding developing country partners who have a stake in arriving at solutions to problems ensures ownership of research results. Indeed, research results from IDRC's applied research have sometimes been so convincing that governments are willing to invest their own time, effort, and money into using and applying them on a wider scale. In this way, a small initial investment from IDRC leverages much bigger downstream investments by others.

An IDRC project in Colombia in 1974 developed an improved tri-colour middle upper-arm circumference tape, called an MUAC tape, a sample of which is provided in your information package. This tape is now used by ministries of health, the WHO, UNICEF, Doctors Without Borders, and many other groups as a standard tool for measuring child malnutrition rates, especially for rapid assessments during droughts and famines.

Third, research helps hold governments to account. Research provides evidence for supporting political accountability and unbiased judiciary and open and robust political institutions that safeguard citizens' rights. For example, in Guatemala IDRC supports a judicial observatory that brings together judges, defence lawyers, prosecutors, and human rights activists to monitor problems facing the criminal justice system in Guatemala. A report on local trial procedures created an uproar in justice circles in Guatemala, but it resulted in the creation of an administrative centre to better manage the criminal courts.

In Senegal, IDRC supported an NGO, called Forum Civil, to study corruption in the health sector. The findings, showing widespread corruption, received broad coverage in local media and stirred debate on how to change the system. The president of Senegal then publicly acknowledged the seriousness of corruption in the public services.

IDRC has also worked with the private sector, including Microsoft, to improve communications in the developing world. And better communications technology also helps foster democratic development.

Finally, research is the basis for evidence-based policy-making. IDRC has worked with the parliamentary centre, and you're going to be hearing from Bob Miller later this afternoon. We've worked with them to research the depth, distribution, and extent of poverty in west Africa, this information now being used by parliamentarians to debate proposed strategies to reduce poverty in their countries.

More recently, in June of this year, IDRC, along with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Parliamentary Centre, brought a group of Afghan parliamentary officers to visit and learn about Canada's parliamentary system. Democracy assistance policies should be based on sound research, but rarely are. This is one of the main drivers behind the creation of the Democracy Council, and Minister MacKay spoke about this when he appeared before your committee. This mechanism brings both the Department of Foreign Affairs and CIDA together with several arm's-length organizations to share lessons learned and better understand what does and doesn't work in supporting democratic development. And we're happy to be a part of this council.

● (1540)

Each of these activities underlines the necessity of basing policy choices on solid evidence. Mr. Chairman, research is important for democratic development. It is the foundation for open inquiry and debate. It expands the range of practical solutions available. It can help hold governments to account. And it is essential for evidence-based policy-making. Canada's IDRC plays a key role in promoting research for development and democratization.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Neil.

Mr. Roy, you have 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy (President, Rights and Democracy (International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development)): I just said, Mr. Chairman, to Maureen that I would say that I'm in complete agreement with everything she said, but I may add two or three things.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

We are delighted to be here, and there are three reasons for that. The first one is that the topic that has brought us together is at the core of the mandate of Rights and Democracy, which, as you know, was created by Parliament in 1988.

The second one is that I believe it is necessary for us in Canada to periodically discuss what the country is doing to support democracy in the world.

The third one is that I am very anxious to see the assessment of our partners—IDRC and others—of the state of democracy in the world.

I think we have to say, at the outset of our work and deliberations —that's what we feel—that we live in a world that has moved substantially toward democracy in the past 30 years, and that the geopolitics of the world has been changed by democratic values. That's the case in Central Europe and Eastern Europe, that's the case since the 1980s, in Latin America, and that's the case, in a more limited way, in Africa. Some very large Asian countries have become democratic, like Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, etc.

The international political agenda is still one of growth and expansion of democracy in the world. No other item should take precedence today, in my view, internationally, for the reasons we have just heard, be it for research or for other reasons related to fundamental rights and freedoms.

I have already told this committee and I will not go over it again, we, the members of Rights and Democracy, have a vision of democracy that has as one of its essential elements all of the human rights that are recognized under international law and by the United Nations, as well as by governments that have signed and ratified the international instruments.

Mr. Chairman, your committee has asked us a lot of questions. I will try to summarize them into four questions and to provide two or three partial answers to each as a way of setting the stage for our subsequent discussion.

The first question you asked was the following.

● (1545)

[*English*]

Is the world moving towards acceptance of the global principle of democracy, similar to the development of international human rights standards? We have answered in our brief with a cautious positive answer—a cautious yes.

If we look at what is going on at the United Nations—the creation of a democracy fund at this level, the creation of a conference on failed and restored democracy, the electoral process that is sustained by the United Nations and other elements that you know better than I do—at the global level, the notion of democracy and the actual—

The Chair: Please excuse me for one moment.

I'm having a few people signal that they cannot pick up the interpretation in French.

Could we have a test from the translation booth?

It's coming now.

My apologies, sir. You can pick it up where you were.

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: You'll give me one minute more.

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Thank you very much.

I was trying to say that democracy has changed our world and that we can answer with a cautious yes the question of whether the world is moving towards acceptance of the global principle of democracy. I was making a grand tour of the world to indicate where democracy.... If you look at the map of the world as it was 30 years ago and look at the map of the world as it is today, you'll see quite a change. It does not mean that we have to stop working; it means that we have to increase our activities, and I hope that Canada will do just that.

We mention in our brief, in the context of this globalization of democracy,

[*Translation*]

New requirements flow from this globalization of democracy. I see the reports of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and other groups that, a bit like us in Canada, work in the field of promoting democracy. Given that democratic values has become global values, I think we need to come up with a new language. Democracy is no longer just a western thing. It has been internationalized by India, which made democracy its political system sixty years ago. Fragile democracies have now been established in large Islamic countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. Democracy has been established in all parts of the world, in all cultures of the world, in all spiritual and cultural traditions of the world. We can no longer do as we did 25, 30 or 50 years ago and export democracy. That would be an absolutely radical mistake.

I am building on what Maureen O'Neil has just said. We must therefore work together with our partners in countries that are seeking to consolidate democracy in their land or establish it where it is absent. That is a very profound change that we have to pay very close attention to.

Moreover, in the first phase of democracy, when it was

[*English*]

in its Euro-Atlantic confines, in a way,

[*Translation*]

it was a democracy of relatively rich countries.

Democracy is now established, in the majority of cases, in poor countries, in countries with huge social and economic problems. In terms of the work of promoting democracy in the world, we have to go beyond the mere assertion that democracy equals political rights.

Democracy must from now on be identified with full recognition of political rights and the accountability that goes along with it, of course, but also recognition of social rights and economic rights.

In major surveys in Latin America and in Africa, people living in democratic poor countries asked us what democracy actually brings. They know it brings significant political values like freedom of speech, freedom of movement and sometimes vague access to a new form of more independent justice, but people expect more than that. They expect employment, housing, access to food and water, policies that back up the fact that having this new relationship between citizen and state—this control over the state, in a wa —will be gradual, but will solve their problems.

Mr. Chairman, you have asked many difficult questions, and I do not know whether we will have enough time to do them justice. Nevertheless, I would like to say a few things about civil society. I work in an institution that, since its creation, has done a lot to promote the link with civil society.

A little earlier, I spoke of other groups around the world. I do not think that anyone will appear before you and say that it is possible to build democracy. However, there is a deep connection with civil society organizations in the countries where we are present. A democracy is built by its citizens. It is they who maintain democracy and who fight for it. And the work has to be done every step of the way.

I would hope that we could go a bit further. That is why I spoke about civil society. In Canada, we have a vast experience in the relationship between the state and civil society. I am wondering whether we should not reinforce the ties between civil society and public authorities, both here in Canada and abroad as part of our cooperation programs.

You spoke a little earlier about Senegal—why should governments discuss issues amongst themselves, without the presence of civil society organizations? People in many states, in the other world, do not trust the dialogue between governments because they feel that such dialogue is conducted at a level that excludes them, and the ensuing policies will never benefit them.

I therefore hope that we could push a bit further with regard to the role of civil society in our negotiations to build the new political systems.

For the reasons I raised a bit earlier—I will say a few words, you can find more information in our submission—I would really hope that the committee, as part of its consideration of Canada's work to support democracy around the world, include the important contribution from the private sector, the businesses who use their resources, budgets, finances, research teams and assumptions to go and spread democracy around the world.

There is a debate being held in the world today. A round table on corporate responsibility is afoot in Canada's major cities. Having worked in this area over the past 20 years, I believe that investments are very important. Investments play such an important role in development, private investments have such an impact on the lives of people and societies! We see it in Asia today, in South Asia, in India and in China. We have to reflect on the impact of these investments. Particularly with regard to the respect of rights and democratic values.

Lastly, Mr. Chair, I believe we have to recall something that we all know—sometimes, it is better to repeat things—that half, or exactly 50% of the world population, is under 25 years of age. There are 1.2 billion humans between the ages of 10 and 19. In all those countries where we work, in all those countries in the South, populations will increase over the next few years, and the dominant age group will be composed of people between the ages of 10 and 25. We have to speak to these young people about democracy, we have to find innovative means and have real programs to give them.

● (1550)

For example, I am thinking of a micro-credit bank to support projects by young people in Africa, Latin America and elsewhere. Such initiatives would allow them to play an active role as citizens, to develop the political culture of their countries, to speak about the institutions, to raise awareness of their conditions, etc.

Mr. Chairman, we really do not have enough time. And yet I would still like to give a quick response to the very important question that you have raised.

● (1555)

[*English*]

Where should Canada concentrate its efforts in the future?

[*Translation*]

This is not something you can answer in two minutes. However, I believe that Canada has a very important obligation, which is to ensure that the idea of democracy building continues to be part of the international agenda.

Canada is a member state of the UN, the Commonwealth and the Francophonie and, on a more regional level, of the OAS. It takes part in APEC and has an impact on the African Union. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that a country like ours ensure, whenever possible, that the question of democracy continues to be part of the international agenda, discussions and projects.

In line with what I said earlier, Canada should review some of its policies, particularly the policy of the past few years with regard to the justiciability of social and economic rights.

Democracy builders in poor countries are mostly democrats, and countries like Canada have to find a way to indicate their interest in the issues that you raise:

[*English*]

What is democracy delivering in terms of social and economic evolution and in terms of social and economic change? We have to say something about that. It's at the centre of our discourse.

[*Translation*]

Time permitting, I will address issues related to world geography later.

At the start of our meeting, you asked a question dealing with the type of approach to adopt, or best practices. In preparation for our meeting, I read all the reports from the major international groups. I mentioned some earlier on. There are five recurrent ideas in the reports of those international groups who are in the same line of activity as we are, and with whom we often cooperate.

[*English*]

Democracy cannot be built from the outside. It must be from within in order to be sustainable.

[*Translation*]

First of all, as part of their work, all groups look to integrate, give meaning to and embody the idea in a concrete manner.

Second, each country is in a unique situation. In fact, our practices as well as those of our Canadian partners differ from those of Westminster, the High Commission and the National Democratic Institute. We have to be very careful to avoid adopting somewhat prefabricated models and believing that democracy can be built in Egypt the same way as it could be in Vietnam or Zimbabwe.

Everyone says the same thing over and over:

[*English*]

The western model and system are not perfect. We have to take into account the fact that there is a plurality of situations, a plurality of heritage, and a plurality of social and economic situations in the world.

I should add that the surveys made in Latin America are very clear on that. There is now developing in our world

[*Translation*]

A mistrust toward foreigners and toward us. The Arab world, for instance, is a bit wary of us for obvious reasons.

We are working in Africa as you are, Ms. O'Neil. Our African partners prefer seeing us work with African researchers, to work in cooperation with their centres and call on their expertise. There is a sort of mistrust out there, and this should lead us to pay extra attention to the models that we sometimes try to impose.

The third idea that is somewhat widespread is:

[*English*]

the specific nature of knowledge creation and transfer from this part of the world to the rest of the world.

[*Translation*]

A number of national and international institutions working in the development field have recently understood that it was absolutely necessary to have staff members who speak the language and are from the countries in which those institutions are active. Some work can only be done from inside the country, not outside.

The fourth and second-last idea is the following:

[*English*]

long-term commitment. It's nonsense to go to Vietnam for two years. Our Danish partner is there since ten years. They plan to be there in the next fifteen years. They have been able to enter into the system. I will not speak for them, but they have been able to go very far in the judiciary system in building cooperative programs because they have been there and have built trust with their partners.

Monsieur le président, I will be very pleased if the committee, at the end of its work, recognizes what I mentioned previously, the youth engagement, the youth capacity. At Rights and Democracy we have created networks of Rights and Democracy delegations in 40 Canadian universities. We are now twinning each of those delegations with two delegations somewhere else in the world. They build joint plans, joint projects, and it's beautiful to see what the young people from Morocco and Sherbrooke, from McGill and Kenya, from Afghanistan and the University of Alberta are building together. There is a wealth of ideas that they have inside of their own culture, their own sphere of activities, and I think we have to look at this very carefully.

Concerning the Canadian apparatus, the structure that we have, Maureen referred to the Democracy Council. We are part of it also. We have seen this experience developing for a year. We hope that the experience will evolve, and we'll be very pleased if the experience of the Democracy Council evolves into the creation of a *regroupement* of arm's-length, independent institutions, so that the Parliamentary Centre, yourself, Rights and Democracy, and others can organize our work together, see ourselves altogether, see what we have in common, what needs we have, and then have with Canada, with the Government of Canada, meetings to discuss with them.

I would hope also that the committee will look at, if such a thing exists, the interdepartmental committees that this government may have to see that what CIDA is doing, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and other departments, is convergent, and to see also between the federal government and provincial and territorial governments what kinds of committees you have. Some reports are prepared in this city, but it needs the input of all governments. We would like very much to see the committee look at those mechanisms that you have at the governmental level.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

● (1600)

The Chair: Thank you.

And thank you both for the prepared documents that you have left with our committee. We are preparing to do some travel to some of the other donor countries.

I would suggest in regard to the recommendations of Madam O'Neil in regard to research and certainly the recommendations of Mr. Roy—he has two very specific recommendations at the end of this document—that all members of the committee go through this before you travel, because I think it's excellent background.

We're going to go to the opposition side: Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I'll share with Mr. Martin.

The Chair: And share with Mr. Martin? Okay. Five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: My question is for Ms. O'Neil, whom I would like to congratulate on her research work.

The theme of the last Sommet de la Francophonie, which has just closed in Bucharest, was “The role of information technology in education”. In your presentation, you said that IDRC was working with private sector companies, including Microsoft, to improve communications in developing countries, an initiative that could improve economic development, job creation, democracy, etc. However, developing countries currently face a huge literacy gap, a problem that is particularly pronounced among girls.

With the advent of new communications technologies, available only in urban areas, at the expense of rural areas, do you not think that we are careering toward a digital gap, in other words, do we not risk widening the gap between the regions and increasing poverty? Is basic education, particularly that of young girls, being sidelined for the sake of new information and communications technology projects?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, Madam O'Neil?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Maureen O'Neil: I do not believe so. New technology can also play an important role in basic education. In Africa, for example, organizations such as SchoolNet Africa use new technologies to train school teachers because, as you know, this is a task that, among others, has been complicated by the AIDS epidemic.

Telephone networks and telephony devices, some of which are better than the cell phones we use here, are also available. This infrastructure is extremely important, not only for agriculture and education, but also for the health sector.

We have provided funding to research networks in Uganda that use Treos and BlackBerrys to gather data on health in very rural regions. They then share this data with the major health and medical centres, something that was previously not possible.

New technology improves public services, including education and health services. It is also of great use to farmers, who now have much greater access to market information. For example, a woman will no longer have to undertake a long journey to a particular market if she is able to ascertain that she could sell her produce for a better price at another market.

To my mind, the ability to communicate serves not to cleave a gap, but rather to bridge that which already exists between urban and rural areas.

● (1605)

[*English*]

The Chair: *Merci.*

Mr. Martin, you have one minute for questioning. Would you rather wait until the second round?

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): I thought it was ten minutes.

The Chair: No, it's five minutes.

Hon. Keith Martin: I'll wait. You were only going to give me two and a half minutes?

The Chair: No, you get five minutes the first round.

Hon. Keith Martin: Oh, I see. I'll wait for the next round then. Thank you.

The Chair: Madame Barbot, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Ms. O'Neil, Mr. Roy, I would like to thank you for your extremely interesting presentations.

Mr. Roy, let us take the example of a country which, while it may have its problems, is not war-torn, a country where things are going fairly well. Given the importance of working at the grassroots level, it is reasonable to expect that the citizens of such a country would be involved in helping their fellow countrymen.

I recently saw a program on avian flu that showed a witch doctor carrying out voodoo ceremonies on chickens. It highlighted the huge disconnect between the witch doctors and the scientific knowledge of the country's medical doctors, who disavowed such ceremonies.

How do you reconcile, at the grassroots level, the faith that the communities have in the supernatural exorcism powers of the witch doctor, whom they believe can protect them from avian flu, with the scientific data? I assume that this is the sort of situation that you are confronted with in your work.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Roy, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Mr. Chairman, I must apologize for an earlier oversight. I wanted to extend greetings from Janice Stein, the president of our board, who could not be with us today because, as you know, Yom Kippur is an important celebration. I would also like to introduce you to the vice-president of our board, Mr. Wayne MacKay, from Halifax, who is a well-known Canadian lawyer and professor of law at Dalhousie University; Mr. Lloyd Lipsett, senior assistant at my office; and other colleagues whose presence is testament to their interest in your work.

Your question is very important and relevant in all countries and regions, except Europe, perhaps Japan, Canada, the USA, etc. Spirituality and traditional culture are still very present around the world, and continue to play a central role in people's lives, often influencing how they behave.

It is therefore important to find means to enter into dialogue with these people, particularly with opinion leaders. When it comes to democracy, the most important factor is education, education and more education. It is imperative that people go to school, yet too few do. Fifty per cent of the world's population is under 25, and 1.3 billion people are aged between 10 and 19. As it stands at the moment, nearly 200 million children will never even spend one day at school. Yet, at the same time, we nowadays talk about building democracy, developing the market economy, and so forth. Education is key.

My next point relates to what Maureen said earlier. People cannot influence societies that are not their own. It is therefore imperative to work with people who have great influence in their society, and who can educate people by talking in simple terms about issues that affect peoples' lives, people who can get to the heart of the matter. It is important to preserve the positive aspects of their heritage while filtering out those that are less beneficial.

I am increasingly convinced that our policy must also experience what I refer to in my brief as our “Copernican revolution”. We have to completely reassess our understanding of the world because it has undergone profound changes.

Let us take the example of women's rights. Which country has done the most, in terms of legislation, to advance women's rights? I believe the answer is India. The constitutional amendments introduced in India in 1992 requiring local and provincial governments to reserve one third of seats for women changed the agenda regarding education for young girls, public health, housing, sanitation, etc.

We have carried out several studies on this subject. A major conference on democracy in Asia was held in Toronto in June. It was attended by several Indian experts with experience in this field, including Ms. Gopal Jayal, who, although relatively unknown here, is very famous in Asia. With the support of a large team, she worked from 1992 to 2005 to bring about this constitutional change. Their analysis shows that the fact that, in two thirds of Indian states, one third of those elected to local and regional governments, and thus able to participate in public debate, are women has had a considerable impact.

Of course, there are problems, but we can learn from them.

● (1610)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I just want to remind everyone that these five-minute rounds are for both the questions and the answers, so let's keep our questions fairly concise, so we can hear as many as possible.

Mr. Obhrai, go ahead, please.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming.

Both your organizations are very heavily involved in development as well, as you have said. For the past many years, CIDA and everybody have been focusing on the promotion of democracy very well and also on development. Both your organizations have been doing that very well. Now the time has come to move further. Is development assistance alone sufficient for promotion of democracy, or do we have to look now at other means to see how much further we can move forward?

I just came back from Congo and saw democratic elections taking place over there. One of the areas where I am finding a severe deficiency—and that could be the areas you could look at here—is that there is absolutely no development on the political front, on political parties, on political involvement, on political links, because ultimately the players in the development of democracy are the political parties themselves. Although you have focused and talked about institutions, justice, and they're all fine and they all need to be strengthened.... However, where is this development moving, with the players? Opposition MPs have come here, and I've been an opposition MP and I've talked to them all the time; we do that. Nevertheless, as a collective from Canada, don't you think we need to focus in that direction to see what results would come out of that?

● (1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Madam O'Neil.

Ms. Maureen O'Neil: That's a really interesting question, and it's also really important to keep a long perspective when we talk about democratic development. If you think about it in terms of our western society, it was a long, long way between the Magna Carta in 1215 and aboriginals finally getting the vote in Canada in 1961. We always have to keep a long perspective when we're talking about democratic development.

Similarly, when we talk about political party development, there's a story, perhaps apocryphal, about Mobutu, after having been propped up as probably one of the bad examples of how Cold War politics played into African politics. As things began to change and western governments started to say “we want political parties here”, Mr. Mobutu said “If you need political parties you can have political parties”, because of course he could create them.

That's not what you're talking about. You're talking about how a society can offer the conditions that are sufficiently free so people can associate together, can create their own organizations, can structure them, can move ahead. We have to ask ourselves very hard, “Is that a technical problem or is that a much broader problem?” In other words, can we say, “We from Canada are going to help you create your political parties”? We have to think long and hard about all the other elements required for that to happen.

Once there are political parties.... I also should say that probably assistance to political parties and political party formation is one of the biggest overall areas of investment if we add up what the George Soros Foundation is doing, what the German political party foundations are doing, what the National Endowment for Democracy is doing in terms of aiding political party development. There is quite a lot going on.

The question that lurks out there is should there be something with a Canadian flag on it saying here is Canada, here we are to help with political party development? This is an area that is extraordinarily difficult for a country as a bilateral to do, because it is surely a direct involvement in the polity of other countries. So how one goes about structuring that would have to be very, very carefully thought about. But more than that, it's what kind of environment needs to exist so it's possible for people to freely assemble, to think about these things together, to organize their financing, and to move things ahead. It's not a technical question, I would argue.

Jean-Louis has probably much more experience on that.

The Chair: It may be a question we'll have to come back to. We're out of time in that round for that one, and we have to make sure everyone gets a question.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): *Pas de problème. Merci.*

I want to zero in on two things briefly, and the time is very short.

There's been a lot of consternation expressed this week about cuts that have been announced in international youth internship programs. I'm interested to know whether IDRC and Rights and Democracy have such interns working through that program now.

Secondly, I'm wondering if you could comment on whether you have hired graduates from such internship programs, either those who have worked directly with your agency or organization or those who have had similar experiences elsewhere that have formed part of the résumé on the basis of which you've done that hiring. I wonder if you could comment on that.

Also, in your last round of comments there was a brief mention of a concern that I think exists. It's a question of balance; it's a question of sensitivity. It's the issue of whether development aid is going to be needs-based or whether there's a danger that aid can become tied to a political agenda of the donor nation. Is this something with which you have grappled in regard to your own decisions about what kinds of programs you've become directly involved in sponsoring or have chosen to become associated with in countries where there clearly is an agenda about advancing democracy?

Where do the trade-offs get made between the aid that very much addresses fundamental needs and any political agenda with which we may be associated? What do you see as the challenges and hazards in that?

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Mr. Chairman, allow me to add a comment in relation to the previous question on political parties. I have had the opportunity to observe certain aspects of Elections' Canada's work that, it has to be said, is indirectly linked to political parties. I am not going to speak on behalf of Jean-Pierre Kingsley, he is perfectly capable of doing so himself. Rights and Democracy has contact with political parties in countries such as Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Morocco, Egypt, and, in the past, Kenya. This allows us to explore specific questions related to human rights, minority rights and women's rights. Our initial approach to this very important subject was one of caution and tact. I agree with you, it is a highly sensitive matter.

Ms. McDonough, I am not sure if I am in a position to answer your question on the political agenda of the donor.

[*English*]

Can you just rephrase it for me? Maybe I should have used the translation, but I did not.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I had two questions. One was around the international internship programs. The second was around the challenges in finding a balance between nations that are genuinely responding to the need for international development aid and having aid be associated with democracy promotion, democracy building, in a country—the risks and challenges of tying any such international development aid to the political agenda that is clearly evident in trying to support the development of democracy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: I hope that I will be able to provide you with a satisfactory answer. I am sometimes very surprised by Canada's decision not to intervene in certain countries. Let us take the example of Africa. In the 1990s, in light of the global context, particularly what was happening in Europe, democracy began to surface in Africa. Although some countries have experienced setbacks, others have progressed to the next level of the democratic process.

Where was Canada when Benin reverted to democracy? We were not there and I have never understood why. What about Mauritania? Where is Canada? Mauritania is in the process of becoming a democracy, yet Canada is absent. That worries me. Any time that a society... Morocco is also moving towards democracy. Where is Canada when the citizens of a country, civil society and politicians alike, out of a common desire for democracy, create democratic institutions allowing debate to flourish? This ought to be an absolute priority.

At some other time, I would also like us to discuss Islam and China. Today, however, I would like to focus on the fact that democracy should be considered as a fundamental need for Latin America, Africa and some South Asian countries. We have all seen the polls on Latin America; what strikes me is that although the tangible benefits of democracy have been slow in coming, people's faith in it has not faltered. People need our help. They want democracy to continue to flourish in their countries even if it presents huge challenges on both social and economic fronts. Lastly, Ms. McDonough, we have interns.

[*English*]

We have those interns you referred to. We have eleven of them, I think, all over the world. We value this program highly. The young people are also of this opinion. They come from all parts of Canada, and we have them in institutions in all parts of the world.

We're sure that we will have a discussion with the government and that they will look at it again. It's a very significant program for young Canadians. More than 150 have been beneficiaries of this program. More than that, we have young Canadians in the UN Commission on Human Rights. We have others in the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and they are doing a tremendous job in institutions that are poor, some of them at least. They can provide a very significant amount to those institutions.

● (1625)

The Chair: Thank you.

Because we are out of time, I'm going to suggest that we do something. Mr. Martin and Mr. Goldring and a couple others have asked for a second round. Can I give Mr. Martin 30 to 45 seconds to quickly ask a question? Then we'll go to Mr. Goldring and anyone else who wants in on the second round, and then our panel can answer more succinctly.

Go ahead, Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you very much for the consideration, Mr. Chair.

Madame O'Neil, Monsieur Roy, thank you for being here.

Democratic development is wonderful, but it isn't a guarantee, as we know, for sustainable development. I think corruption is a larger problem. Can you tell us, in your view, what type of framework we need to prosecute leaders who engage in the flagrant theft of the resources of their countries, like what's happening in Zimbabwe and Angola?

Secondly, do you think the Special Economic Measures Act should be rewritten, including having an obligation-to-report provision?

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Monsieur Roy, you touched on some of your expertise in the area of promoting political party development, but then you made the comment that you're approaching it very cautiously. Could you explain why you would be approaching that significant factor in a cautious way?

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Bourgeois, did you have a very quick question?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Roy spoke about how businesses can play a partnership role in the democratic process. I would like us to discuss globalization, China and economic partners in the context of democracy.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Bourgeois.

I hope you're making note of some of these questions so we can refer to them.

Yes, Madame McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Just briefly, I wondered if I might ask Maureen O'Neil if she would address the two questions that were raised. Secondly, not for now but by way of follow-up, could you supply the committee with how many interns you now have with your respective organizations and in what kinds of settings, and how many you have hired—alumni or graduates of the internship program—as your respective staff?

The Chair: Thank you for those questions.

We'll have Monsieur Roy or Madame O'Neil.

Ms. Maureen O'Neil: I'll take a stab first at Keith's question and then at Madame McDonough's direct question about the interns.

On the question of corruption and the obligation to report, as we know from the Singapore meetings, the World Bank is taking a very strong stand on this question now. Quite surprisingly, some ministers—in fact, the Secretary of State for International Development from the U.K.—took some issue with that.

I should note that I mentioned one example where research, which IDRC is supporting, being done by researchers within their own countries has focused on this question. I mentioned the problem with corruption in the health system in Senegal, which in fact has resulted in some action.

We also supported the work of John Githongo, who had the responsibility in Kenya and was appointed by the government, in fact, to look at corrupt practices there. As you may know, having done his job well—and we supported the applied research that went along with some of his work—he was obliged to actually leave the country for some time because he had hit a rather sore spot. However, prosecutions are going on in Kenya now.

I agree that corruption is a big issue. Applied research can be extraordinarily helpful in outlining exactly what is at play.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: If you want to discuss corruption, I can start us off straightaway.

Ms. Maureen O'Neil: I wanted first of all to answer Ms. McDonough...

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, but let Madam O'Neil respond about the internship.

● (1630)

Ms. Maureen O'Neil: We have not been big users of the intern program. I recall, though I will have to check and get the information for you, that some years ago in some of the work we were doing on new technologies, we had an intern working in our South African office. I will have to check on that. We have our own *stagiare* programs, particularly for people who are doing doctoral dissertations with us. So we haven't been a big user of that program.

On your second question, with reference to how do you do the trade-off, I guess I would ask if there is indeed a trade-off. I'm not sure there is a trade-off between the advancing democracy and dealing with particular needs in countries. In fact, as countries become more open and transparent, usually at the same time you see an increasing investment being made in health, in education, in those areas that are crucial for people to improve their lives.

On the question of political agenda, sometimes there are extremely important political agendas that involve all agencies of government. I would think a good example would be the questions posed about how is it that all Canadian agencies can work together to provide some kind of support for any kind of movement on improved situations in the Middle East. So IDRC has supported Canada in its role as gavel of the refugee working group that came out of the now almost forgotten Oslo peace process on the issue of refugees, and has supported a joint research by Syrians, Jordanians, Israelis, Lebanese. It sounds impossible to say that today, but indeed that work has been extremely useful. So yes, one can say that is a major political agenda.

One could also say that the work that has gone on in a country like Cuba some years ago, where IDRC supported really the first work that made it possible, gave opportunities to economists who had previously only been trained in Marxist economics to actually be trained in other than Marxist economics. One could say yes, at a very high level, one can say that's a political agenda. But really it is helping to connect them with the rest of the world.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Roy.

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Monsieur Martin, thank you very much for your question about democracy, development, and corruption. I think you're right, corruption is such a huge phenomenon all over the world. It's not an African thing, it's not Latin American. We have seen what is going on in the United States and in Europe. We have a problem in the world.

However, I think that democracy is the only system that can at least at some point put the question of corruption on the agenda. Recently in Mali, as you know, we offered the Malian government to build an auditor general system like we have in this country, and they did that. When the Malian auditor general published his first report, it was huge news for a week in Mali, because it was revealing a lot of things. It was gossiping before that. There was a lot of extraordinary information for people there. We will not be able to do that in Zimbabwe. We can work to build institutions that will correct what has to be corrected in a country like Mali, but not in Zimbabwe.

I think we should also pay a lot of attention to the peer review in Africa. It's not a great system. It did not produce a lot of things; it's a new system. Well, that's a system that the Africans have developed by themselves. It's difficult to condemn the colleague who is the head of state, and blah, blah, blah, but recently the African Commission was quite clear in condemning Mugabe, the Mugabe regime, in very clear text and what it has produced for the Zimbabwe citizen.

We approach political parties cautiously. I ask Wayne MacKay to say to you why, and I'm sure he will talk about Egypt.

The Chair: Very quickly, and then we have to suspend. We have other witnesses waiting.

● (1635)

Mr. Wayne MacKay: I'll be very brief.

I wanted to perhaps use Egypt as an example of the importance of caution. In the brief that Mr. Roy put forward, democracy can't be imported, it has to be fitted into a different context. Egypt is a very good example of that. During our week there we met with 30 different groups, from the Muslim Brotherhood to a host of different agencies, and everyone had different needs. Perhaps the most important point, and this often is the case, the level of free speech even in Mubarak's recent contested elections is not what we have in Canada.

One of the reasons for caution is you don't want people you've met with to pay the price in a regime after you've left. You may leave and not have to face any consequences, but they may. I think the level of free speech and the level of dissent is very different, and the tolerance of dissent is very different in different countries. So when you're talking about grassroots civil society parties you have to be very cautious. That would be one good example of why we do that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I do note that in your document you said we had to be very careful. I think over the next period of time we as committee members have to be cautious as well. Democratization is not westernization. Sometimes we have this concept of what democracy should be and should have to look like. Other parts of the world are pushing back from that. How we can gain some success without just having it as the western model is going to be a major challenge.

Thank you very much for coming.

We will suspend for a few moments and ask our other presenters to please take their places.

● _____ (Pause) _____ ●

● (1640)

The Chair: Order. We'll bring this meeting back to order.

I'm very pleased to have with us this afternoon, first of all, from the Parliamentary Centre, the president and CEO, Robert Miller.

Welcome.

Mr. Robert Miller (President and Chief Executive Officer, Parliamentary Centre): Thank you.

The Chair: Also from the Parliamentary Centre, we have Jean-Marc Hamel, a member of the board of directors. We're also very pleased to have, from the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, John W. Graham.

I am going to ask that you keep your presentations from eight to ten minutes. It gives the opportunity for more questions. We are going to time you and try to keep this meeting running.

Mr. Miller, would you like to begin? Thank you for appearing before our committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, good afternoon.

[*English*]

The Canadian Constitution recognizes “peace, order and good government” as fundamental purposes of the state. It's now understood, if not universally accepted, by the international community that good government is a requirement and an essential element of sustainable development. Democracy—citizen voice in government and government accountability to citizens—is increasingly recognized as a global norm.

But democracy and good government do not happen automatically—far from it. They're the result of a long, hard, and frequently dangerous struggle by citizens over many years. Democratic development is the effort to assist that struggle through peaceful international cooperation. It follows that support for democratic development should be seen as a Canadian service to the world.

Some people believe that other countries do democratic development better than we do and that we should copy their approach. I believe that Canadians do this work as well as anybody in the world and that we should concentrate our attention on strengthening our own approach.

The Canadian approach has two key elements. First of all, over the last twenty years we have developed a strong family of institutions doing this work. In the early 1990s the Department of Foreign Affairs and ClDA began to fund programs in democratic development. Since then, that funding has grown substantially. Out of it has grown a strong family of Canadian institutions that specialize in delivering programs of assistance in many different areas. In our case, the Parliamentary Centre has specialized for the last fifteen years in a key area of democratic development, namely the strengthening of political institutions and processes in eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Secondly, we've developed over those years a distinct philosophy of cooperation. Canadians have a clear and distinct approach to cooperation that's appreciated by many of our partners. We support the efforts of people to strengthen their own democratic institutions; we don't attempt to export ours. We share our rich experience and ongoing struggles to reform and develop Canadian democracy, while acknowledging both our successes and our failures. We try to keep ideological baggage to a minimum, preferring results to rhetoric. Most importantly, we believe that democratic development should be practised democratically, between equals.

Democracy is a complex of institutions, practices, and values—I don't need to tell the people at this table that—that develop slowly. It follows that assistance to democratic development must go beyond the relatively short-term, project-by-project approach that has characterized international assistance in the past.

The Canadian government has begun to implement a new approach to strengthening results. Among initiatives that should be recognized and I would say encouraged by the committee is the formation of the Democracy Council, which brings the Department of Foreign Affairs and CIDA together with a family of so-called arm's-length organizations of which the Parliamentary Centre is one. And secondly, I think it is important for the committee to recognize and encourage the fact that CIDA has been taking steps to develop a more strategic, knowledge-based approach to democratic development, particularly as it relates to the broader objectives of Canadian official development assistance.

Additionally, we recommend that the government invest in building a network of Canadian centres of excellence in international democratic development. An initiative of this kind would invest in competitively selected Canadian organizations to strengthen their capacity to innovate, apply, and share knowledge in key areas of democratic development. In turn, it would enable Canada to play a stronger leadership role in this critical area of international relations.

● (1645)

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I want to emphasize the important role of this institution, the Parliament of Canada. Together with elections, parties, and civil society, parliaments are key institutions in democratic development. They are, or should be, institutional bridges between citizens and the state.

The Parliamentary Centre was founded in 1968 to help strengthen parliamentary democracy in Canada. Over the past fifteen years, we have evolved into a Canadian-based international organization, with staff and offices delivering programs in many parts of the world. Leadership in the centre comes increasingly from people like Bunleng Men, who heads our program in Cambodia, and Rasheed Draman, who is the director of our African program, based in our regional office in Accra, Ghana.

For more than a century, going back to the founding of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Parliament of Canada has participated actively in international organizations and programs intended to strengthen parliamentary democracy. Throughout the history of the centre, we have benefited greatly from the support and close cooperation we've received from the Parliament of Canada as well as from the provincial and territorial legislatures of Canada. This support adds enormous credibility, resources, and leverage to our work.

In the spirit of serving the cause of international democratic development, we believe it would be helpful for the Parliament of Canada to adopt a resolution affirming its commitment to international democratic development and pledging its continuing—and increased, if possible—support for programs of assistance in parliamentary development.

Thank you very much. I look forward to our discussion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Miller.

Monsieur Hamel.

Mr. Jean-Marc Hamel (Member, Board of Directors, Parliamentary Centre): Mr. Chairman, I first would like to apologize for missing the very beginning; I was tied up.

I wish to express also our chairman's regret at not being able to be here this afternoon. Monsieur Robert Marleau, the former Clerk of the House of Commons and our current chairman, is out of the country. He has asked me to replace him today.

[*Translation*]

I have been a member of the Parliamentary Centre's Board of Directors since retiring from my position as Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

I accepted the offer to become a member of the board because I believe that the mission and objectives of the Parliamentary Centre complement the work that Elections Canada continues to do around the world.

Since the early 80s, Elections Canada has been helping countries that are seeking to develop democratic institutions. We have helped them hold free and fair elections by training election officers and returning officers and helping to prepare electoral lists. We have even drafted electoral and other legislation. But that is as far as it goes. Once a government is elected, Elections Canada leaves it to its own devices.

This is where I see a role for the Parliamentary Centre. We are in a position to take over where Elections Canada left off and help elected members to work effectively within the context of a democratic legislative assembly—a situation that is new to most of them. Although this sort of support does not enjoy the same high profile as that provided for elections, it is, nonetheless, at least every bit as important.

● (1650)

[*English*]

I will not go into more detail. I know you'll have many questions, particularly for Mr. Miller, who has already presented.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for having us today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hamel. Pass on our hello to Monsieur Marleau.

Next we have the Canadian Foundation for the Americas. Mr. Graham, welcome.

Mr. John Graham (President, Board of Directors, Canadian Foundation for the Americas): *Merci beaucoup*.

I'm honoured to be here, although it does strike me that coming to a committee of the House of Commons to talk about democracy is a bit like telling Prince Edward Islanders how to grow potatoes. However, I understand that the emphasis is on democracy in other places and on the practical support that Canadians can provide.

A few years ago I summarized the hemispheric portion of my experience in an article entitled "Election Monitoring in the Americas—Benefit or Boondoggle?" The benefits far outweigh the boondoggle. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Since 1990, the year that Canada joined the Organization of American States, 19 of its 34 members have had one or more of their elections monitored by international observers. In this period, the OAS alone has conducted over 80 observations. Millions of dollars, a lot of that money Canadian, have been invested, and hundreds of Canadians have been involved. This is clearly a major undertaking. But has it done any good? Has it changed the course of democratic evolution in the Americas? If you compare the dictatorship-dominated political landscape of the Americas in the pre-eighties period with the present, the answer is that the investment has been amply rewarded.

Unfortunately, there has been slippage. Very troubling in Latin America is evidence that popular confidence in the democratic system is eroding. That has little to do with the electoral process and much to do with the failure of expectations engendered by the promotion of democracy in the eighties and the collapse of respect for political parties—a bad situation, as political parties are of course the indispensable machinery of democracies.

Canada, especially through parliamentary networking and through the OAS, can do more to help parties and parliaments rebuild. CIDA has good governance programs in many countries. They need to be applied to political systems, not just to bureaucracies.

The usual mandate of an observer mission is to assess whether an election can be endorsed as genuinely free and fair. The approval of international observers helps to establish legitimacy both internally and externally. For countries undergoing a transition from authoritarianism to the beginnings of a democratic system, the observer process has been critically important, and if accompanied by long-term technical assistance has been shown to play a decisive role in facilitating that transition. In countries where a democratic culture has been all but extinguished by dictatorship or has never matured, expert technical assistance must start from scratch to build reliable voter registration lists and all the other electoral infrastructure.

The most spectacular vindication of this process was the Nicaraguan election of 1990. Another was South Africa.

In Nicaragua, the Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega had agreed to invite observers, in the firm expectation that they would be endorsing a Sandinista victory. When it became apparent that he had lost, Ortega had second thoughts and was eventually persuaded to accept the victory of Violeta Chamorro through the diplomacy of Jimmy Carter and Venezuelan president Carlos Andrez Perez. However, these individual efforts would have been futile if the observers and the advance preparations had not delivered a highly credible verdict.

More groundbreaking occurred in the Dominican elections of 1994, when the OAS mission of which I was the leader blew the whistle on election manipulation that had deprived the opposition of victory. A similar pattern was followed when the OAS withdrew from President Fujimori's rigged elections in the 2000 elections in Peru.

Not all observations have moved the democratic process forward; however, the evidence demonstrates that advanced preparation and election monitoring have contributed significantly to embedding a democratic culture. What is less understood is that these successes could not have taken place without disciplined attention to the professionalism of the observers and of the technical experts.

For several years the OAS would not accept Canadian candidates for observer missions, because they had been selected by ministers, often without regard for qualifications.

● (1655)

The present system works because international missions have developed high credibility. Success has meant that traditional electoral observation in many countries is becoming obsolete. Of course the objective is just that: to make observation by foreigners obsolete. Hence the importance of supporting local civil society organizations.

As a caveat here, we already work with civil society, but too often it is the civil society of well-educated and well-heeled elites. We must connect more effectively below these levels.

In those countries where uncertainties, corruption, or instability still call for outside observation, the approach is being rethought. The focus should include counts of what is happening at polling stations on election day, but sharpen on pre-identified weak spots in the process, such as abusive government control of the media, election transport, computer fraud, election financing, intimidation, the lack of transparency in the registration, and the improper security of ballots.

The principal observer organizations are sending in teams months in advance to determine the tilt of the electoral playing field and to locate the major deficiencies. In places where a democratic culture has not taken hold or is tenuous, the role of a few long-term observers can be more important than the activities of large numbers of observers who spend only a week in the country.

A major challenge for observer organizations is to find resources up to a year ahead of time. CIDA has begun to provide funding for election missions on an annual basis, and this helps enormously with planning. There are lessons learned from our participation in the Ukraine elections of 2004—and Mr. Goldring is certainly an authority on that and on other election observations—and earlier this year in Palestine.

One lesson is the absolute necessity of maintaining the impartiality of the observers. It is a mistake to recruit observers who have strong links to one side in a political contest. In Ukraine, the government party, with active support from Russia, was looking for opportunities to discredit the western observer missions by pointing to partisan links and behaviour. Some observers in the Canada Corps observers mission came very close to falling into that trap. Evidence of partial observation could have been disastrous, as the reporting of the western observer missions was one of the critical factors that allowed a peaceful transition to take place.

Twice in the last two years, the Canadian government organized election missions that were exclusively Canadian. There is a temptation to look upon these missions as opportunities to burnish the Canadian image at home and abroad. We go down this road at our peril.

Election missions must have credibility built on a cumulative track record to enable them to endorse or repudiate an election process. National missions inevitably carry political baggage or are susceptible to political baggage that can compromise that credibility.

What would have happened to the mission in Palestine if *The Globe and Mail* or *Le Soleil* had published religiously insensitive cartoons while we were in Palestine? Multilateral missions are better insulated from this predicament.

Of course elections are only one part of the process; other parts deserve more attention than they traditionally receive. We have successfully exported our access-to-information model to Mexico. This is a vital tool of the democratic process. We should do more of this. But it has not helped that a succession of prime ministers have been messing up our own model. Our image in this area and its value overseas would be greatly improved if we could reverse the steady erosion by governments of the powers of the Office of the Information Commissioner.

Some of the most basic lessons learned are about sensitivity to cultural differences, but that was covered before and I will leave it.

To conclude, I have been moving across a large waterfront and have not addressed one of your key questions: Where is the greatest need for our support? It's a tough question. There's a lot that we've done that's useful and we still should do in the Balkans, eastern Europe, Africa, and Central Asia, such as help with party architecture, including finance rules; governance at the municipal level; transparency; access to information; and support for civil society organizations. These are generally not high-cost operations, but with our limited resources I believe we should be guided also by knowledge of where we have credibility and potential to make a difference.

● (1700)

Here I will expose a professional bias. The logical area is Latin America and the Caribbean—places like Haiti, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Ecuador, Jamaica, and Guyana—neighbours in our hemisphere.

Some of this we can do bilaterally, some by supporting the work of the President Carter Center on the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Much should be done through the Organization of American States. No regional organization outside western Europe has struck out so boldly for the values of democratic governance. The OAS should nudge the region toward better governance, greater accountability, and more attention to the horrors of drugs and human rights abuse. It needs more support to do its job as the bulwark of hemispheric democracy.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, both groups, for your presentations.

Again, we will go into the first round of questioning.

Mr. Martin, you have five minutes.

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj is also going to ask a couple of questions at the end.

Thank you very much for being here.

Since I didn't get a chance to say this on the last round, in my 13-year experience with the Parliamentary Centre and with the IDRC, I believe that the taxpayer gets enormous value for money in what your organizations do. I have had a chance to see intimately what both of your groups do. I really think that we get a big bang for the buck, and I would just encourage you to keep doing what you're doing.

I have a follow-up on the last question that I had, and I'd like your opinion on this. I really think if we're looking at developing low-income countries, and we're looking at the gross and heinous abuses by leaders against their people—and there is a long litany that you know as well as I—I firmly believe that we need a legal framework on which to prosecute leaders who are engaging in the equivalent of economic genocide in their countries.

I want to take Angola as an example, because there is a narrow window of opportunity to work there just because of the oil surpluses that are there and the abject poverty that exists. So I would really be interested in your views on whether we need to work with other countries in order to develop a rules-based mechanism for prosecuting leaders who are engaged in the wholesale economic pillaging of their countries.

I have a second question. I just got off a plane from the U.S. a couple of hours ago. I believe that we really need to do a much better job of working with other countries at a governmental level and also at an NGO level—this is where I think your groups come into play—in terms of creating cross-border relationships that can develop a critical mass upon which one can affect public policy. I'm very interested in your views on the role you think Canada can play, and particularly organizations like both of yours, in terms of developing that cross-border critical mass to affect public policy.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Robert Miller: Let me be brief: legal framework, yes, if legal framework is understood.

One of the key messages in our work in parliamentary development is that legal frameworks are not about passing laws. That's a part of it, but there are a great many laws on anti-corruption and on other issues in the countries where we work that have no effect. They aren't overseen and they aren't implemented effectively. So much of the work we do in the field of anti-corruption—and it is an area of concentration of the centre—is focused on the follow-up oversight work by parliamentarians to see to it that laws actually work, that they're put into effect, and that they result in prosecutions and some meaningful difference.

Secondly, the legal framework has to apply to the politicians themselves. One of the major problems with corruption in many of the countries where we work is the political process itself, the method of funding elections, and only latterly have we begun to address those issues successfully.

Working with other countries is very important. This has become a feature of much of our work. For example, we're undertaking a program of political party development in Sudan at the present time with International IDEA, which is an international organization based in Stockholm. We're going to cooperate with a U.S.-aid-funded program run by New York University in Haiti, to a degree that hasn't been the tradition in international parliamentary development.

So I think you're pointing to the future, and it's something that all of our organizations have to learn to do much better.

● (1705)

Mr. John Graham: Very briefly, neither I nor my organization is an authority in the corruption area, but I would certainly point you to the work that is being done by Transparency International. The head of Transparency International in Canada is Wesley Cragg. They can address these issues much more usefully than I can.

One thing that Transparency International has done is develop an annual or a biannual humiliation index. All countries in the world are listed in order of the degree of their corruption. I think Canada has slipped a bit; we're now at number six. It's the sort of thing that, with publicity, can have some impact.

One of the great difficulties—and this came up in the discussion with the previous panels—is of course that in countries where corruption is most severe, it can be seen that western countries, western cultures, are trying to impose their values, and there is a resistance to that. So there should be as much effort as possible to develop and support homegrown resistance to cultures, and I think that's one of the things that Transparency International does.

On partnerships, we at FOCAL, the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, are very much in favour of the development of partnerships. We have very useful ones with a number of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll have to come back to you, Borys.

Madame Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is for Mr. Miller.

Mr. Miller, in the section of your brief entitled “The Canadian Approach”, you argue that a strong family of institutions is essential for democratic development.

Since 1996, Canada has provided China with many services in support of democracy and human rights in general, for example, providing training for judges and lawyers. Canada has invested $265 million in democracy since 1998.

How can you explain the fact that, although Canada has invested so much over the best part of a decade, democracy has not yet been secured in China? China is an authoritarian country, not a democracy. How is it that 10 years on, and after having spent $265 million, we have not managed to shift the attitude of the Chinese government with regard to certain religious groups and countries, such as Tibet, that are being destroyed? Can you explain this to me?

● (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Miller: I think the essential reason is because one key feature of the Chinese system has not been changed and will change only very slowly—that is, it's a one-party state.

The check on the behaviour of governments comes partly from what governments themselves learn, but it comes more from the knowledge that if they don't learn it, they'll be removed from power and somebody else will be put in power. Where that check doesn't exist, there's a real impediment to governments learning lessons.

There's no question in my mind that, in time, to address deeply some of the changes that are needed in China democratically will require the changing of the political system itself and the opening of that system to pluralism. That does not mean that nothing we've done over the last ten years with that investment has been valuable, because I think the effect of the exchange between Canada and China—the diversity of linkages that have taken place in the legal sector, the parliamentary sector, and in civil society—is beginning to make Chinese society a more complex society.

I can't describe to you how fundamental is the difference between the kinds of conversations I have with Chinese now and had ten years ago about the world out there and the kinds of changes that need to be made eventually for China to be a fully effective part of that world. But it is slow change, and the regime has made it very clear that the question of multi-party democracy is the last one they're prepared to discuss.

The Chair: Thank you.

You have a minute and a half left, Madame.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: This reminds me of what Mr. Roy, the previous witness, said about the length of time for which international aid was provided. In the case of China, 10 years on, we are just starting to see results.

What would you think about a Canadian approach whereby we choose the countries in which we become involved? I say "choose" because, in light of financial and resource constraints, we obviously cannot be present in every country on the planet that needs support.

Should Canada not opt to provide aid to a restricted number of countries where it would be possible to forge longer-term links and partnerships? The question is for both witnesses.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Let's have a very quick answer, please.

Mr. Robert Miller: Yes, I believe strongly that China should be among them, because we all have a huge stake in the transition to democracy in China being a successful one.

The Chair: Mr. Graham.

Mr. John Graham: As a very short answer, yes, I think the idea is a sensible one. If we disperse too widely, we don't have the resources to do the job, and I think that's what CIDA has been trying to do over the last year.

It's a difficult call. Does this mean we would withdraw the kind of support we provided—it's not very much, but some—for the elections in the Congo, which were a great success, and in other parts of the world that are not on our priority list? I think there has to be some sort of balance, but within that there should clearly be priorities established, so that we can provide the kind of intensity of work that shows a greater chance of producing the results you're looking for.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Graham.

Mr. Menzies, please; you have five minutes.

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

Thank you to our presenters today. I don't know if you were here to hear our previous presenters. I guess it brings me to this question. We have a lot of organizations, CIDA being one of them, and all of the witnesses we've had here today, and many others, who all seem to be focusing on democracy and how to achieve, promote—and certainly promote without imposing our values.... I'm glad you emphasize that, as it's very critical. We have an organization that's just gone through a conference, Global Oganization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption. All of these do great work.

The suggestion was made to form some centres of excellence. This raises a concern with me. Do we have too many organizations and not enough focus? The Department of Foreign Affairs funds IDRC; CIDA is involved in this very deeply. I'm not criticizing anyone's work, but do we need to focus this? Do we need to bring this down to one association, one body of excellence, if you will, one centre that can focus all these efforts so that we may be able to make a difference?

Look at the number of dollars we've put into development over the years. It's all well intended, but if we don't create a democracy that's able to handle this, that's able to sustain development, are we missing something very critical here?

I'd like your comments, if you would, about bringing this focus down.

● (1715)

The Chair: Mr. Miller.

Mr. Robert Miller: We should certainly focus in the sense of establishing priorities, and there I think the key priorities are policy priorities. The two that stand out for me at the moment are the relationship between democracy and poverty, and the relationship between democracy and violence or conflict internationally. Those are two great areas where I think Canada over a long period of time could focus.

Looking at the history of our own democracy, I think its great strength has been pluralism and diversity. We certainly haven't been singular in building our own democracy. There are many different institutions in our society that contribute to it.

What I've suggested is not that we go to a single institution, but that we recognize now that we have an interest as a country in building a limited number of institutions that have the potential perhaps to be global leaders in certain fields of democratic development. That's what I mean by centres of excellence. I would propose that there be some competitive process of identifying those, equivalent to what goes on with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, or goes on with the Foundation for Innovation, and so on; that takes a look at the capacity of these institutions, both what they're doing now and what they could do in the future, and says, "Let's concentrate a certain amount of what Canada's doing in a limited number of areas of excellence."

The Chair: Mr. Graham.

Mr. John Graham: I can support what Bob has been saying. I think it's important to note that a number of organizations who work in this field draw relatively little of their funding from government. There are civil society organizations, NGOs such as my own. Mine is not focused exclusively on democratic development, but democratic development is certainly a key part of it.

To add to the democracy dimensions that Bob has mentioned, I would say that democracy in education is absolutely basic. In the area that I know best, which is the Americas, Latin America and the Caribbean, there has been a decline in public education over the last ten years in practically every country in the region. That inevitably has an impact on the quality of democratic discourse.

And one other area, of course, in the same region, one of the great difficulties, is that the gulf between wealth and poverty has been growing. That has had the effect of eroding the confidence that people have in the democratic process and the expectations that rose up 20 or 25 years ago about what democratic institutions would produce.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Graham.

Madame McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much for your interesting presentations. I want to pick up a couple of threads and take the opportunity at the outset to say how really genuinely appreciative and impressed I was by the arrangements through the Parliamentary Centre to visit Haiti during not the presidential election but the follow-up election. I was very, very impressed by the whole operation.

I have one observation and one question. Reference was made to possible vulnerability when things don't turn out ideally—and one can never guarantee that they will—if a country tends to be a solo operator in the international observation role and the technical assistance. My observation, rightly or wrongly—and I'd appreciate any correction of this impression if in fact it's not correct—is that Canada might have been pretty exposed in that sense in Haiti, because there didn't seem to be much sign of other major international observers. I guess the other thing related to that is that it's a pretty costly undertaking for one country when we have a lot of different commitments. I don't say that to take away from the incredibly good job done and the importance of it.

The second one is that you couldn't be anything but utterly, totally overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task, the challenges that lay ahead, whether in terms of economic development, environmental remediation, basic infrastructure, human infrastructure, all of those things. How would you envision the kind of process that needs to flow through from that actual election process and clearly raising people's aspirations and expectations, and the follow-through on those many, many challenges?

Everything we've heard and observed was that it was just utterly unimaginable that it was going to be possible to eliminate corruption, for example, when the police were hardly ever paid, health workers were hardly ever paid, and prison guards were not paid. I'm asking, really, whether you have recommendations to put forward about how to ensure that there is some kind of appropriate magnitude of follow-through in what is such a herculean task.

● (1720)

Mr. Robert Miller: Let me make a very brief comment to say I agree with everything you've said. Certainly in beginning a program in Haiti we have the sense that—and we've worked in some difficult environments—we're probably working in the single most difficult.

The principle that I keep coming back to that's fundamental and that so often has gone awry in Haiti is respecting the people themselves and genuinely engaging the people in the society. It's so easy to get quickly to "We're going to do this for you, we're going to do that for you" and skip that part. We've been forcing ourselves to slow down, to start having a meaningful conversation, for example, with the speakers of the National Assembly and the Senate in Haiti so that when we finally do go forward, we're going forward in support of ideas they've developed themselves and have some commitment to. Often this work fails because that isn't the case; that very basic condition isn't in place to begin with.

On the business of vulnerability in election observing, I'm going to leave that to John, except to say that spreading the risk in these high-risk situations through collaboration with others is important for all of us, without question.

The Chair: Mr. Graham.

Mr. John Graham: These are big questions: the linkage between an election and a successful election. You were there, and it was a successful election. I think Elections Canada did a great job.

I would add that I think we were fortunate, because it was, as you point out, mostly Canadian. That did not get us into difficulty. Sometimes it will. There, it did not.

It did, as you know, help to create a more promising framework—and I use the term "more promising" as a very relative term—in Haiti. I have a colleague who is just back a few days ago from Port-au-Prince, and there is at the moment greater calm. There is greater promise that things will happen there than I can recall in many years.

The difficulty, of course, is fragility. It can go wrong very easily. Gangs can organize—gangs that are not yet disarmed—and there is now apparently an undertaking by MINUSTAH, the UN organization responsible for security under Brazilian leadership, to more aggressively disarm the gangs. If they can do this, that will make an enormous difference, because the authority that runs from the government in Port-au-Prince into the country is very limited and, as you know, sometimes totally non-existent.

One of the great responsibilities, I think, is to get the donors to pay more attention to the need for job creation. As long as you have a majority of the country, particularly the young people, who are unemployed or whose employment is only a fraction of their time, that's going to fuel the security problems around the country, and particularly in the Port-au-Prince area.

Despite all of the huge financial commitments to Haiti, there is not yet enough money actually on the ground to generate accelerating levels of employment, which are needed. Efforts are being made on education, but that's a sort of Sisyphus thing, with a huge stone up a mountain.

And more needs to be done to encourage a private sector. There is a small private sector there, some of which has an unsavoury reputation, but surprisingly there are parts of it that don't, and they can do more, with help and encouragement and the kind of fragile framework the elections created.

● (1725)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Graham.

I am going to take a couple of very quick questions. Maybe word them within 30 seconds, and then we'll get a very quick response.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Graham, you referenced the Ukrainian elections. Within nascent developing democracies, elections can be critical historic junctures. Canada has never had that size of observer mission. It was unprecedented—that was terminology used over and over—and it was organized in a two-week period.

Would you judge that particular mission to have been a success, and if so, what were the success factors? What led to the success?

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Goldring, will you pose a question?

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Miller, in your brief you indicated the key components necessary in democratic development as being elections, and of course the parties and the civil society. Perhaps you could expand on what type of expertise you've had in political party development.

The Chair: All right. Mr. Miller and Mr. Graham, do you want to touch those two questions?

Mr. John Graham: Was Ukraine a success or not? Yes, it was a success, and it was an extraordinary undertaking to put all that together in a very short period of time. But it was hugely risky, and I think we took excessive risks. It's a bit like Haiti, but more so. The Russians and of course the Ukrainian government were looking for opportunities to discredit western observation teams. What you're referring to, of course, was the third in a series of elections.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: I'm more curious about the success factors, not what the risks were. I think everyone's aware of what the risks were, but what led to the unprecedented success in a short period of time?

Mr. John Graham: I don't think that we Canadians can claim credit for the success. It was a collective, cooperative undertaking. There were a number of international organizations there, including the OSCE, the European Union, and a number of others. If we had been on our own, it would have been very different, because the difficulties we had in organizing that and training our people would have been exposed. They were not seriously exposed.

Was there success? Yes, we were part of a large and successful group. This enabled the coverage of the country to be much wider than it would have been otherwise. The credit goes to the individuals who were there and who obviously behaved responsibly in difficult and sometimes provocative circumstances. I would not recommend that process again.

● (1730)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Goldring's question.

Mr. Robert Miller: I believe that Canada should do a good deal more in the area of political party development along two lines, because how it's done is critically important.

First, we've begun to work on political parties in the context of building strong parliaments. As you know, political parties are a key part of a parliament, but establishing a legal and constitutional framework for the behaviour of political parties is very important.

Secondly, I believe that Canadian political parties themselves should become much more active internationally. There is nothing that prevents Canadian political parties from establishing arm's-length organizations—NGOs, in effect—to engage in this kind of work internationally. I think it's very important that the initiative be taken by the parties, because the message we want to broadcast to the world is that political parties belong within civil society, not within the state.

One of the major problems with political parties, in almost all the countries in which we work, is that the line between the political party and the institution of the state, including the military and the police, and so on, gets blurred. So the message that political parties grow out of the society and are an expression of civil society is a very important part of the Canadian model, which we want to make sure we communicate successfully.

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to thank you for attending. I have a feeling that some members may be getting in contact with your organizations a little later on. I know a number of them have paid very good compliments about your work. We're aware of that. Also, regarding some of the things in your submissions, we may look for further answers. So you may hear more from the committee a little later on.

We have an agreement among the members to postpone our committee business until the next meeting. I thank you for that.

The meeting is adjourned.

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