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**EVIDENCE**

## Thursday, February 1, 2007

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## Chair

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson**

# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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● (0905)

[*English*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)):** Good morning, everyone.

This is meeting number 39 on the orders of the day. We are continuing with the study of democratic development.

As witnesses this morning we have Mr. Stuart Clark, who is a senior policy advisor for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank; with him as individuals are Mr. Malex Alebikiya and Mrs. Fidelis Wainaina.

Welcome to all of you.

Mr. Clark, will you please start?

**Mr. Stuart Clark (Senior Policy Advisor, Canadian Foodgrains Bank):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all of you for making time in your first week back at the House to hear from us.

I have particular thanks for the chair and those of you around the table who have been particularly supportive of giving more attention to the role of small farmers in the business of reducing hunger and poverty.

We come before you today to communicate two messages. The first is that we want to make it clear that appropriate aid to agriculture is an effective—in fact many people say the most effective—investment in reducing hunger and poverty.

Canada made a promising start in providing aid for agriculture a few years ago, but more recently we fear that this is falling off the map. So we took the opportunity to see what Canadian efforts have already achieved, and that's the substance of what we want to say this morning.

The second message we want to send, which clearly is very germane to the question of good governance, is that local communities, civil society organizations, and farmer-based organizations and NGOs are especially important as the starting point for any aid for agriculture. They should not only be the final point; they need to be part of directing what kind of agricultural development takes place.

Those two messages are coming to you from the food security policy group, which is a network of Canadian NGOs working in international development that also includes some farm organizations in Canada.

We say food security is our business, but we're talking to you about agriculture, because we think that particularly in Africa attention to agriculture is essential to doing anything about food security.

Eight months ago, we started a project to give a voice to African civil society on the question of aid for agriculture—its importance and what kind of direction it should take. We therefore engaged consultants in each of three CIDA priority, sub-Saharan African countries: Ghana, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. I believe that you or your staff received the summary report of that research.

Tomorrow morning, we are going to host a half-day workshop at CIDA to discuss the particular findings of that report. But let me say that generally it was very positive about the start Canada has made in this area. The important thing is that this start shouldn't falter.

I mentioned that we wanted to give voice to civil society, so I'm about finished saying what I wanted to say.

I would like to introduce two visitors from Africa. First is Fidelis Wainaina, who won the 2006 African Green Revolution Yara Prize, is an agriculture teacher and the founder of Maseno Interchristian Child Self Help Group. This self-help group seeks to work with local communities to help their AIDS orphans and at-risk young people become strong, viable farmers. So most of her work is spent working with small farmers.

The second person we have with us is Mr. Malex Alebikiya, who is the executive secretary of the Association of Church Development Projects in northern Ghana. This is a network of 40 church-based NGOs that work in the area of agriculture, nutrition, health, and rural livelihoods. Malex is an agriculturalist and has worked in northern Ghana for the past 30 years. He was particularly important in our study, since he oversaw the work we did in Ghana.

● (0910)

I'm now going to invite first Malex and then Fidelis to make brief presentations to you, and then we look forward to your questions.

Malex.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you very much, Mr. Clark.

Before asking Mr. Alebikiya to give us his brief, I just want to recognize and welcome to our hearings this morning Her Excellency the High Commissioner of Kenya, the Honourable Judith Mbula Bahemuka. Welcome.

Thank you.

Mr. Alebikiya, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Malex Alebikiya (As an Individual):** Thank you very much, chairman of the committee, distinguished members of Parliament, and distinguished members of this committee. On my own behalf, on behalf of the farmers in northern Ghana, on behalf of the more than four million people who cannot feed themselves, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to meet with you and to bring our voice. We appreciate it because by spending this time with us, it shows that you care, it shows that you understand us, and it shows also that you have an ear for what we are going to say. It's particularly encouraging for us, and that's the reason why I have been able to brave this journey and this winter to come at this time to make this presentation.

First of all, I think we are talking here about poverty. We are talking here about four million people who cannot feed themselves. I'm standing here on behalf of the farmers and I'm standing here on behalf of civil society organizations in the north and the south, to add our voice to the many voices that you've already heard, to encourage you, and to ask you to support the agricultural sector particularly and food security for the poor in particular.

When I talk about small-scale farmers, I'm talking about them particularly in the context of northern Ghana. I'm talking about farmers who cultivate three to four acres, farmers who live off these three to four acres. From that land, they are feeding their families, they are paying their school fees, they are taking care of their medical care. That is their livelihood.

The reason why I'm particularly encouraged to come and make this presentation is also that if you talk about development in northern Ghana—and it's not a question of flattery—clearly CIDA has made an impact in the development of northern Ghana. It has made an impact on the side of the poor. I'm talking here about water particularly and its implications in terms of health, Guinea worm eradication, and small-scale agriculture.

Consequently, for northern Ghana, when we got the information that CIDA was going to intervene in agriculture, we were very happy, because that takes the input of the Canadian government further than water and tackling the basic needs and the basic lives of the people.

I have been part of the CIDA farmer project steering committee. Unfortunately for us now, it's very worrying that agriculture and small-scale production for the poor is, as Stuart said, dropping off the agenda. It is widely recognized that we cannot achieve the millennium development goals without supporting small-scale farmers and pastoralists. This is recognized in the millennium development goals, it's recognized in the documentation of the Canadian government, and it's also recognized in the document by the African heads of state.

In the comprehensive African agriculture development program, it is clearly articulated that agriculture is going to lead to development, lead to growth and to food security, equitable distribution of wealth, poverty reduction, and rural development in Africa. So it is also an agenda. It is not just the farmers who are saying so, because the African governments are also putting small-scale production on their list of priorities.

● (0915)

We believe that focusing on agricultural development for small-scale production is not just a responsibility, it's the first step to building the basic foundations for economic growth. It's also the first step in meeting the poor at their point of need.

Clearly, to attain the millennium development goals of halving poverty, meeting food security, and meeting the poor at their point of need, to meet the production of small-scale farmers, we are basically asking that the Canadian government show the way, in the ways it has always done. We think there is an alternative agricultural development approach, a proper approach. Once the Canadian government has been able to do this in the area of water, to do this in other areas, it should be able to show the way as far as proper agricultural development is concerned.

We are basically asking the Canadian government to stand on the side of the poor, to stand by small-scale producers, and to demonstrate an alternative agricultural development approach. In sum, we are asking that the Canadian government put small-scale agricultural production, put food security, as the number one item on its agenda.

Let's think about 70% of the rural population in Africa being able to feed themselves, being able to pay their children's school fees from the income they earn, being able to improve their nutrition and improve their health, and being organized in a way that they can articulate their views to the government. As far as we are concerned, organizing the 70% small-scale producers and supporting them to produce will then have a number of impact points other than just in agriculture.

There are many ways in which we can do this. One of the things that we want to believe—and this has been said before—is that it can also be done when we have a long-term agricultural assistance strategy. I think we have said this before.

Talking about proper agricultural development, one of the things I want to believe is that the civil society organizations, the farmer organizations, the NGOs, have been in this field for more than thirty years. We are saying that in doing this we have to consult with and work with these civil society organizations and farmer organizations that have the experience and with the farmers who feel and know what they want to do. We are talking here about looking at sustainable agricultural production strategies that take care of a number of pillars: poverty, food security, and the environment.

Honourable members of Parliament, Mr. Chairman, this is our message. At this point, I would like to thank you again and open the floor to wait for any questions for clarification.

Thank you very much.

● (0920)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

Before having questions, we'll go to the presentation of Mrs. Wainaina, please.

**Ms. Fidelis Wainaina (As an Individual):** Thank you.

Honourable MPs and Mr. Chairman, I am very grateful to be here this morning to reiterate what my brother has said here.

I would like to shift our thinking more to what the African small-scale farmers have to bring to the table, if we allow them. In working with small-scale farmers for the last 10 years of my life, one thing I have realized is that they are great stockholders of the problem facing us today.

I have spent about two weeks in Canada, and I've been asking myself this. What is the leadership of the Canadian government struggling with at this moment?

I have talked to various people, farmers, and members of Parliament. I have had a little interaction with some members of Parliament. I gather that their biggest question is how we solve the problem of global warming. This is at the top of their agenda.

I may be mistaken, and I may be taking this too far, but if we are thinking about global warming and Africa is not thinking about global warming, then we are leaving out a big proportion of our stakeholders, the people who are able to bring a solution to this problem.

In my work in western Kenya, I have realized that small-scale farmers live among the wetlands, the soils that we would very much like to preserve. We would very much like to see that they do the right thing.

My appeal is that as we think about solving this problem, we realize that by investing in agriculture we are in a real sense investing in ourselves. We are investing in the lives of Canadians, because we are one world, and what the Africans do at the grassroots level does in fact affect what happens here in Canada.

I would like to illustrate this. I have been working with communities that would not think of planting trees, for example, because they are thinking about putting food on the table. But in trying to solve this problem of putting food on the table, we are able to engage with them to the extent that they are able to see why they should set aside their land to plant trees.

We have seen orphaned children and orphaned young people, people you would call the least of the least, engaged in such an important agenda as global warming, in a way that they may not know, by planting as many as a thousand trees, after overcoming what is really holding them back. And those are issues to do with food and putting food on the table.

I would like to say that as a result of this we have been able to mobilize our communities to plant as many as 50,000 trees in western Kenya in the last year.

I am not sure there is an option for us to leave out these people who have such a big contribution to make in solving that which is holding us and that which is facing us. In doing this, I would propose a few other things.

We need to begin to see ourselves as partners. We need to be not only increasing aid to African agriculture, but rather we need to change our thinking on where it should go. We are saying that it matters.

If it ends up in the grassroots, we would be able to solve problems that we have struggled with in the last many years, and that is leadership of the African people. We will be able to engage the majority of the farmers, and these are women. We know they form 80% of the farming population. We know their votes count. But if they are preoccupied with putting food on the table, then they are not thinking about good governance.

● (0925)

We will be able to change the way the people engage their own governments by not passing the money just through their governments but by making sure it goes to the people who deserve it, and who then can hold their governments accountable. In this we are also bringing up healthy children. We have seen this. I have worked with malnourished children and mothers, and we have seen that an increase in agricultural production and the way the mothers engage with available resources does indeed reduce malnutrition. So if we are talking about healthy nations, if we are talking about health —I know there are doctors here—we'd rather work prophylactically rather than curatively. So we are saying that in engaging with agriculture with a majority of the people, especially women, we will be able to solve the primary problems that face us.

Finally, I would just urge us to understand that when we bring our resources to Africa, that is not all that is needed to solve these problems. Therefore we know that an increase in Canadian aid to agriculture is an important step, but it is not all that is needed. We are calling for greater involvement of the African people. We are calling for a greater voice for the African people in determining their future, in determining and developing and bringing forth the biodiversity and the strength that Africa brings to the globe, which is so needed because we are one world. I feel that when Africa is happy, Canada is happy, because you will not be so cold.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you very much. We will now move to questions.

[*English*]

It will be for seven minutes. We will start with the Liberals.

Mr. Eyking.

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Guests, thank you very much for coming here today.

Before I got into politics I worked with small farmers in Central America with the same sorts of problems. They were small farmers, and they were barely feeding themselves and they needed to go that next step. I helped with irrigation, varieties, and things like that.

There was a big success in Asia—I don't know if you mentioned it —with its green revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. It helped Southeast Asia become an economic powerhouse in a way because they could feed themselves.

Definitely Africa has a bigger challenge. Asia was mostly rice and dealing with varieties, and it was mostly wetland production. One thing about Africa, and you're well aware of it, is it has many different types of crops and livestock, and it's a vast continent, so each region has different needs.

There are many private foundations helping also, or wanting to help, in Africa. We have the Gates, the Rockefellers, the Soros, and the Buffetts.

My question would be, how are we going to be successful with this green revolution? The wish of the western world is to help, but to roll it out, because each region is different and has different needs—different types of irrigation, different types of crops, societies are different, some are more cattle farmers—how do we organize that aid? Do you see this going mostly toward the governments? Should we be going more to the UN? How should we organize our aid in these regions?

Those are my two questions. How do we have different types of approaches throughout Africa, and what kind of vehicle can we use with our aid if other private NGOs want to help?

● (0930)

**Ms. Fidelis Wainaina:** Thank you.

I would say yes, Africa has challenges because of its diversity, and that could also be its strength. I don't know the whole answer to this, but I feel that if we involved the people and concentrated on identifying leaders—because you have partners here who are also based in Africa. If we could network, do things like identify best practices, that would be one way that we could engage the people.

Africa is known to be a cultural country. There's nothing we can do about that; we are just cultural beings. A lot of what we do is affected by our cultural way of doing things. If we engage with African people, they would be able to help us think about their culture and how it affects farming.

I would say that a lot has to come from us, the Canadian people, to understand that Africa has resources. Its greatest resource is in its people. How you see us as solving the problem together with you, and positioning yourselves to be facilitators of this process, rather than fixing us, might be one way that we could begin to solve these problems.

The other one is to channel, to see that the information pathways to grassroots people are developed in such a way that aid can end up touching the people we are targeting.

I would like the input of other people on this.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Very briefly, because I have another question.

**Mr. Malex Alebikiya:** Okay.

For me, the starting point, taken from what she has said, is to consult the people. Before we even say we are going to come with a green revolution, given that diversity, what would the people themselves say they want? Is that the entry point to agricultural development for Africa? I think that is the primary question, before we even decide whether a green revolution is required or not.

I would say, what has the experience been of the green revolution? Africa has also had its share of green revolution experiences, in Ghana for sure—I know we had that experience in the 1970s. We are sitting here saying that despite the green revolution in the 1970s, it hasn't worked. What are the lessons that we have picked up from there that are going to make this one different? For me, that is the issue that I think we need to discuss or contest.

One of the things that small farmers in African agriculture have talked about is the issue of subsidies, the issue of liberalizing our markets to the extent that we get dumping and farmers cannot produce. I think these are the structural issues that we need to discuss before we even look at the technological issues.

Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

Mr. Dosanjh.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** I have a very brief question.

I can tell you my experience. I grew up on a farm in Punjab in the late 1940s and 1950s, a six-acre farm with 19 members of the extended family. The green revolution happened shortly after I left India, or it was happening then. There is now salinization of the soil, the chemical fertilizers, and all of that.

One thing that struck me in having gone back to India many times is that as you intensify agricultural production you are losing the trees, because people want to reclaim the land. They don't want trees because trees have shade, there are all kinds of other problems, and you have less land to grow food on. When you are talking about agricultural production and at the same time talking about growing more trees, how do you reconcile these for agriculturalists?

● (0935)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Ms. Wainaina.

**Ms. Fidelis Wainaina:** Yes, thank you.

Well, it's because we've seen it work. There is a way that you can mix the two if you are able to commercialize tree products. That's one way.

Bring in interventions that people can buy into and that don't affect the environment much. I'm thinking about issues like honey production. In working with orphaned children, I have found that giving an orphaned child two or three beehives is like giving them one great cow, in terms of how much income they can bring in.

Therefore, we're not recommending wholesale planting of trees everywhere, but we are saying that among these African farmers, there is a lot of land that is not put to use. And that's what happened in my case, when I started showing them how to grow trees and discussing indigenous knowledge with the people. They realized they had other places they hadn't used where they could put trees. They also began to experiment a little bit with the kinds of trees needed that wouldn't negatively interfere with crop growth. So with that on the ground, they would be able to sort that out. But it does work.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you. Ms. Lalonde, you now have the floor.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Thank you very much, Mr. Patry. I will be sharing my time with Ms. Barbot.

Thank you very much for coming today and for sharing your extremely important opinion with us.

When preparing last year's Doha Round, agriculture and small farmers were discussed intensively. We realized, after hearing various groups speak to us about the conditions there, that it was absolutely necessary to protect some African farmers against rules that would restrict their market access, and imports that could destroy their livelihood.

We also discussed agriculture when Canada's new foreign policy was presented, which contained nothing about agriculture. We discussed it because there was no reference to it in the document. And so we have embarked on this. We need to draft a new policy, we need to work on this.

I realize that we need to consult the people concerned, but I think that there is one decision that we must make now and that is to increase agricultural assistance for small farmers, especially in Africa, because that is how we will be able to tackle poverty and disease—as you mentioned—for undernourished bodies are more vulnerable to diseases. That is also how we will be able to tackle desertification. Trees are being planted in order to prevent desertification because desertification is what makes farming impossible. I also think that small farmers would benefit from cooperatives. Small farmers selling their crops individually cannot negotiate acceptable prices on their own.

Various measures could be used, for example, giving women access to funding. Canada, however, has to restore adequate funding. In this document it says that from 1990 to 2000, Canada's agricultural support in sub-Saharan Africa went down by more than 57%.

Of course, various players must be consulted. But there has to be a commitment to increase and sustain assistance in order to give communities the opportunity to prepare.

● (0940)

**Ms. Fidelis Wainaina:** Yes.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** You could speak in your first language, I also understand English.

**Mr. Stuart Clark:** What exactly was the question?

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Do you think we should start by increasing aid?

[*English*]

First we should decide to increase aid and then we can consult on everything.

**Ms. Fidelis Wainaina:** I think we need to be thinking about these things simultaneously. The fact that we increase aid does not stop us from thinking about design and implementation. I feel it is up to all of us, as partners, to think of where we want our aid to go and take small steps towards achieving the goal. It may be a logistical issue, but we need to increase aid, because that affects the cutting edge and it facilitates the process.

Also, realize that for farmers to get out of poverty, they will never really do that from small-scale farming. Therefore, there will be growth of other outgrowth activities that link the urban and the rural.

All that you have said about developing cooperatives would be good, because they will be farmer-led, as opposed to what has been there. They have been formed out of model structures without incorporating the voice of the farmers. Therefore, they would be able to control this. They would be able to develop local domestic market linkages within Africa, if need be.

My experience is that even bringing our products here is a real problem. We are exposed to double standards. We'd better think about trading with our neighbours first before we think about bringing them into Canada. I was here two years ago and I had the same story.

I would say let's increase the aid, but in the meantime, let's work at changing our thinking, in knowing that there are available resources in Africa that contribute to a bigger proportion of what is needed to solve these problems. What we are doing is positioning ourselves to facilitate that process of making it possible for all of us.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

Mrs. Barbot, you have time for one brief question.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Rather than ask a question, I would like to tell you about a community group in my riding, an urban riding, in the neighbourhood called Villeray. These people are involved in food security in urban areas. There are poor people in those areas and they decided to start a collective kitchen in order to tackle that poverty. They got the idea from peasant farmers in Peru who also do this. In order to ensure food security, they began buying collectively and planting trees. They planted orchards; when they realized that there was a significant amount of unused land in their riding, they decided to use it.

Their current project involves planting trees in urban areas, in school yards, near public buildings, and so on. They're doing this for the same reason you raised, that is to find a way to tackle poverty.

I think that you have clearly expressed what it means to think globally and act locally. When you request more aid, I understand that it is to enable you to do what you do very well and what you know how to do very well. You lack the means, however. I want to tell you that in this struggle, you have people on your side all around the world.

For example, we are facing the same global warming problems you are. It's simply the opposite problem. I think that what you are saying is extraordinary. And I would simply like to ask you this: given that it is women who often have not been the recipients of aid, can you tell us how we could ensure that aid will be put directly in the hands of the people doing the work, that is women?

● (0945)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

We will now move on to Mr. Obhrai and Mr. Goldring.

[*English*]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** Thank you, and thank you for coming. *Karibu.*

I grew up in Africa, in Kenya and in Tanzania, and I'm well aware of all the dynamics that take place with small-scale farming in Africa. I have been back to Africa many times in reference to small-scale farming and everything. I know the need for more aid. I know the need for this.

What is really, in our point of view, one of the most serious barriers is good governance in Africa. There is also the poor infrastructure, which has never been developed, and the poor irrigation. There's absolutely no system of irrigation. We rely on the rains, and if the rains fail, you have famine. You have deforestation that's taking place. In the area I grew up in, and this relates to the question of trees you talked of, there's an absolute deforestation taking place because of the increase of livestock, which is one of the wealths that the Africans see. There are strong structural problems before it can go.

Now Ghana has had success, because of good governance to some degree in Ghana as well. But ultimately it falls on them.

So before the Government of Canada increases its aid and everything, we have to address some of these main issues that go hand in hand. I've been to small-scale farming operations in Nairobi, outside of Kenya, in the Rift Valley, where Canada gives its aid, to see how small things do impact quite a bit. But I still think, ultimately, these good governance structural problems need to be resolved before there is any kind of green revolution in Africa.

Of course, we've put a lot of our emphasis and hope in the Doha Round, which would open up the agricultural market for Africa in the rich countries, which is also one of the strongest barriers for Africa.

So in terms of the NGOs that you are asking for and all these things, I agree with you one hundred per cent that the leadership has to come from Africa, from the NGOs, and I think Canada would need to work with the NGOs to work towards achieving these things here. So I think before we start saying yes, let's increase all aid, yes, let's do all these things, we need to also look at these factors to assist here to see that it goes. Am I right?

**Ms. Fidelis Wainaina:** Honourable MP, I do agree with you, and you're best placed as a member of Parliament to think of mentoring. I agree that this is the greatest need that we have—good governance, good leadership. You're the gatekeepers. You are the ones who are best placed to strategically position yourselves to talk with our leaders because you are stakeholders.

And perhaps more than engaging in reducing aid to us, you would increase your participation in moulding our leaders, in putting a voice and saying hey to Mr. Kibaki, our honourable president, in a way that he's not threatened—remember, this is an African man—and bring them on board to see that leadership would be—And they're doing a great job. Absolutely.

In some ways I feel like we have been misrepresented. But if you engage more in seeing us as called to mentor and to bring good leadership, at the same time you should realize that when the grassroots people are empowered, they can also have that voice to act, that they need a good road, that they want to harvest their water. There are things they could begin to do if you do find them. And we've seen that harvesting water is something that communities can do if they're facilitated. If they begin to act—

At the risk of taking too much time, I went through a university that was very much funded by Canadians, and I'm a product of what happened to me, because you put your money there. At this time we are saying that things do change, and at this point in our history we want that research to move out from the research shelves and come to the people. That cannot happen if we continue to fund the same structures as heavily, at the expense of causing them to move that research to their own people, who are contributing to paying for the debt we incurred as we were going to school. So we need to go there.

● (0950)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

Mr. Goldring.

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Ms. Wainaina, I appreciated your comments a little earlier when you disagreed that more aid simply would be the cure for the problem. I appreciate your comments on that because I think around the table here, and as is very commonly understood, the core to any sustainable development in governance or civil society is certainly sustainability of food production and being able to feed—A core to aid, or the most important thing, is to have the food aid delivered to feed the people, but more important than that is to provide the equipment and expertise and funding to be able to have the population sustain that food production in the following years.

So I appreciate your comments on that, and your comment that part and parcel, of course, of being most effective is the involvement of civil society with the governance of the region too, because all of these things fit together. There is no one simple solution to the difficulty here.

An interesting part of that, which hasn't been discussed, is micro-financing. We're hearing that it has had great success in helping people to develop small farms and agricultural projects. Could you explain if micro-financing has been effective in your region, and is this one area that can be explored? It seems to me that some of the statistics coming back are that it's 90% refundable or returned by these small businesses and farms involved in it. Could you tell us a little bit about its success or lack of success, and what you think could be done to improve that area?

**Ms. Fidelis Wainaina:** I would say there has been success, yes, but the question is whose success? And micro-finance is a good tool, but if it is not moulded to affect agricultural enterprises—and we all know that agriculture has a lot of variants—so that people will be more willing to lend to other people who are doing secondary interventions because they can repay.... But if you want to lend to women to go and grow their vegetables or to keep chickens, and they come and tell you that the chickens died, then you don't want to go that way as an economist.

So I would propose that this is the right place for us to increase aid, but to also be flexible and to think about other ways we can use micro-finance. I wish my East African friend were here. There is something we call *pesa taslimu*, meaning legal tender. How do we see African resources? Do we see them more in the way of dollars? If I had a cow, you would still call it a resource, but does that mean if I brought my cow as a way of exchange for micro-finance you would still accept it? So I would call for redefining what we call resources.

I would also call for incubating the poor, for systems that enable the poor to come to a level where they are creditworthy, because the kind of poverty we are defining here is a kind of poverty that keeps you out of the system, so that even accessing micro-credit can really be a big problem.

● (0955)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

Yes, very short, for 30 seconds, because I'm approximately out of time and I have one more questioner.

**Mr. Malex Alebikiya:** In our programs, we have micro-finance. I would even say that the whole concept of rural banks in Ghana started in the wake of the NGOs in the field, in terms of mobilizing farmers to make savings and credits at their own level and moving those through banks.

In our experience, the micro-financing we've done has been very successful, but it has also been successful in the areas where the farmers have access to a market for their produce at a fair and good price. Since I just have 30 seconds, I'll say that this has been successful, in my experience, and from the study that we did I think it came up as one of the prime movers for small-scale agriculture.

Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** My pleasure.

Now we'll go to Ms. McDonough.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to welcome all three of our guests, especially our guests who have come from Africa to share their experiences. I have to say your timing is perfect from three points of view, given the thrust of your presentation.

One is that you're quite right that this country is finally seized with climate change as a really serious issue, and I think you have helped to elucidate some of the relevance of your case for small-scale rural farming being at the heart of the strategy, from the African perspective.

Secondly, you may or may not know that this committee has been very much seized for two years now with the issue of directing our international aid particularly to poverty reduction, with that being very much the priority.

Thirdly, a number of members of Parliament have been in Africa over the last couple of weeks. I have to say, as one such member, that it was thrilling to visit both Kenya and Uganda to see the clearly overwhelming challenges that are faced, but also to see the very strong, impressive leadership coming from civil society, coming from local village councils and provincial governments and so on, around the very issues you're talking about.

I really also want, and I think we would be remiss not to do so, to recognize the leadership that has come from the food security network. Mr. Clark is a voice that is heard among others around the very fundamental issues you're talking about, again and again before this committee and directed to all members of Parliament of all political parties.

You have spoken particularly about understanding the connection between sustainable rural livelihoods and healthy ecosystems, but what we also saw, particularly when visiting, I would say, some of the projects in Kenya, was the very close connection between healthy rural agriculture and healthy bodies, in terms of adequate nutrition and of recognizing the double challenge faced by people struggling with HIV/AIDS. We were blown away by the numbers of people who are living positively with HIV/AIDS because nutrition was being addressed in a very serious way.

Also, I was extremely impressed in a number of cases in which young people were being brought into agricultural training opportunities that were turning their lives around. Some of the projects I saw in Uganda, as well as in Kenya, were directed at young people who in some cases were HIV/AIDS orphans and who were getting really good agricultural training for a lifetime; in some cases, in northern Uganda—unbelievably—children whose lives were being turned around, because they had been abducted as child soldiers and forced in some cases into child sex slavery and were now being reintegrated and rehabilitated, with agriculture as the solid base to help them turn their own lives around and to also rebuild their communities.

So I want to commend you on the presentation you've made, but also on the display of leadership. It won't surprise you to know that all members of Parliament don't agree on all matters, but I think it is not so much for you to say as it is for us to reaffirm our commitment to meet our millennium development goal obligations and our ODA obligations to climb out of the basement, where we are now, at 0.32% ODA, to at least meet the minimum of 0.7%.

The committee has also just come back from Europe, where we met with five European countries, all of whom are way ahead of where Canada is in this. I do not think you should take either/or for an answer; it has to be both/and. It has to be our meeting of those basic obligations for ODA, but also working at respect and knowledge, working in partnership with local leadership.

I have a very specific question that I want to ask.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** It is a very specific question about marketing. You can see I'm very excited about what we learned, and I want to make this connection.

● (1000)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Ms. McDonough, make it a short question, if you want to get an answer.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** I have a very short question about marketing.

I know we've tried to address the problems of fair trade and fair markets in North America, but do I understand from your presentation that one of your messages is that we would serve your interests better if we were helping to provide the support at the very local level for local and regional markets, which means transportation to local venues and so on?

Without maybe an either/or, is that—

**Ms. Fidelis Wainaina:** Precisely.

**Mr. Malex Alebikiya:** As we said before, the problem of markets also has a structural impasse, but in the context of the farmer, and Parliament organizing farmers, one of the things we foresee is organizing them and empowering them to the point where they can negotiate good markets for themselves, and linking them to those markets.

Ms. McDonough, I'll just give you one example. In our program, we have organized farmers—when I talk about farmers, I'm talking about men and women, because 45% of the farmers in this organization are women. We have managed to link them with big companies, Guinness and other big exporters, for markets. In that context, we have set up a social marketing company that is farmer-owned, and the farmers themselves are sitting on the board of this company. This company negotiates with Guinness on the price and comes back and negotiates with the farmers. One of the things I see as being very important is empowering them, giving them that market information and making it possible for them to understand the whole production and marketing chain, to be part of it.

As a result, what we have seen...we thought the farmers' production was low. Because there was an opportunity to get a higher price, last year we supplied 150 pounds of sorghum to Guinness. This year we are supplying 600 pounds from those farmers, without fertilizer, without anything. I'm not saying that is not important. I am saying that by opening up that opportunity, by their being able to understand that we are getting a good price and by being part of that process, they are able to go back and take their own initiative as to where and how much acreage they will put into this to get a good income for the other things they need for their families.

In my opinion, markets are important. The structural issues are important. Organizing them and making them part of that and empowering them to be able to negotiate is also important.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you very much.

I want to thank our guests, Mr. Clark, Ms. Wainaina, and Mr. Alebikiya, for being here this morning.

We'll recess for a few minutes before our next round.

Thank you.

● _____ (Pause) _____ ●

● (1010)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** In the second portion of our meeting this morning we have the pleasure to have with us from Partnership Africa Canada, Mr. Ian Smillie, who is research coordinator.

Mr. Smillie, welcome. If you can, you can start your presentation, please.

**Mr. Ian Smillie (Research Coordinator, Partnership Africa Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for inviting me to be here today.

I want to talk a little bit about democratic development and how it has evolved in Canada, how our thinking about the promotion of democratic development has evolved. I want to talk a little bit about what it is, why we promote it, and how we do it. And I want to talk a little bit about some of my own experiences as well in this area.

On the question of what democratic development is and where it came from, historically we've actually been very late to the idea of promoting democratic development in developing countries. Many countries in the west and in the Eastern bloc actually supported bad governance for many years in support of Cold War objectives and regimes that were acting in anything but the cause of good governance. I'm thinking of countries like China, Ethiopia, Somalia, Congo, Liberia, and Indonesia. It's only in the last 25 or 30 years that we've actually begun to think more seriously about how we can promote good governance.

The first foray into the idea of good governance was in the area of human rights. It was probably the Carter administration in the United States that started to talk more openly and more directly about the need to promote human rights through aid programs and informed policy, followed by the Netherlands, and then gradually by other countries, including Canada. So human rights was the beginning of this discussion.

Then in the late 1970s and into the 1980s we talked about economic governance, because we were beginning to see that many countries, especially in Africa, but not exclusively, were running double- and triple-digit inflation. Currencies were worthless, and the economies were in a state of free fall. Structural adjustment became the watchword of the 1980s.

During the 1970s there were approximately 10 structural adjustment programs a year. In 1980 there were 28, and by 1985 there were 129 more. Structural adjustment was a pretty tough cocktail of economic remedies that developing country governments were asked to swallow. Many did. The results, in some cases, were successful. In many cases they were not.

We moved to the idea of more democratic governance. We began to think about that more clearly and more forthrightly during the 1980s. During the 1980s, many of the military governments in Latin America began to fall, partly because of the economic conditions they found themselves in, and you had a return to democratic elections in many Latin American countries. Then, with the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, we could talk much more openly about democracy and how to promote it.

The promotion of good governance, as I said in the paper I submitted to you, is essentially about building effective institutions and rules imbued with predictability, accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. It's about relations between institutions and processes, governmental and otherwise. A UNDP report says it's also about protecting human rights, promoting wider participation in the institutions and rules that affect people's lives, and achieving more equitable economic and social outcomes. Governance for human development must be democratic in substance and in form.

Why do we want to promote democratic governance? Democratic or good governance, depending on how you define it or term it, is a key to poverty alleviation and long-term sustainable development. It's important to conflict prevention and conflict resolution. And it's very important to the better management of human, natural, and environmental resources.

In my paper I talk about some of the difficulties we've had in promoting this. I said that some critics of Canada's approach to governance lament the absence of coherent policies tying all aspects of the agenda together. A patchy project-by-project approach, with no obvious central policy and no central management, they say, is unlikely to yield coherent results. This may be true, but given the overwhelming size of the governance agenda and the limited track record in its promotion by any donor, healthy doses of humility and caution are warranted, along with a good set of brakes in the expectations department.

● (1015)

Given the complexity of the challenge, a case can be made for selective interventions in concert with other donors, aimed at learning what works and what does not. The apparent absence in Canada, however, of a place where the lessons can be rolled up, spelled out, shared, and remembered works against the learning that is so badly needed in this field.

I'd like to talk about three examples of how governance is applied or thought about from my own experience. The first is the Canada Corps that came onto the scene a couple of years ago with a lot of flourish. Through Canada Corps, we were to promote good governance and democracy, primarily by sending young people overseas on short-term assignments.

At the time, I was a lone voice on this. It was kind of odd that nobody said it, but we actually had a Canada Corps called CUSO, the World University Service of Canada, Canada World Youth, and Canadian Crossroads International. We had 12 or 13 volunteer-sending organizations in Canada, and over the last 20 years, all of them have been starved for funds.

When I left CUSO in 1993 as the outgoing executive director, we had a budget of $26 million. Today, in 2007 dollars, CUSO has a budget of $13 million. All of the volunteer-sending organizations have had serious cutbacks. I don't think we necessarily needed a new organization. What we needed was a rejuvenation and rededication of what was already there, unless of course you see sending young people overseas as the cutting edge, in terms of the promotion of good governance and democratic development. The problem with that idea is that those in developing countries who want good governance know what it is. Those who don't are not likely to be persuaded by young Canadians on three-month assignments.

The talk about Canada Corps has gradually subsided, and it's been folded into something called the Office for Democratic Governance at CIDA. It's too new to say what this actually is—it just started—but at least the title is more appropriate to the challenges.

Secondly, I wanted to mention the Pakistan environment program I was involved in for five years. CIDA ran this project for more than 10 years, and by 2002-03 it had become the leader among donors on environmental issues in Pakistan. Canada had promoted the development of Pakistan's national environment policy and brought together government, the private sector, and Pakistani civil society to talk about these issues and to promote change.

This area was and remains extremely important in Pakistan, but in the early part of this decade, governance rose to the fore in CIDA's agenda. CIDA decided it needed to have projects in governance. Today CIDA is supporting a project on the devolution of governance: decentralization in two districts of Punjab and Pakistan. That may be a very good project—I don't know anything about it—but it was done at the expense of everything we knew about the environment.

Our work on environment was about the governance of a very badly underresourced sector in Pakistan. We were the leaders. We were not a large donor in Pakistan, but we were the largest in that area. We had a voice, leverage, and the ear of government. Now we can't actually remember what it was we did in Pakistan on the environment.

The third area is diamonds. For the last seven or eight years I've been working on the issue of conflict or blood diamonds, which are the diamonds stolen by rebel armies in Africa and used to pay for weapons to prosecute wars. Over the last 15 years, the diamond-fuelled wars in Angola, the Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leon have directly or indirectly taken the lives of four million people. That's not an exaggeration; it's a fact that's backed up by a lot of study—four million people.

● (1020)

When the issue of conflict diamonds came to the fore in 1999 and 2000, the Government of Canada became very much involved and took this very seriously. We had what I would call a joined-up approach.

The Department of Foreign Affairs led on the negotiations for the Kimberley process, which is a certification scheme to control the movement of rough diamonds. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs was involved because they are in charge of diamonds in the Northwest Territories. Natural Resources Canada was involved.

We received support from IDRC, very generous support, and from CIDA in our work both on campaigning and in the creation of the architecture for the Kimberley process certification scheme.

About two years ago we began to talk about the development issues behind all of this. The Kimberley process is up and running and working fairly well. It's not perfect, but it's working fairly well. But the Kimberley process is a regulatory process. It's not about development.

In Africa there are more than a million, probably 1.3 million, artisanal diamond diggers. These are people who dig with a shovel and the sweat of their brows to dig diamonds out of the earth. They earn on average about a dollar a day. It puts them into the category of absolute poverty. These people were the source of the conflict diamonds. They are vulnerable to economic predators. They are still vulnerable to military predators.

What's needed on top of the Kimberley process in addition, now that we have the regulation in hand, is a development process. My organization, Partnership Africa Canada, and some others, along with the diamond industry and the governments of the countries affected, have created something called the diamond development initiative to work on the development challenges here.

The minute development came into the equation, our funding from CIDA ceased. We had received very generous funding, but from one year to the next, it simply dropped off the agenda and we had nothing.

It is very odd that we get support from the governments of Britain and Ireland, from a number of other sources, and from the industry itself, which is very worried about this issue, and not from our own development agency.

This is a governance issue as well, the governance of a very important natural resource for Africa. Seventy per cent of the world's gem diamonds are produced in Africa. Diamonds have never been regulated in any way at all in the past. Here is a challenge and an opportunity.

We need to be a lot clearer about what we mean by democratic development and good governance. We need to understand why we're doing it, and we need to learn and apply what we've learned.

I finish my paper, which I submitted to you, in this way.

I agree, however, with the admonitions found in all thoughtful critiques on governance programming: good governance does not drop from the sky; it is not a gift; it cannot be imposed. Good governance is unlikely to flow from a collection of disparate, time-bound projects offered by a dozen ill-coordinated donors. It cannot be transferred holus-bolus like pizza from a delivery truck. It must be earned and learned, not just by those for whom it is intended but by those who would help them. Effective application of the full governance agenda as we now understand it is still pretty much undocumented, untested, and uncoordinated. And it is far too young for dogmatism and certainty. It is old enough, however, that mistakes should not be repeated, and it is important enough that lessons, both positive and negative, should be documented, learned, remembered, and applied. Aid agencies have a problem with this sequence, in almost everything they do. But for democratic governments that want to promote their values elsewhere, doing this well is a test of their own understanding of and commitment to principles of democratic good governance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (1025)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you, Mr. Smillie.

We have 20 minutes remaining before going to motions. There will be five minutes by group.

We'll start with Mr. Wilfert, please.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, thank you.

Mr. Smillie, your admonitions are quite interesting. I concur with you with regard to the notion of a patchwork approach.

I will ask you a couple of questions.

For example, we have not really had a coherent approach or policy in terms of good governance issues. I don't know that we are necessarily the best model at times. However, I won't get into the Senate.

The national endowment in the United States is a structure that the U.S. uses. What would you create here? In an ideal world, what would you create in terms of the type of structure, the tools, and the resources that you think we need? What would really be our objectives?

We can't be all things to all people. What kind of target audience do you think we should be looking at, given the fact that as late as 1995 we clearly didn't seem to have the right tools in place, and we haven't really developed them through CIDA as an instrument?

**Mr. Ian Smillie:** That's a very big question.

Now that CIDA has created an Office for Democratic Governance, perhaps that is the place where lessons will be rolled up and learned and remembered, but in fact we already have an International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, and it is funded by Parliament. I've never understood why we need more institutions when we have institutions that are already there. If it's not doing the work that's wanted or needed, then it should be given the mandate and the marching orders to do it.

When I say it has been a patchwork approach, I'm not opposed to the idea of a patchwork approach because there is so much to learn. We actually don't know what all the answers are. My concern about the patchwork is that we aren't learning from it. We have a huge propensity in the aid business—and it's not just in this area, it's in the whole area—for what I call the failure to learn from failure. We promote success. We advertise success. We pretend we know what we're doing. We tell the Auditor General for certain we know exactly what we're doing. Everybody who has a project to pitch, whether they're inside CIDA or whether it's NGOs or anybody else out there, talks about the certainty with which the results will be achieved. The truth is that if we knew how to do all this, we would have done it years ago. If we knew how to create jobs in developing countries, if we knew how to end poverty, we would have done it a long time ago.

A lot of this is experimental. A lot of it is risky. We should acknowledge the mistakes. We shouldn't repeat them. We should acknowledge them, not punish them, but learn from them, and certainly not hide them.

That's a long, indirect answer to what you ask.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Should we have a clearer focus and not try to be all things to all people in terms of what we want to achieve?

**Mr. Ian Smillie:** I'm a bit of a contrarian on the idea of focus. We talked in the last couple of years about narrowing the geographical focus of what CIDA does. It's cut back to 25 countries, and I understand it is going to focus even more on 20. One of my concerns is that in the process of deciding which the 20 are going to be, we've cut off a lot of countries where there are real opportunities to do things. It isn't just Canada that's cut them off; everybody has cut them off.

A country that I know quite well and went to 40 years ago as a CUSO volunteer, Sierra Leone, has come out of a 10-year civil war, a horrible situation. They've had democratic elections. They've had a truth and reconciliation commission. They have a special court that is dealing with war criminals. They have an anti-corruption commission. It's not a great government, but it's the best government that country has had since independence. They are trying hard. They're not on our list. In fact, they're not on anybody's list. The Nordic countries, the most generous donor countries in the world, are not interested in Sierra Leone. Only Britain is, and to a lesser extent the United States. Everybody else is off looking for the better performers.

Mozambique, which is one of our favourite countries, is also a favourite country for 13 of the bilateral donors. Of course, focus would be good.

It would be nice if a couple of countries, at least, would focus on Sierra Leone, or if we coordinate this rush to focus and not allow countries like Sierra Leone to fall off the agenda.

● (1030)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

We'll go to Madame Lalonde, *pour cinq minutes*.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Thank you very much for coming, Mr. Smillie. I would like to have you come back because the document that I have just read has raised many questions for me. Your vast experience could help us further our understanding on many points.

I'd like to talk about one paragraph that I found particularly inspiring. On page 2, it states:

> A problem, however, for anyone spending government money in today's climate —one might say today's "fog"—of results-based programming, is the need to demonstrate cause and effect; to show that efforts aimed at democratization or improving human rights have actually had the intended results. This has become a kind of programming tyranny, one that has led CIDA and its grantees into an excess of planning and risk aversion, in what is essentially an emergent and risk-prone business.

I would like you to expand on this. Earlier you quoted Mintzberg, and I would like to hear what you have to say.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Very well.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ian Smillie:** The idea of results-based programming and focusing on outcomes rather than inputs and outputs came to the Government of Canada more widely I think in the early nineties. I think it came from the United States. It was one of the first initiatives of the Clinton administration in the United States: let's talk about what the impact is of our work, not the inputs; let's evaluate the results.

I said that this has become a kind of tyranny, because everybody who is putting forward a project proposal has to be able to say what the results will be in advance and then is going to be held accountable for the results, when in fact, as I said before, often we don't know. There are so many things that happen between the time a project begins—or between the time when an intervention in general begins—and when it ends that you can't predict what the results are going to be. Often the results are unintended. Often the results can't actually be attributed to what you're doing.

Social development is very complicated. It takes time. Let me just give you an example of the problem. If you're going to have a program to improve education in the school system.... Let's say you decide that the project is going to be improved teachers, that you're going to do a teacher training project. The input is a teacher training project; the output is trained teachers. In the old days, what we would have evaluated was how good the training program was: what did they learn? If you were thinking more about outcomes, you might actually measure whether or not the teachers are applying what they've learned in the school. If you're thinking about long-term results, it's all about the children. It isn't about the teachers or the project; it's about the children.

How would you measure the impact of your teacher training program on children, and how soon could you measure it? You obviously couldn't measure it within the life of the project. The project might have been for one year, and you might not be able to measure it for two or three years, and there would be other things that would impinge on it.

One of the problems is that in our need to get results we've actually forgotten about those kinds of results and focusing back again on the outputs and short-term outcomes of a particular project.

Development is experimental. This development business that we've been in for 40 or 50 years remains an experiment. What we have to do is learn from what works, and we have to make sure that we learn from what doesn't work—as I say, not cover up the mistakes, but learn from them. The fear of making mistakes, the aversion to risk, the fear that there's going to be an announcement that the Auditor General has discovered some failure, has made a lot of people, including CIDA and many NGOs, very risk-averse, in a business that is full of risk.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Thank you.

Would you like to continue, Vivian?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** You have 45 seconds.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Only 45 seconds!

● (1035)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Yes, because we only have 10 minutes left.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** What happened to Alexa's two minutes?

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Absolutely not.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** You are absolutely right in saying that we are obsessed with results. This morning, an extraordinary young woman came to tell us that she had been educated in a Canadian university. I don't think that could have ever been assessed by CIDA. However, the fact that this individual appeared before us made us aware of how important the work happening over there is. What you are saying is of great interest to us.

Furthermore, you spoke about democratic development and about how both those who provide the aid and those who receive it have to learn. I would like you to tell us to what extent you think this sharing of understanding and of what actually happens in reality has occurred. Do you think that it happens enough?

[*English*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Mr. Smillie, make it a quick answer, please, if possible.

**Mr. Ian Smillie:** It is a big question for a short answer.

People talk about how bad the situation is in many African countries 45 years after independence. I sometimes remind people that 85 years after independence in the United States they had one of the world's worst civil wars, genocidal wars against Indians, and slavery. So 45 years isn't very long in the general scheme of things.

As I say, I think it is very important that we work on things that we know work: the expansion of space for civil society, voice for citizens, free and open media, working on the judiciary—working on things like this. And CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs do these things.

I think it is very important for us to learn from them, and to learn what works and stay with things that work. We often abandon projects because we think they've failed. In fact, they often fail because we've abandoned them. I think it is very important to stay and learn and stick with it, to continue with it.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** That's a good answer. Thank you.

Mr. Casey.

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC):** Thank you very much. I find this discussion very interesting, and I want to just drift off a little bit.

You mentioned Sierra Leone. A few years ago, I visited Sierra Leone. I went with the parliamentary group. We got on a bus in Freetown, and when we were going up the street, the tour lady said, “That's a Nova Scotia house.” I thought I had misunderstood her. I'm from Nova Scotia. We have three members here from Nova Scotia. When we went a little further, she said, “That's a Nova Scotia house.”

I asked here what she was talking about. She said that in 1792, fifteen boatloads of black Canadians and former slaves left Alexa McDonough's harbour and sailed to establish Sierra Leone. I didn't know anything about that. It's not in our history books. There's nothing about it there, but I think it's a tremendous bind between Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone.

Some of the other members and I also went to the amputee camp there. There were 250 young people with their hands chopped off because of the blood diamond conflict you were talking about.

Anyway, it really did bring back thoughts when you brought that up.

We just came back from Kenya as well, and accountability is a big issue in all of these countries. One of the issues that came up was that a lot of funding partners delay funding if there's a question about accountability. Almost all of the recipients that Ms. McDonough and I and our group met with said that when money is held up for accountability reasons, people suffer and people die. I just wonder what your thought on that is. When there is an accountability issue or a concern, how should a government react? Should they delay money, stop money, or just keep on going?

**Mr. Ian Smillie:** I listened to a group of Sierra Leonean NGOs ten years ago talking about the problem they had in getting money. I talked first to a group of international NGOs who said the problem with the Sierra Leonean NGOs was that they lacked capacity and there were problems about accountability. Ten years ago, the Sierra Leonean NGOs asked me why it was that after all those years of so-called partnership between northern and southern NGOs, the international NGOs hadn't figured out a way to build Sierra Leonean capacity or help them build their capacity. Why hadn't they figured out a way to make sure they got the kind of accountability they wanted?

After forty years of development assistance, surely we know how to get accountability and how to make sure it's there. If we don't, it's because we don't know the country well enough. Maybe we shouldn't be there.

I had the same discussion two years ago in Sierra Leone. Nothing had changed. The international NGOs said the locals didn't have capacity and that there were accountability problems, and the locals were asking what the matter was because ten more years had passed and they were still no further ahead on this.

● (1040)

**Mr. Bill Casey:** We heard the same thing in Kenya. We met with a whole group of NGOs and they said they want to be accountable but they don't know the standards; they don't know how to do it. Maybe that's an area we could help with, in training NGOs and organizations to be accountable.

**Mr. Ian Smillie:** Part of the issue has to do with relationships. We talk about partnerships all the time, but what we have are not partnerships; they're contractual arrangements between people with money and people who don't have money. Often, these partnerships are not very solid, they're not very old, and they don't last very long. It really is a contractual arrangement.

One of the advantages NGOs have is that the relationships are deeper and do last longer, but often they are of the same sort. Over time, if you really spend time getting to know a country and really getting to work very closely with people, I think you begin to understand how the system works, who can be trusted, who shouldn't be trusted, how to protect yourself if there is a risk, and how to minimize risk.

**Mr. Bill Casey:** This came up in a couple of different areas about organizations. In fact, Canada's was one, but there were other organizations that held back money or delayed it. A lot of suffering was caused because of those decisions, because there was a question of accountability. Should donor countries or organizations hold back money if there's an accountability question once they start the process, or should they stop it?

**Mr. Ian Smillie:** Development delayed is development denied.

**Mr. Bill Casey:** Exactly. That's what we heard.

**Mr. Ian Smillie:** You shouldn't start a project if you don't have the accountability nailed down in advance. There shouldn't be cause after one or two years. Unless something is going seriously wrong, there shouldn't really be a need to hold up the project for accountability reasons. You should have sorted that out at the beginning.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

Sorry, Mr. Casey.

We'll go to Ms. McDonough, very briefly.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** I'd like to continue on exactly the same line that Bill Casey has raised.

It's quite literally true that, on the ground, grassroots organizations that have almost no resources but are working in various networks, coalitions, empowerment groups, and so on, were pleading the case that they want to be accountable and try to be as much as they can be. But there are two problems. One is that it's not asked of them until the money is half spent sometimes, and then they don't have the systems in place. Secondly, they don't necessarily have the knowhow and the capacity.

A specific question about that is whether you have suggestions about how groups in that situation might be appropriately responded to when there is some Canadian money in some of those projects.

Secondly, I really want to thank you for your comments about a little humility and caution being in order as we take on democratizing the world. I'll ask you quite specifically about what now is this new structure that has been set up, the Office for Democratic Governance.

Do you have some indication of whether or not there has been a collaborative process with the NGOs that have had the experience on the ground, literally for forty or fifty years in your case and that of others, to have confidence? Should there be a round of collaboration now to in fact inform and make sure we know what we're doing here? I think a lot of people are worried that some of this is about regime change by another name and a velvet glove.

**Mr. Ian Smillie:** On the first one, accountability is not brain surgery, and it doesn't have to be. The basic ideas of accountability don't have to be reinvented. Accountability to Canadian donors, whether they're Canadian NGOs, CIDA, Foreign Affairs, or IDRC, shouldn't be vastly different from accountability to anybody else or to local governments.

Part of the difficulty recipients have is that they have to deal with so many donors. They all have different rules, different forums, different timeframes, different budgets, and things that they will and won't include. It's extremely difficult, whether you're an NGO or a government, to put together a program out of the patchwork of donors and to remember what kinds of accountabilities they all want.

It wouldn't hurt for donors to get together and have a serious joint discussion about what they mean by accountability—what it means for NGOs, what it means for governments, and so on. Let's get some common standards here so that you don't have to jump through a Danish hoop today and a German hoop tomorrow.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** What is the appropriate process for doing that? I agree with you, but how do you—

● (1045)

**Mr. Ian Smillie:** It could be the OECD. It could be a United Nations agency. There are any number of.... Canada could lead on it. Different countries could take the initiative in particular countries. Canada could do it in Mozambique and Britain could do it somewhere else. But this idea that we're all different and all unique and that our answer is best only confuses people.

On the other issue, the Office for Democratic Governance, I'm sorry, but I don't know the answer. I wasn't aware until fairly recently that it had been created. I think it has only happened since the end of October, and I don't know where it is, so I don't have an answer.

I do notice, though, that democratic governance, which in the 2005-06 estimates for CIDA was $565 million is $900 million today, according to a CIDA document that I picked up the other day. That's a 60% increase, which might be heartening in some ways, but it's probably a coding issue. It's probably the way the issue was coded before. If it's not a coding issue, if it really is a 60% increase in funding, then that means significant decreases in other areas in a very short space of time, and an indication that, again, we're not staying the course on some of the things we had in place.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you very much, Mr. Smillie.

Thank you, colleagues.

We're now going to proceed with motions. We have fifteen minutes for four motions.

We're not going to recess. We're just going to keep going with the motions to save time.

The first motion, according to the schedule that was given to you by the clerk, is a notice of motion by Monsieur Dosanjh.

Do you want to read your motion, Monsieur Dosanjh?

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** Thank you.

The motion is before you. Do I have to literally read it, or do I just leave it and consider it read?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Just read it. It's not long.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** All right, the motion reads:

> That this Committee hold hearings, starting at the earliest, for the purpose of evaluating Canada's mission in Afghanistan and determining how the mission can be balanced, in particular to engage in more rigorous diplomatic and development efforts.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

Are there any comments?

Mr. Obhrai.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do understand the need by the committee to discuss the mission in Afghanistan. It is important to recognize that Canada does not work in a vacuum; Canada works with other nations to be more effective, to be more of a voice, and to produce results.

Canada signed the compact in January 2006 with the democratically elected Government of Afghanistan. The United Nations and 60 other nations around the world are a part of this compact. We have an integrated approach with this compact, to help Afghanistan do that.

In November I was in New Delhi for the regional conference on the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We are not talking about the military one; we are talking about the reconstruction. Every other country surrounding Afghanistan was there, and all these countries committed with Canada and the compact to help in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

We all understand that reconstruction is a priority—no question about it. If you don't do reconstruction, and the Afghanis don't recognize there is value to these things, they will of course feel they have been left out. We recognize that very crucial part.

We also recognize that security has to be provided. You saw the report that came out the day before yesterday. Over 1,000 Afghans died—the majority killed by the Taliban. Insurgency is there. It is very important that we do not have just one view, that we can only do this in Afghanistan, the reconstruction only, without taking other factors—number one is also the security aspect. That is why NATO is there.

But, thirdly, most importantly, we have to also promote the democracy in this country. We must support the government of Karzai. If there is no government of Karzai, then you have a failed state.

So is the Canadian approach to Afghanistan on three levels? It's not. It is a balanced approach, working with the international community to get the results we all want. As far as the Government of Canada is concerned—and this is the first anniversary of the compact—we feel we are providing a complete and balanced approach to Afghanistan. That is why we can't support this motion unless the word “balanced” is removed.

● (1050)

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** I thought I was supposed to speak to the motion.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Yes.

I have Madame Lalonde, Ms. McDonough, and then back to Mr. Dosanjh.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** I'm sorry that the party in power does not agree. Given everything we have read, from all sides, it is extremely difficult to support Mr. Obhrai, who feels that the mission is balanced. If it is, then a study like this should not be of any concern. We only want to get the facts. If the mission is not balanced—and that is what we think—then it is extremely important, for those reasons raised by Mr. Obhrai, to rebalance it or attempt to do so, because, let's be clear, that rebalancing does not only depend on Canada.

Yesterday, *The Globe and Mail* stated that the retired former general, Lewis MacKenzie, a highly esteemed man, said that he was concerned that there would only be 650 more soldiers assigned, for the painful spring to come. You are aware that we in the Bloc Québécois have also worked hard and we also want a balance. That means providing sufficient security and sufficient reconstruction in order that Afghans feel that this is their project and that it is useful to them, so that they do not once again turn to the Taliban and condemn NATO's armies as invaders. If there is not apparent and perceived sufficient reconstruction, then that is what will happen—all the experts have said so.

Just because from time to time a child gives soldiers the thumbs up—as was reported by a reporter who is a fervent proponent of the war and the work going on in Afghanistan—it doesn't mean that there is not going to be an extremely difficult and painful situation. I think that there truly is a geopolitical interest at stake in Karzaï winning. As long as this conflict lasts, we have to provide the means, otherwise Karzaï will be abandoned by the Afghans. Let us not forget that many people in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan are Pachtuns. The Taliban do not constitute a nationality, it is the Pachtuns who are religious fundamentalists. It is absolutely necessary to provide sufficient reconstruction and sufficient security.

We should also be talking about Pakistan and corruption in Afghanistan, but I think that the motion that I tabled before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development is an open motion. I could have specified what kind of rebalancing I wanted, but I did not do that. That gives us an opportunity to suggest the rebalancing if we feel it is necessary. That is our mandate.

● (1055)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you, Ms. Lalonde.

Ms. McDonough, please be brief.

[*English*]

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to argue strenuously for support of this motion. I think it's long overdue. I actually tried to argue strenuously many, many months ago that this is a focus appropriate for this committee. There's nothing more serious than sending our troops into harm's way. There's nothing more important than for us to continue to be very clear about what we're asking thousands of young men and women to do on behalf of Canadians and on behalf of the people of Afghanistan. If that isn't appropriate activity for this committee, I don't know what is.

I think it's particularly urgent that we do this at this time. We know the U.S. is about to shift thousands and thousands of troops, more firepower, and more military hardware into Afghanistan as it pulls them out of Iraq, and it's more important than ever for Canada to be clear about what our commitments are based on, clear about what we mean by a balance of diplomacy, development, and defence. There is an incredible responsibility and onus on each and every one of us to take that seriously. That's why the foreign affairs committee exists.

I'd like to propose a very brief amendment to the motion before us. It would simply add “and accordingly that this committee invite the appropriate ministers, departmental officials, civil society representatives, and members of the diaspora to come before this committee in this process”.

I think it's very important that we be clear about a comprehensive approach. When I argued for this many, many months ago, I kept being told that the defence committee was doing that. No, the defence committee is not doing it; they are doing their job, which has to do with looking at the defence part of Canada's participation. For us to turn down this motion is to say basically that defence is all it's about and that there isn't an equal responsibility around our diplomatic and our developmental obligations.

I urge support for that friendly amendment. I hope the friendly amendment would be accepted by Mr. Dosanjh.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** That would be fine, Ms. McDonough, if you can add something so that it doesn't appear that I'm limiting it to those four groups. If you can add “other appropriate witnesses”—

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** We'll add “other appropriate witnesses”. I'd be happy to see it expanded.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** I just want to warn you that we've got three minutes left. If we're going to friendly amendments, nothing is going to go through, because we have the opportunity to go—For me, when we say “hold hearings”, that means hearings that include everything.

Now it's Mr. Dosanjh's time. After that I have Mr. Goldring.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** I accept the amendment. I don't have a problem, because that amendment simply more specifically amplifies the motion.

I would just call the question. We can have this debate when we're holding the hearings or we should set aside two or three hours and have a go at each other. I have no difficulty with that. We all know the arguments. What we want to do is exactly what Ms. McDonough has said, so I simply say let's call the question.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Or another one.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** No, we cannot call the question like this. Unfortunately, there is an amendment. When there is an amendment, everyone is entitled to speak on the amendment. Now it's Mr.—

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** No, it's a friendly amendment—

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** I have a point of order.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** It's friendly, yes, but your friendly amendment needs to be accepted on the other side also, Ms. McDonough. Yes, it needs to be. A friendly amendment is for all parties involved.

Go ahead, Mr. Obhrai.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** I would like to tell my honourable colleague here, who is a new member, that we are not going after each other, as he just said in his statement. We are not here to fight. We are here to come to an issue, so the words that we are going after each other are inappropriate. I'm not here to fight with any of you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Go ahead, Mr. Goldring.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** I'm concerned that the motion presumes the need for the mission to be balanced without even hearing from the witnesses. I've just learned that a number of witnesses have appeared before the defence committee too, including CARE and Rights and Democracy and other groups, and here, reporting on this issue. There is the compact, and many other organizations have been working in a manner that we're presuming has been effective and is already balanced. I think it's wrong to presume that the mission is unbalanced before we even hear the witnesses.

● (1100)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

Go ahead, Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Chairman, I was talking about my motion, but Mr. Dosanjh's motion is the one before us.

I have a problem. I considered specifying how the mission would be rebalanced and in the end I decided to leave this open. I think that we can rebalance it while ensuring security as well. We don't know about this spring. Everything I am reading now indicates that there will not be enough NATO soldiers.

If all the testimony was telling us this, then we should also be making a recommendation about security, because without security, there will be no reconstruction. It is for that reason there has been so little reconstruction. If you do not include the words: “diplomatic and development efforts” and if you do not add the words: “for security”, then we'll end up simply with: “how the mission can be balanced”.

I would ask you to reflect on this because the motion is not satisfactory as it currently stands. I would also point out that my proposal takes all Ms. McDonough's recommendations into account except the mention of the diaspora.

It would be simpler to adopt my motion.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you, Ms. Lalonde.

[*English*]

Mr. Wilfert, did you raise your hand? No? Sorry.

I have Mr. Anderson and Mr. Dosanjh.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** I am before him.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** You are before who?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** I am before him.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** We'll go with Mr. Anderson first, and I'll figure it out.

Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** I want to re-emphasize some of the comments that have been made by a couple of my colleagues. I think this motion is unbalanced in itself because it's making some assumptions here that we obviously can't support. As Mr. Obhrai has said, there is an international agreement that has been reached, a compact that has been in place for a year, to which a number of countries have committed. We have a role in that, and I think our role has been substantive. It's also been balanced. So to bring a motion forward that seems to indicate that there's something more that needs to be done there is inappropriate.

I would like to take a couple of minutes to talk about some of the roles that Canada has played in that balance. It's obviously played a large role in the areas of local security. It's been an important component of what we've done there. We've also been involved in rural development. Everyone is aware that Canadian Forces have played a role in rural development in Afghanistan. Obviously they've played an important role in the area of law and human rights, and the establishment of them, and in economic and social development.

So I think Mr. Dosanjh's motion here really is inappropriate because it does not talk about the balance that already exists. We've played other roles as well. Obviously there is the work to get rid of anti-personnel mines and to get rid of some of the unexploded ordnance that exists in that country. We've contributed to the promotion of the rule of law of human rights throughout the country in trying to train judges and prosecutors. We've increased their government's ability to comply with international human rights treaties. We've contributed to rural development in a number of different ways and places, in key national programs, and in micro-financing. Obviously we've given support to the Government of Afghanistan's commitment to treat women with respect and increase the role of women and girls in society.

I think there is a balance within our commitment in Afghanistan, and we don't need to support this motion because we already have that balance in our role in Afghanistan.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

Mr. Obhrai, Mr. Dosanjh, and Mr. Casey.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** This is to my new colleague here.

Yes, I know you are very enthusiastically working for this, but you'll get your chance.

Mr. Chair, to Alexa, to this thing, we don't have a problem with listening to people coming and telling us and talking about this mission. It is a Canadian's right to come and talk to us about this mission. So to have a debate, as you are saying, is not a problem. The debate has been going on in the defence committee as well. What Madame Lalonde also said about listening to the people, and the argument she has made in reference to supporting the government of Karzai, and all the other things that would take place should we not support this mission.... It's a UN mission, and as we stated, it's through a compact that we have gone down there. It is the largest Canadian foreign assistance program now in the world, with close to a billion dollars committed for the next 10 years. This is an important aspect. Forty-five of our soldiers have died. Our soldiers are out there. So it is an important point, and there is no problem in having Canadians from all aspects of...coming and telling us.

The problem we have with this is when you say “rebalancing”. That is presumptuous on your part, before hearing from any.... It's in the motion. It says “balanced”, that “can be balanced”. We're saying that it is this thing. A lot of debate has gone into this up to now. A lot of people have come here and talked. In working with our international partners, who also have these debates in their own countries...nobody is talking about the fact that at this given stage this is not a balanced approach. It is a balanced approach.

The motions that are coming forward, both from Mr. Dosanjh and from Madame Lalonde, are talking about doing a balancing, and we are not talking about a.... Further on down the road, when we listen to the witnesses—and we have all kinds of witnesses—then we can decide. To come beforehand and say, “We want to balance something”, when Canada is committed, working already with its international partners.... That is saying this is a balanced approach right now. But there's nothing wrong in hearing from anyone.

So we have a serious problem. Let me be very clear from the government's point of view. We are not opposed to listening to Canadians. Canadians have a vested interest, so they can come and talk. This whole idea that we want to balance it is sending a wrong impression by saying things are wrong right now. Let's hear from the witnesses. We will bring witnesses; you will bring witnesses also, who will say that it is a balanced approach.

We also point out that this is part of the compact and what the United Nations and 60 other countries have agreed to do. That is a very powerful statement, when the United Nations and 60 other countries in this compact are working with us to ensure that Afghanistan does not go back. To say that is why we have a problem...because this motion calls for an assumption that things are wrong right now, which is why we are having difficulty. We want to make it absolutely clear that we are not opposed to listening to Canadians.

● (1105)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** I have a point of order.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** No, there is no point of order for the moment, Ms. McDonough. It's already eight past eleven. There is another committee and some members are sure to appear.

I'm going to adjourn the meeting.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** We will now return to our business.

We're still dealing with meeting number 39 and the committee is considering Mr. Dosanjh's notice of motion.

[*English*]

We're still on the order of today's committee business, on the notice of motion of Mr. Dosanjh. Mr. Dosanjh has the floor, and then after that we'll go to Madame Lalonde.

Mr. Dosanjh.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** Rather than actually getting into the merits of the whole issue, and to save everyone time, call the question.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** I just want to let you know that we cannot call the question on motions—

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** Let me then make my contribution.

Obviously, over the last year, there have been issues and concerns with respect to the balance of the mission, and there have been opinions from one end of the spectrum to the other. Those opinions have been aired publicly. Some argue that the mission needs to be balanced, or rebalanced, whatever word you want to use. Others argue that the mission is not in need of balance.

I believe we want to have witnesses come here, both governmental and non-governmental, to continue to explore the issue of how we can make Afghanistan more secure, how we can engage in more development and more reconstruction, and how we can engage in better diplomacy.

The motion before you, given the way it's worded, can deal with all three of those issues. I believe it is nothing more than dilatory tactics on the part of my colleagues opposite, the government members, to not have a vote on this issue.

I would simply suggest that if we want to get into the merits of the debate, we will have lots of time in these hearings to ask questions of different witnesses. We will be able to provide our own lists of witnesses to the clerks so that witnesses can be called. I think we will have a lot of time. I think Canadians need to know what's going on with respect to this mission. Government is usually evasive in its responses in the House. This is a forum in which we can explore all of these issues with experts who might be independent, and in fact with government ministers as well.

So I would simply suggest that we pass the motion before you, as amended with a friendly amendment.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

Mr. Obhrai.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In listening to my colleague across, I would say he is accusing us of not trying to hold the war to anything. That is not true. He has given an argument here that is very contradictory to the motion. He's saying we want to hear from the witnesses. He says we want to listen to these witnesses.

The defence committee did make a visit to Afghanistan. Even this committee could make a visit to Afghanistan, if they so desired, to see what the thing is and to understand.

He gave the rationale that he wants to listen to witnesses and everything, but the problem with his motion is that he has already made a judgment on that motion by saying they need balancing. You want to do exactly what you want to do and then call it and have everybody agree. I've stated quite openly and quite clearly that we have no problem in listening. We have no problem in going there. The difficulty we have is that he has already made a prejudgment on that. We know his position, and the opposition's position, with which the government has difficulty.

But in order to make sure that all Canadians understand that the government is not opposed to listening to Canadians, I propose a friendly amendment.

Can I, Mr. Chair?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** You're always entitled to propose any amendment. Maybe it will not be friendly, but it will be an amendment. Go ahead.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** All right. The amendment that we propose is simply this: that this committee hold hearings, starting at the earliest, for the purpose of evaluating Canada's mission in Afghanistan—full stop.

We have no problem if, subsequent to that, the committee makes its own judgment after hearing everybody. I wish to put this forward.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Okay. I don't think it's a friendly amendment. I think it's an amendment, and when the time comes to vote—

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Well, let's ask—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** —we'll vote first on the amendment, and after that we'll vote on the main motion.

*Madame Lalonde, s'il vous plaît.*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Chairman, now that we are sitting as a committee, I regret that the motion that I tabled at the last committee meeting was not considered first. Now we wind up where we are.

It seems to me that my motion could have been supported by all committee members. In fact, my reference to a “rebalance”, implied that the mission might have been balanced at one point in time, but that it's no longer wise. That could imply that this is because conditions have changed.

Regardless, I want to see an assessment carried out and the various components of the mission to be rebalanced, in order to ensure that this extraordinarily difficult mission in Afghanistan is successful. Canada can not ensure its success alone; the other NATO countries also have to be involved. Our assessment will also take that into account.

I am willing to vote on Mr. Dosanjh's motion, while pointing out that my motion was tabled first.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you, Ms. Lalonde.

[*English*]

We'll have Mr. Wilfert and then Mr. Casey.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** I wonder if, since he has difficulty with "balance", we might consider saying "to review the present focus of the mission". "To review the focus of the mission" is—

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** It means the same thing. The friendly amendment I put to the motion says exactly that. Let's hear from everybody and then make our recommendations. Please, let's not presume that there's something wrong. We want to hear from witnesses.

You see, here is the key point: it fulfills all the requirements that you want, but it takes politics out of it, which you are trying to put in by saying there is something wrong with the mission. Let's first hear from everybody, and then you can decide whatever you want to do as a committee member.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Are you suggesting there is no focus to the mission?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** No, I'm not suggesting that. I'm suggesting —

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** So to say that we want to look at the focus of the mission does not in any way predetermine anything.

**Mr. David Anderson:** What's your wording? Are you amending it, or what?

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** At the moment, we seem to have more friendly amendments and amendments out here than we have motions. I would like to try to bridge and then say we will examine the present focus.

You may determine the focus is great and we may determine it's not great, but "focus" in itself is not a positioning word. It doesn't have any connotation, in my view, that predetermines anything. I say we just look at the focus. I think that's a simple way out.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Put forward your motion, and I will have a look at what you're talking about.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that after the words "mission in Afghanistan", we add "to review the present focus", and then add what Ms. McDonough has added with regard to the issues of witnesses.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Do you want to repeat it again?

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** It would read: "That this committee hold hearings, starting at the earliest, for the purpose of evaluating Canada's mission in Afghanistan, and review the present focus", and then, "accordingly invite", as Ms. McDonough has indicated.

I'm trying to look at a bridge here so that in fact—I think we all want the same thing. *Oui*? Thank you.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** So the issue is whether your colleague accepts that as a friendly amendment.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** I just want to note—

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** Can you just give us a moment?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** I'll give you all the moments you want. In the meantime, I'm going to read it.

Mr. Obhrai, I'm just going to read it: That this committee hold hearings, starting at the earliest, for the purpose of evaluating Canada's mission in Afghanistan, and review the present focus". After that we had "and accordingly invite the appropriate minister, departmental officials, civil society, representatives of the diaspora, and other relevant witnesses."

That will be the motion, if it's accepted.

I just wanted to read it for you. This way we're not going to say, what's this?

Deepak, what do you think? Is it okay like this?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** I just want to ask you something. My thinking is that the motion that I put forward is wide and open, and it takes everything into account. By putting anything else in there, by doing these things, we are starting to send ambiguous messages out. I don't want to send any ambiguous message out. I want to say let's study the thing. Mine is as wide open to do whatever you guys would like to do. Whichever way it is, witnesses are yours to call; the same witnesses that Alexa has said she wants to hear from will all be called.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** We agree with that.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Everything can be called in that. Why do we have to put it in the motion? Let the motion be wide open.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** I really think you are saying the same thing.

Mr. Wilfert said he wants to review the present focus and to call any witnesses that Madame McDonough wants—NGOs and everyone entitled to come.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** There is an ambiguity here when we say "focus", and it can be read in any direction. We just want to take the ambiguity out of the whole thing. I see that the friendly amendment I put gives you everything you want, no side-taking. Again, I'm saying politics are out of it.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Can we vote on yours and this?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** You can vote on mine.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** We vote first on the amendment, then their subamendment, and your amendment. It goes like this.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Which one is first?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** If they agree among them, we'll go with them first. If it doesn't pass—

**Mr. David Anderson:** We'll go to Mr. Wilfert's?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Yes, to Mr. Wilfert's.

**Mr. David Anderson:** And then it goes back to Deepak's.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Yes, then it goes back to Deepak's, and then this.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Okay.

Mr. Chair, I just want to make sure—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Wilfert, Mr. Anderson wants to ask you something.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I just want to make the point that I'm not a regular on this committee—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** No, that's fine.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I think what Mr. Obhrai has suggested will allow the committee, hopefully, to have unanimity on the motion, and then you can go forward as a committee with the hearings. You have to decide whether the unanimous support for a motion is important or not. I think Deepak's is fairly open, and it lets you have your hearings in the fashion that you want. It will, I assume, allow the committee to be unanimous in supporting it. And then you've got what you want out of this.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Mr. Wilfert came out with a subamendment, an amendment to the amendment. Does Mr. Dosanjh accept it? I just want to be sure. Is it accepted?

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** We're discussing "focus" first.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** I will accept Mr. Wilfert's amendment as a friendly amendment.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Okay. What we have right now is as follows:

> That this committee hold hearings, starting at the earliest, for the purpose of evaluating Canada's mission in Afghanistan, and review the present focus, and accordingly invite the appropriate minister, departmental officials, civil society, representatives of the diaspora and other relevant witnesses.

That's what we have in front of us right now.

Mr. Obhrai.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** I want to go on record as saying that the reason we will oppose this particular motion with this sentence is that there is a political connotation to this motion. The motion I have proposed is far more open and has far more leeway, but the committee is rejecting it. This one brings it down and has thrown a critical question of focus in there, which is why I want to be on the record as saying that the government would oppose. I again would like to say that my motion, which calls for hearings for the purpose of evaluating the mission, is very wide open and exactly what everybody wants, but we will not have it.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** We have Mr. Casey and Madame Barbot.

Maybe we can try to go a little faster.

Mr. Casey.

**Mr. Bill Casey:** Thank you. I asked to speak two rooms ago, and I'm pleased to do so.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** I know.

**Mr. Bill Casey:** Everything has changed since then anyway, so it's okay.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** I know. That's why.

**Mr. Bill Casey:** I have two points.

First of all, I think Mr. Obhrai's motion covers everything. You can bring in witnesses and ask about focus; you can ask if there's a focus or a balance; you can ask anything you want under his motion. It's wide open. I think it would have a much better impact if we did have a unanimous vote and support for a motion. There are absolutely no restrictions on Mr. Obhrai's motion. You can talk about anything you want—balance, focus, diplomatic or development efforts—and I would support that.

The other thought is that I think we're going into a very changing environment, and we may be wasting our time, because NATO has predicted a very aggressive spring offensive that's going to cause things to change a lot. Some of the things we may talk about may not be effective or applicable anymore. If I remember correctly, the United States has just announced that they're going to put $3.5 billion extra into Afghanistan right away—billion I think it is.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** I heard you say millions.

**Mr. Bill Casey:** Well, it's billions. I mean three and a half thousand million dollars. A lot of the countries involved there are expecting the spring offensive to be aggressive and the environment to change a lot, so all of our deliberations might be for naught.

I cannot understand why the opposition wouldn't support Mr. Obhrai's motion when it opens it up to anything. There are no limits on his motion.

Those are my thoughts.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you, Mr. Casey.

Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Did you want to speak? You asked to have the floor.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** No, that's fine. I'll pass.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Mr. Goldring.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** I would certainly agree with my colleagues that Mr. Obhrai's motion is quite encompassing. The concern here is in trying to presumptuously re-analyze the issue to see how it is focused and then have some determination on focusing at that period of time when the situation is so fluid in Afghanistan. We know that the situation is changing, and there are upcoming offensives that will be affecting it as well.

I would think that Mr. Obhrai's motion is quite encompassing and would allow examination and evaluation by witnesses from the diaspora and any other groups who are willing and who wish to attend here. I, too, really question why Mr. Obhrai's motion, which seems to be all-encompassing, would not be quite sufficient, unless there were other ulterior ideas behind trying to have these ambiguous words like "examination" and "focusing" in there.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you.

I don't see any more people asking for questions. Can I call the question on the subamendment of Mr. Wilfert?

(Subamendment agreed to)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** We'll now vote on the motion as amended. I'm going to read it just to be sure:

> That this committee hold hearings, starting at the earliest, for the purpose of evaluating Canada's mission in Afghanistan, and review the present focus, and accordingly invite the appropriate minister or departmental officials, civil society, representatives of the diaspora, and other relevant witnesses.

That's the amendment as amended by the subamendment.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry):** Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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