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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Colleagues, welcome. This is meeting number 11 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Tuesday, February 5, 2008.

Our orders of the day include a briefing on the situation in Somalia. As witnesses, from the Canadian International Development Agency we have Nadia Kostiuk, the assistant general director of geographic programs and vice-president, Africa; and Ken Neufeld, director of geographic programs, east and southern Africa division, Africa branch. From the Department of Foreign Affairs, we have David Angell, director general, Africa bureau.

In our second hour we will deal with committee business.

I also want to welcome a number of other colleagues here. All of us are very concerned and very aware of the reasons for which we've asked you to come today, namely the events that have gone on in Somalia. Over the last couple of weeks we've looked at issues in Burma. Today we will look at issues in Somalia. Within the next little while it will be Sudan and other areas of Africa as well.

We look forward to your briefings. We thank you for coming.

We'll invite Mr. Angell to give us his presentation.

Mr. David Angell (Director General, Africa Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Chairman, members, it's an honour to appear before the standing committee to discuss Canada's engagement in the Horn of Africa, specifically in Somalia. I'll address the current situation in the Horn and in Somalia and discuss briefly Canadian and international diplomatic efforts. My colleague from CIDA, Nadia Kostiuk, will discuss Canada's humanitarian and financial contribution in greater detail, and then we would both be happy to take questions.

My comments focus on the four countries generally defined as comprising the Horn of Africa, namely Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. I understand that this committee will be addressing the situation in adjacent Sudan later this month.

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, the Horn of Africa's geography has been central to its political, social and economic development for centuries. Relations between the countries in the Horn—and especially between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia—are intertwined and complex.

Firstly, for example, there is an ongoing and serious border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The decisions in 2002 of the internationally-mandated Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission have still to be implemented. Neither country is willing to enter into negotiations without conditions, and both remain prepared to resume battle.

Secondly, Ethiopian troops remain in Somalia. The African Union and some countries within the region view this as a liberating and security force, others as an occupying force.

Thirdly, Ethiopia accuses Eritrea of inciting the large ethnic Somali population in Ethiopia to create instability, and of supporting the opposition forces in Somalia.

Underlying this dynamic are challenges within several of the countries that comprise the Horn, challenges relating to governance and human rights, to acute poverty exacerbated by endemic drought and food insecurity, and to internal conflict. To these have been added new security challenges including international terrorism, largely because of the weakness of states in the region.

[English]

Mr. Chairman, within the Horn, Somalia, which I realize is your principal interest, plays a crucial geographic and political role. It is a failed state that has been without a functioning government since 1991. Somalia is a centre of internal and regional insecurity, with continual humanitarian suffering, famine, and outward migration.

In the past two years, through the mediation of the subregional organization, the International Governmental Authority on Development, or IGAD, and supported by the United Nations and the African Union, a time-bound transitional federal government has emerged and a national reconciliation congress has been held. Thus far the TFG, the transitional federal government, has not achieved the required security and reconciliation and it continues to encounter active resistance by a largely Islamist opposition, whose resistance is inspired, in part, by Ethiopia's military intervention.

However, there have been encouraging developments in the recent past. These include, first, a renewed commitment to reconciliation on the part of the new TFG Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein; second, the preparation for the first time of an integrated TFG priorities and plan of action, which has the potential to provide the basis for a road map for Somalia; and third, a renewed diplomatic initiative centred on the new and exceptionally dynamic special representative of the UN Secretary General for Somalia, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, and a new African Union special representative for Somali, Nicolas Bwakira.

The UN Security Council approved the mandate for an African Union mission in Somalia, AMISOM, the implementation of which has, unfortunately, been slow. There are currently 1,500 Ugandan troops and some 600 soldiers from Burundi on the ground, with additional soldiers from two other African countries expected to arrive within the next two or three months. This remains a fraction of the 8,000 troops authorized for AMISOM and it is not sufficient either to restore order or to provide the necessary protection to the civilians of Somalia, and especially Mogadishu. Indeed, the UN Secretary General has indicated that the operating environment in Somalia is so difficult that a UN peace support operation may not be a viable option.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in Somali is judged by the UN to be among the worst in the world, with nearly 1.5 million displaced, aid being hampered or pirated, and humanitarian workers under threat.

• (1540)

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, Canada's diplomatic engagement in the Horn of Africa reflects a broader commitment to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security and to promote good governance, democracy and human rights.

With regard to each of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, Canada has—through its missions and mission heads in Kenya and Ethiopia—encouraged the promotion of good governance and reconciliation. We have encouraged respect for human rights, for international humanitarian law, and for international decisions and agreements, including the decisions of the UN Security Council and of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. And we have constantly emphasized the importance of each country playing a constructive role within the sub-region.

With reference to Somalia, Canada has participated in the International Contact Group on Somalia, the principal international mechanism in support of peace. The International Contact Group is reflecting on how to achieve greater impact on the ground in Somalia. Canada has endorsed this.

We are also undertaking targeted engagement in Somalia, working with local partners, to strengthen the media, to develop citizenship, to promote human rights, to empower women and to foster reconciliation.

Promoting the role of the media in Somalia has particular salience for Canada in view of the murder in August of the Somali Canadian journalist, Ali Iman Sharmarke, and his colleague, Mahad Ahmed Elmi.

Ultimately, however, Canada and other international partners can but help. It is for Somalis, working through the transitional federal government and other mechanisms, to ensure their own destiny. This point was underlined in a recent report by the UN Secretary General on Somalia. While circumstances do not permit formal diplomatic relations with any Somalian government, Canada maintains contacts with the TFG, including with the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ali Ahmed Jama, who is a Canadian of Somali origin.

[English]

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I would emphasize that the Horn of Africa remains an especially complex part of the world. The challenges are great, and in some places, such as Somalia, the tools at our disposal to address them are few indeed. But we will continue to try to find ways to improve human rights, democratic development, and governance in the Horn, not just for the people of the Horn, but for greater security and stability globally. And we will remain alert to new opportunities for engagement in Somalia, as and when the situation on the ground improves.

The government appreciates the concerns and contributions of the growing diaspora communities in Canada from the Horn of Africa, including what I understand to be the largest Somalia diaspora community in the world, communities that are succeeding in making important contributions both to Canada and to their countries of origin. And of course we appreciate the commitment of Canadian parliamentarians in helping to achieve lasting solutions to the challenges in the Horn of Africa, including Somalia.

Thank you.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angell.

We'll move to our second presentation, and that comes by way of CIDA and Ms. Kostiuk.

Ms. Nadia Kostiuk (Assistant General Director, Geographic Programs and Acting Vice President, Africa, Canadian International Development Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for the invitation to appear before the standing committee to discuss the work that CIDA does in the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia.

As my colleague David Angell has described, the Horn of Africa is an intertwined and complex region composed of four countries: Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Ethiopia.

I must say that CIDA's only bilateral program in the Horn is in Ethiopia, with its 77 million people representing roughly 85 percent of the region's total population. Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world, currently ranked 169 out of 177 on the United Nations human development index. It is in fact the largest extremely poor country in the world.

Our development programs in Ethiopia focus on poverty reduction, primarily through work to improve agricultural production and food security for the poorest eight million Ethiopians. The promotion of human rights and democratic governance is also a key priority. All CIDA programming in Ethiopia is delivered through international organizations, Canadian firms, and non-governmental organizations. CIDA's bilateral program disbursements, those directed by my branch, in 2007-08 are projected to exceed \$70 million.

[*Translation*]

Canada does not provide bilateral assistance to Eritrea, but can and would respond to humanitarian emergencies. There is a small local initiatives fund in Djibouti, managed by the Canadian Embassy in Addis-Ababa, that supports human rights and democratic government activities.

Canada's contribution to Somalia is primarily in the form of the financing of humanitarian assistance. This assistance is delivered by humanitarian agencies including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Food Program, the WFP, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as Canadian non-governmental organizations such as World Vision, OXFAM Canada, and Médecins Sans Frontières. These trusted partners are widely recognized for their experience working in Somalia and other situations of conflict or insecurity.

In 2007, CIDA provided approximately \$15 million to aid Somalis displaced by their ongoing conflict and flooding. Somalia received another \$15.6 million in 2007 from the UN's Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the CERF, to which Canada is the fifth largest donor.

Canada also provides non-humanitarian assistance to Somalia. The Canadian High Commissioner in Nairobi manages the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. This \$500,000 fund supports small governance initiatives in Somalia with the objective of promoting human rights, equality between women and men and the development of independent media, as my colleague just explained. Additionally, through its support to the African Union, Canada is contributing to that organization's efforts to resolve the crisis in Somalia, particularly in mediation, negotiation, and peace monitoring activities.

CIDA's decisions on funding for activities in Somalia are taken based on close consultation and collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

[*English*]

The delivery of programming in Somalia is very difficult. The chief constraint is insecurity stemming primarily from the ongoing conflict in the south between the Ethiopian-backed transitional federal government, or the TFG, and a loose coalition of Islamic insurgent groups. Humanitarian agencies report increasing difficulties reaching those in need due to the conflict and to the lack of respect for international humanitarian law demonstrated by, I must say, all sides to the conflict. Attacks on non-combatants, extra-judicial executions, and other human rights abuses have led to a dramatic increase in the number of people forced to flee their homes.

Nationwide, more than one million people have been displaced, one quarter of them just in the last three months.

Humanitarian organizations are frustrated by the denial of access, extortion at roadblocks, and intimidation or violence at distribution sites. Targeted violence against humanitarian workers has also become an important issue. Representatives from CIDA and the Canadian High Commission in Nairobi visited Somalia in November of last year and corroborated the concerns voiced by humanitarian agencies.

Médecins Sans Frontières announced just last Friday, on February 1, that it is withdrawing its international staff from Somalia following a bomb blast that killed three of their employees in Kismayu. MSF has indicated that it will continue to deliver their programming with the help of their local staff. However, it is too early to tell what the impact of last week's bombings and the subsequent decision by MSF will mean for the delivery of humanitarian assistance in what is already a very difficult environment.

Insecurity is less pronounced in the semi-independent northern provinces of Puntland and Somaliland, although the situation there has deteriorated with a border clash between them in October 2007 and with the recent kidnappings of a journalist and aid workers in Puntland.

The situation in Somalia is further complicated by pirate attacks on ships delivering aid, although no attacks have occurred since November, when France began providing naval escorts for World Food Programme ships. The U.S. Navy recently made forceful interventions to resolve pirate attacks on commercial vessels.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

The Horn of Africa remains a complex part of the world and constitutes a challenge for the international community. As my colleague David Angell emphasized, the region is of strategic importance from both an international and Canadian perspective. Despite longstanding challenges, we can see signs of progress in the region, especially in Ethiopia, one of the most influential countries in this volatile region, and on the continent. Ethiopia is working, with donor support, to address the scale and depth of poverty compounded by weak public sector institutions.

[*English*]

Somalia's challenges are very directly related to stability and security. However, in spite of the very difficult operating environment, Canada's assistance is delivered to those most in need, with close monitoring of those efforts. There is some progress, such as in the provision of emergency food to nearly 2.2 million internally displaced people and to other people affected by conflict or natural disaster. There is also access to medical care and sanitation services for nearly 27,000 people living close to the MSF-managed hospital in Galkayo. We're hoping that they will be able to keep that open.

I must say, in conclusion, Mr. Chair, that the Horn of Africa ranks near the bottom in the world, and indeed below the rest of Africa, on the human development index. Its peoples face the challenges of overwhelming dependence on international support.

Canada is contributing to global security in the region by investing in its stability through a combination of emergency assistance and support for sustainable poverty reduction.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Kostiuk.

We'll move into our first round, the seven-minute round. We'll begin with Mr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague, Mr. Wrzesnewskyj. I would like to thank our witnesses for being with us this afternoon.

According to the United Nations special representative for Somalia, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the humanitarian situation in Somalia, which you have just described, is the worst in Africa. That is a very troubling assertion, given what is happening elsewhere in Africa, particularly in Darfur, Sudan, North Kivu, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and what will perhaps soon develop in Chad.

We know that Somalia is divided into three regions, and that the two semi-autonomous regions in the North, Puntland and Somaliland, are relatively functional by African—although not northern—standards.

Human Rights Watch has harshly criticized war crimes in Somalia. A tally of collateral victims is no longer kept. You spoke about what was happening in the Mogadiscio region. The Somali President, Mr. Yusuf, believes it acceptable to punish a neighbourhood that has not blown the whistle on its insurgents. That is what he himself said.

Mogadiscio was once a city of a million inhabitants; today it is home to only 200,000. Some fifteen refugee camps housing more than 200,000 refugees have sprung up within a 60-kilometre radius of Mogadiscio. The situation is critical both in terms of humanitarian needs and human rights.

I have two questions for you. The European Parliament has demanded an independent inquiry into the war crimes, and the United Nations Special Representative, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, has requested that they be heard by the International Criminal Court. Will Canada be supporting this request?

Secondly, what is Canada doing with regard to humanitarian aid which, according to the Red Cross, is insufficient in light of the overwhelming needs? I know that we play a role through the WFP and the United Nations, but as a country, are we really present in the region, or are we simply giving money to international organizations and then claiming to have done our part?

• (1555)

[*English*]

The Chair: Borys, do you want to ask a question?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

With the limited time we have, I'm going to ask a couple of quick questions.

Ms. Kostiuk, you mentioned that in 2007 there was \$15 million in humanitarian aid provided through a UN project. We were the fifth-largest contributor. Could we get the dollar amount of Canada's contribution through this mechanism in 2007?

Also, it seems that we're unable to deliver the badly needed humanitarian aid. Somalia, after Iraq, is probably the most decrepit place on the planet right now, with the greatest humanitarian requirements. We're unable to deliver because we don't have the security in place to be able to do so. We put institutions in place—the African Union peacekeeping mission, AMISOM—yet we never came forward with the resources so they could actually put the soldiers on the ground. As you indicated, the soldiers who were provided through the African Union mission are inadequate.

Do you see any indication within your department that there will be an increased focus? You talked about the Somalia-Canadian diaspora, the important role they play. It was mentioned that there have been discussions with the foreign minister; I understand he lives in Ottawa.

What were the dollar amounts in 2007? Is there any commitment to guarantee that the African Union peacekeeping mission will succeed? Because it's failing at this time. How are we directly engaging this tremendous reservoir of knowledge we have about Somalia in our local Somalia-Canadian community?

The Chair: Who wants to begin? Mr. Angell?

Mr. David Angell: Thank you, Chairman.

With regard to AMISOM, Canada has not provided direct financial support to the AU mission, but Canada has provided considerable financial support to the African Union over the past number of years to assist its conflict resolution capacity.

If there were a transition from AMISOM to a UN force, Canada would automatically pay an assessed contribution of 3% for the AMISOM mission, in part because we've now contributed \$286 million for the AU force in Sudan. Canada is the fourth-largest contributor, and that contribution has been very considerable. That has been the focus of our engagement with regard to support of the African Union. AMISOM is the second African Union force; we've been the fourth-largest contributor of its first operation.

With regard to engagement with the local communities, we are in contact with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I spoke with him last week in Addis. I also spoke with the Prime Minister. In terms of discussion with the community in Canada, there's no structured process, but we are always open to discussion. We have a good dialogue with a number of a diaspora communities, and we are certainly open to continuing that with the Somalia-Canadian community. I know the Somalia-Canadian community does have a dialogue with the minister's office.

In terms of accountability, you know of Canada's very strong commitment to the International Criminal Court. We have very actively supported a number of tribunals in the region, including, for example, in Sierra Leone. I'm not aware that a decision has been taken with regard to the proposal by the Europeans, but certainly the gist of the proposal is consistent with areas where Canada has provided extensive engagement in the past.

•(1600)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Kostiuk, did you want to add a few comments? We're out of time, so it's on the humanitarian aid only.

Ms. Nadia Kostiuk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Very quickly, indeed we are not present on the ground. Somalia is not a country in which we've ever had any significant presence. I can tell you that in addition to the organizations I've already mentioned on the Canadian partnership programming, we have worked with a diaspora organization called the Somalia Canadian Education & Rural Development Organization. We provided some funding. The project is continuing on its own.

We do try to make sure there is a balance. But in a situation like Somalia, international organizations that are specialized in emergency relief are really.... That's why they're there. We work with them and through them as much as possible, maintaining the share that we normally have when appeals like this come up.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Kostiuk.

Now we'll go to Madame Barbot. You have seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Allow me to begin by expressing my views on the situation in Somalia. The situation in the Horn of Africa is one of denial, and it has been for a long time. We are told that Somalia is one of the poorest countries in the world. You described to us a situation so desperate that we can barely comprehend it. You tell us that no progress has been made. Canada is involved insofar as we donate money; however, to my mind, that is the easiest part, especially since it is a mere drop in the ocean when you consider Somalia's overwhelming needs.

Furthermore, no real effort is being made on the diplomatic front either. It is said that the Somali diaspora plays an important role. However, we know that when Somalis come to Canada they often face unemployment and other problems. With all the good will in the world, they are not really in a position to bring about change in Somalia.

Do the Canadian government and CIDA have a vision? Do you have a specific objective in mind with regard to Somalia? Or, in countries subsumed by suffering, such as Somalia—or indeed Haiti, which we recently studied—is it simply a matter of acknowledging the problem and appeasing your conscience by providing enough food to give them something to eat every second day? This is a serious question, I am not trying to catch you out; I am just trying to understand. Canada purports to seek a role on the international stage and has signed conventions to eradicate poverty, and so forth. Why is it then that we do not have a more coherent strategy to address the worst of the problems, especially when we know that their situation could well constitute a ticking bomb for the entire continent?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot.

Madame Kostiuk.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nadia Kostiuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ms. Barbot. You describe situations which are both very complex and very real. It is difficult for organizations such as CIDA to respond to each and every crisis. If you look at our program as a whole, you will see that we are present in Haiti, which you mentioned, and that we're also very involved in Sudan. Furthermore, we will be back before your committee in a few weeks' time to speak to you about our program in Darfur and Sudan as a whole. We cannot be everywhere. As is evident from the 2007 budget, CIDA resources are spread thinly and we always strive to target them more efficiently. We try our best, but in doing so we cannot be everywhere. That is why we try to find other mechanisms and work with other organizations. We want to be able to provide assistance, but not necessarily by means of a major program. That is the best answer I can give you.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I appreciate that you cannot be everywhere, but if Canada had a clear position, and said, for example, that it would not intervene in such and such a country... But that is not what you are saying. You are saying that Canada is present when it is simply not the case. I have a problem with that. Simply opting not to assist a particular country is not, to my mind, a problem. At any rate, with the sort of assistance that we provide people are going to die anyway, be it today or tomorrow.

I would like to move on to another subject now. Mr. Angell informed us that the possibility of transforming the AMISOM mission to a UN peacekeeping mission has been discussed. However, the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that it is no longer an option. Could you tell us what would be an option?

•(1605)

Mr. David Angell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The African Union has indicated a strong preference for AMISOM to hand the mission over to a UN force. This strong preference was reiterated last week at the African Union Summit as it was in the African Union Commission's most recent report. However, the situation in Somalia is so troubled that for the first time, at least to the best of my knowledge, the UN Secretary General has said that it may not be possible to send in UN peacekeeping troops.

As an alternative, the Secretary General suggested a multilateral mission, a coalition of the willing. In spite of the Secretary General's specific concerns about deploying United Nations troops to Somalia, the United Nations is nonetheless analyzing the situation.

All countries wishing to help Somalia currently face the same, significant problem: access is very difficult. As we do not have proper access to the country, it is very difficult to carry out our own analysis, to implement programs or to have meaningful dialogue with the Somali government. Traditional access channels are closed to diplomats and development experts from the majority of countries involved in the International Somalia Contact Group.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Kostiuk.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nadia Kostiuik: We have certain mechanisms that we can use in some cases. For example, our key partner countries can set up long-term programs supported by guaranteed funding. We use a host of instruments and partnership programs and, if necessary, we can also provide emergency humanitarian assistance. When the situation in a given country worsens, we rely on international humanitarian mechanisms, which are better organized. As my colleague was explaining, the current government is not truly operational. It is very difficult to work in such a dangerous environment without adequate tools.

The United Nations and other organizations have better access and are better placed to effectively invest aid dollars to improve the situation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Kostiuik.

We're going to go to the government side, but before we do, I would like one point of clarification. In your presentation, Madame Kostiuik, you mentioned that in 2007 Canada, through CIDA, gave \$15 million to aid in the ongoing conflict and the flooding that was taking place. They also received another \$15 million in 2007 from the UN Central Emergency Revolving Fund, to which Canada is the fifth-largest donor. You're saying that Canada is the fifth-largest donor to that UN fund. What is our dollar amount to that fund? Is that the \$15 million?

Ms. Nadia Kostiuik: It's not the \$15 million, Mr. Chair.

I would like to respond to that in writing, because I don't have that information with me, although I do have a technical.... May we please come back to you with that information? I know Mr. Wrzesnewskij was asking for it, and I meant to say that we will respond.

Thank you.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to the government side now.

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

I'll be sharing my time with my colleague.

I have a very short, quick question to David.

David, you just returned from the African Union conference in Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia. Can you give us a very quick analysis of the African Union meeting in reference to what was happening in Somalia? And then I will give the floor to my colleague.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Angell.

Mr. David Angell: Briefly, Mr. Chairman, there were two principal developments relating to Somalia, both at and on the margins of the African Union summit in Addis Ababa last week and over the weekend.

The first, which immediately preceded the summit, was a meeting of the International Somalia Contact Group with the participation of the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Said Djinnit. It was not formally an AU event, but certainly, with regard to the discussion of Somalia, it was a particularly important element of the summit period.

The International Contact Group is made up of perhaps a dozen of the countries, either as full members or observers, that are the most directly involved in trying to address the situation in Somalia. It was a very useful meeting, in that there was an effort launched to take the ICG beyond a process of discussion of Somalia and turn it into a mechanism whereby real change could be achieved on the ground.

The Prime Minister of Somalia, Nur Hassan Hussein, addressed the International Contact Group. It was a very important presentation. It was an occasion for the Prime Minister to put forward, really for the first time, quite a comprehensive, compelling vision of how the transitional federal government can move forward. There was a broad sense that the vision conveyed could form the basis of a road map for Somalia. So that element, not formally part of the AU summit, was extremely important.

With regard to Somalia itself, there was a resolution adopted by the commission that welcomed a number of the steps that had been taken, including the creation of a new cabinet, under the Prime Minister. It welcomed the process of dialogue that has been evolving around the national reconciliation congress. It appealed for support for AMISOM. It endorsed the role that AMISOM was playing. It welcomed the new contributions made to AMISOM. And it reaffirmed the importance the African Union attaches to a transition from AMISOM to UN force.

There were other provisions as well, for example, with regard to the humanitarian situation. It was a very strong statement, and quite a lengthy resolution was adopted.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angell.

We will go to Madame Boucher.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Thank you to our witnesses for being here this afternoon. I am just filling in for a colleague today. It is unsettling to learn about what is happening in some countries when we are so spoiled here in Canada. It makes us realize how lucky we are.

You spoke about the International Contact Group. What exactly does this group do and how involved is Canada?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Boucher.

Mr. Angell, go ahead, please.

Mr. David Angell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The International Contact Group is the principal international vehicle for engagement on Somalia.

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

The group was founded two or three years ago and is co-chaired by the United States and Norway. It comprises both active members and observers, some from Africa, others from the west, including the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Canada. No distinction is drawn, however, between active members and observers.

Thus far, the group has operated as a forum for dialogue with the government and other partners in order to discuss intervention strategies for those African countries facing the greatest difficulties. We hope that the group will go on to strike a number of task forces to provide more direct support to the government, for example, by helping to prepare the census with a view to the 2009 election and by helping draft the constitution and train police officers.

The ICG is a means of cooperating with the Somali government, even though normal access channels are closed to the majority of the group's members, a reality with which we are not confronted elsewhere.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You said that we are part of this group, but that we do not have access to this country. The members of this group do not have access to Somalia. Is that right?

Mr. David Angell: The big challenge with Somalia is that the situation is so dangerous that the countries participating in the group, with one or two exceptions, do not have an embassy there. Their people are not authorized to travel in Somalia because the situation in the field remains too dangerous.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: All right. Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Boucher.

Thank you, Mr. Angell.

We'll move to Monsieur Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests for your presentations today.

I think most Canadians who are aware of what's going on in Somalia are deeply concerned, to put it mildly. We know from the responses of the UN that many are calling Somalia right now the worst humanitarian crisis we are facing. It seems from your presentation today and from the things we read in the paper and other news reports that there's little hope on the horizon.

I know that people—and UN reports, I believe—have said that up to two million people are facing a humanitarian crisis right now. About a million are internally displaced, and recent reports from this afternoon indicate that 15 people were killed in the north from a grenade attack. It goes on and on.

We know that one of the problems was that the UN was supposed to provide stability, following a motion at the UN, but it was usurped by what happened when the Ethiopian troops came in. I guess this is a political question.

Some would point to the fact there was some stability beforehand, notwithstanding people's concerns about the Islamic courts. I know from eyewitness accounts of constituents of mine that there was

actually a period when you could drive through Mogadishu without being harangued, harassed, or shaken down, at the time the Islamic courts had brought some stability. Those aren't my words; those are the words of people who had been in Mogadishu.

It seems there was another agenda at play here. It seems that the result of the Ethiopian action, with the support of the U.S., was that any sensible conflict resolution was thrown to the side. In passing, I find it strange that we sit here as a country with one of the largest Somali expatriate communities in the entire planet.... I'm not saying this to you, because I know you're the people who deliver the policy of the government. So let me be clear about this, especially as I'm the son of a bureaucrat, that you deliver the wishes of the government. But it seems very strange to me that what I'm seeing is that the best we can do is to come up with a couple of million dollars, and we don't seem to be able to put together a more robust response in what is clearly the worst humanitarian crisis we face right now—though maybe Kenya is going to get worse. And from what we're hearing, it's a political crisis.

What are some of the policy possibilities that we have as a country to support reconciliation, be they through what you already mentioned, Mr. Angell, in terms of the most recent meetings with the ICG or...? And if it isn't possible to do anything now, what can we say to my constituents—Somali Canadians and everyday Canadians—that we can get our government to do beyond what I would suggest is a fairly muted response?

•(1620)

The Chair: Mr. Angell.

Mr. David Angell: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

With regard to the role of Ethiopia in Somalia, you will hear very different assessments of whether that role is benign or not, and part of the reason why my address focused on the immediate region and not just Somalia is you do have an interplay of regional interests that's extremely important to the developments on the ground in Somalia.

In political terms, what may matter most with regard to the question of Ethiopia's presence is the fact that, first, it has the strong support of the African Union, and second, it's a commitment that the Ethiopians themselves are committed to ending at the earliest opportunity. There is no particular Canadian view on the occupation, on the Ethiopian presence, but the—

Mr. Paul Dewar: We had one the first time.

Mr. David Angell: Again, both terms were used, and neither is used particularly by Canada. They're used by people in the country. But the AU declaration on the situation in Somalia that was adopted this month, for example, commended Ethiopia for its invaluable assistance to the transitional federal government. That's an AU statement.

What the United Nations Security Council has said is that it welcomes the commitment of Ethiopia to withdraw, welcomes the fact that a withdrawal has begun, but recognizes that a withdrawal can't take place absent more forceful AMISOM presence on the ground. Again, these are not Canadian views; these are simply statements.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I don't mean to interrupt, but are there any other voices saying who would fill the void? Is there a plan being put forward?

For me, that's the meat of it. If we believe that the Ethiopian troops should withdraw and that something else should be put in place, has anyone come to the table to say here's the plan, here's who can be put into the field? Is there any design plan around that at all?

Mr. David Angell: Mr. Chairman, the African Union has developed a plan, the key element of which is AMISOM. At the moment, two countries have contributed troops. Two more are on the cusp of doing so. There's an authorization for 8,000 troops. There is a hope that will be sufficient to fill the vacuum.

With regard to robust response, the challenge that Canada has confronted is precisely the same challenge that other countries participating in the international contact group concerned more generally confront, and that is, in a country that does not have a functioning government that is responsible for the entirety of the country, that does not have some of the key ingredients of a functioning state, it's exceptionally difficult to have an impact and to get traction.

By way of a vision of how to move forward, what the special envoy of the African Union has put forward as a vision for the short term is a five-point plan to engage all stakeholders within Somalia: through the reconciliation congress process, to build on the results and conclusions of the NRC; to create the security conditions necessary to the effective deployment of AMISOM; to prepare for an eventual UN transition; to create the conditions necessary to permit a timely delivery of humanitarian aid; and to help build the governance capacity. In one sense, that's a very simple five-point plan. Given the realities on the ground in Somalia, that's also at the same time a Herculean task.

In my statement, Mr. Chairman, I mentioned a sense of encouragement recently. Certainly I sensed it at the international contact group meeting, that there are a number of developments taking place that augured for Somalia. At the same time, the most recent UN and AU reports continue to emphasize that there has been no significant improvement in the security situation, that the situation remains exceptionally difficult. There is some basis to believe that greater progress may be possible, but that's small steps. It's incremental progress relative to what we've seen recently.

• (1625)

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

We'll go to the second round. I remind the committee that it's a five-minute round.

Mr. Lebel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for coming.

All of the interventions that we have heard about today demonstrate to Canadians of Somali origin the interest that all Canadian members of Parliament have in the future of their country.

We have to look at the situation realistically, as we usually do. Your documents stated that the state is not viable, that no functioning national government has been in place since 1991 and that 85% of the people in the Horn of Africa live in Ethiopia. We must therefore be realistic as to what we can do. We need to help Somalia improve its future.

Is there a solution that would enhance the quality of life of the people and promote the development of Somalia? Later on, we will be talking about Sudan, a neighbouring country. Our action was made possible because of our facility in Ethiopia and Kenya. Is it possible to find a solution for Somalia which does not involve all of the neighbouring countries? Could we not take comprehensive action in this sector which would have an impact on Somalia?

[*English*]

The Chair: Just as an example, some have suggested that in dealing with other countries in Africa, perhaps the best way of helping one country is by helping democratic countries, or at least countries with functioning governments, that border it.

I know that we're involved in Ethiopia, and we're involved somewhat in some of those other countries, but is that part of the Somalia plan?

Ms. Nadia Kostjuk: From a development standpoint,

[*Translation*]

It is possible to take a regional approach. Nevertheless, it is often very difficult for a country to help another improve its governance, in particular when these countries are not really friends. However, some innovative approaches have come from the African countries themselves. An initiative called the Nile Basin Initiative, is very interesting because it involves the ten countries that share the Nile. These countries have had conflicts amongst themselves, such as Ethiopia and Eritrea, but they do have a common interest, and because of this, they are working together. When representatives from these countries discuss the resources of the Nile, they create long-term associations enabling them to discuss other common challenges. Nevertheless, this is not an easy task and this does not happen very quickly. Organizations, such as the IGAD, which Mr. Angell mentioned, and the role that the African Union plays are very important to enable us to take a truly African approach.

Mr. Denis Lebel: Money must not flow like water, but perhaps it can get people together.

Mr. David Angell: Mr. Chairman, I would like to add one small thing to my colleague's response. It is clear that the future of Ethiopia is crucial for the future of the sub-region.

Mr. Denis Lebel: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Again, I know that much of what happens in Somalia relates more to clans or tribes. There's no major government but you have these clans. Is there a migration of people that...?

You know, Chad, Sudan, and some of those countries "border". What border? There's this constant migration of people, and maybe that's the context for why some people were saying that some of these neighbouring countries need help in order to help these folks who are going back across.

So is that part of what they're facing up there as well?

• (1630)

Mr. David Angell: Mr. Chairman, I believe it is a factor, certainly. There's extensive population movement within the sub-region. There are very large numbers of citizens of one country living in another.

At the same time, for some ethnic groups the population boundaries don't necessarily correspond with the political boundaries between the states. One of the complicating factors in this case is that within Ethiopia, there's a large Somali ethnic community in the Ogaden region. That is an enormously complicating factor.

The Chair: Thank you.

Moving to the opposition side, we'll go to Mr. Martin and Mr. Cullen. This is a five-minute round.

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

Thank you very much to all for being here today.

I have one question and one request. First, by most accounts, as we've heard before, the involvement or the mucky paws of Eritrea and Ethiopia in the events taking place within Somalia have been quite destructive. Are there any levers that can be applied to both Eritrea and Ethiopia to stop their being a negative influence on the events taking place in Somalia?

Second, to Ms. Kostiuk, perhaps you would to send to the committee information on the moneys that have been disbursed to World Vision, Oxfam, MSF, the partners that you have on the ground, and the reports that those groups have given to CIDA on what they've done with those resources.

I think Mr. Cullen has a question as well.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to my colleague Keith Martin and to the chair of the committee for reviewing this, and to the officials. I had hoped to have a question for my colleagues Alan Tonks and Judy Sgro, but there may not be sufficient time.

First of all, I'm glad to see that we're party now to the international contact group, but as you pointed out, we have a very special relationship in Canada with Somalia. We have the largest Somali diaspora. I'm told that the largest community from Africa in Canada is from Somalia. And if you look long term, there are many ways

that we could work with Somalia, with their natural resources and in economic terms as well, but I realize that's some ways away.

We know that Somalia is a failed state. I'd like to suggest that our "watching brief" strategy of the federal government, if I could call it that, is a failed strategy.

If we go back to the first transitional national government many years ago, it seems to me there was an opportunity there for the world and Canada as a player to offer some tangible support to that first government. It was not perfect. You know, neither was the second government. And there's always this concern that we're waiting for the perfect solution, the elegant government, and there's concern about warlords and representation. I don't think in that part of the world it's going to happen. Somalia, hopefully, will get its act together and have another government, and what we should be doing in Canada, in the western world, is showing some tangible support early for that new government so that the people can see that there's a reason to proceed.

If we all stand by and take a watching brief, we know we're doomed to failure.

Alan, do you have a question?

Mr. Alan Tonks: That was my question, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tonks and Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Angell, please.

Mr. David Angell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

With regard to the first question, about levers that can be used to compel cooperation on the part of Eritrea and Ethiopia, certainly the record with regard to the implementation of the decisions of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission suggests that there are few levers indeed. The Secretary General of the United Nations, in a report dated January 23, conveyed the conclusion of the EEBC that the parties had made no progress towards the implementation of the delineation decision announced by the commission in 2002.

That's quite an extraordinary situation. We're in the odd situation now that the United Nations Security Council yesterday or the day before issued a statement to the press decrying the lack of cooperation by Eritrea with the UN peace support operation that straddles the border, a peace support operation that no longer has access to fuel in Eritrea, that has had the composition of its force influenced by Eritrea, and that has declared that now the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary General have demanded cooperation by Eritrea with UNMEE with the threat of withdrawing it, and that's quite an extraordinary circumstance.

With regard to watching briefs, there is a sense now, with the new government headed by Nur Hassan Hussein, that the time has come to give the transitional federal government support. Certainly that is the message that the UN special envoy is conveying. But the government took office only in November. This is an extremely new development. I think countries that participate in the work of the international contact group have taken notice of that message from Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. We will have to see whether there is continued progress, but the message from Ould-Abdallah is that this is now finally the time to provide support.

•(1635)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angell. To clarify, you said there is a recognition of that government, and the reality is that there is some decision or movement to support—

Mr. David Angell: Mr. Chairman, there's no recognition of the government. The practice of Canada and I think of all other states is to recognize states, not governments. But there is a cooperation with the government and there is a practical recognition that this government is trying to do things that may well finally be conducive to success. So there's hope for the success of this government.

But the issue of political recognition is a totally separate issue, and the practice of Canada and all other states is to recognize states, and not governments.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angell.

Mr. Obhrai.

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

This is a very serious situation down in the Horn of Africa. One wouldn't like to play partisan politics. My colleague here was trying to smack my government for doing nothing, considering the fact that we were there for 13 years and his government didn't do anything.

As a matter of fact, this crisis in Somalia has been coming for a longer period of time; the failed state issues don't immediately just happen. There were talks going on in Nairobi all the time between warring factions to bring them back together into this transition government before they moved into Ethiopia. During the period of time when all these talks were going on in Nairobi, in trying to get all these parties to the table to come to an agreement, I'm not sure whether the previous government did issue any instructions that Canada would be there to support them. I don't know whether we were there or this government was there to push to bring all these warring factors back to the table when they were talking in Kenya.

Right now, of course, considering the situation in Nairobi, I may say, they're back in there. So this has been going on there for a very long period of time. Minus what has happened in the past, we have to look at the future, which is why I asked you about the African Union summit—you went there—and what is happening. So looking at the future, I'm as optimistic as anybody else can get about what will transpire and if this transition government will be able to maintain traction.

I'm interested in knowing from you the complicities between Puntland, Somaliland, and this area around Mogadishu. This transition government that is in Mogadishu may not have much of a say in Puntland or in Somaliland, because they are autonomous regions having their own governments. In this issue, what is your assessment, and would that whole Somaliland become one, or will they splinter into what they've splintered into right now?

Mr. David Angell: It certainly is the case that there is a semi-autonomous region of Somaliland and there is Puntland and I don't think the transitional federal government could make any claim to being able to administer or govern those parts of Somalia.

Somalia remains an exceptionally complex, difficult country. The transitional federal government seems to be making progress relative to previous transitional governments, but we're still a very long way

from having a government that can operate with the full capacity that a government in a sovereign country that had a fully functioning government would see.

•(1640)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: It will be in the splinter area for a while.

Mr. David Angell: It will be, absolutely, sir.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We want to thank both departments for coming to our committee today. Certainly we recognize there are no easy answers to any of these, but there are a lot of significant problems, and Canada wants to be there. It's good to hear that we're doing what we can and we're involved in groups that are looking for peaceful solutions to all these different complex issues.

We are going to suspend for a few moments and then we will invite the committee to come back quickly and we will do some committee business.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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•(1645)

The Chair: All right, committee, welcome back. In this second portion we'll move into our committee business.

Before we look at some of these motions, let's look at our Thursday meeting. We're in a bit of a predicament—we don't have any witnesses. We have a number of opportunities. It's up to the committee. We either decide something real quick and invite some witnesses, or we have a steering committee, which we probably should be doing.

Madame Barbot is here and so is Paul, but Bryon isn't here on Thursday. It's something to take note of. Maybe he can get back to me on this. Maybe it's something to think about for a while.

Angela, is there anything you can fill in about Thursday? The opportunity is to have at least a steering committee meeting, maybe Thursday morning sometime.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mrs. Angela Crandall): Right. If members were available we could try to do something Thursday morning.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Could we not do this at the beginning of the committee meeting? We could take an hour to...

•(1650)

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, we could do that. We could have a little bit of a discussion. We could probably bring the steering committee report forward to the committee in the second hour. That would mean we would have only one hour for the committee, 3:30 to 4:30. It's a possibility.

Roy?

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Chairman, now that I'm a signed-in, fully functioning member of this committee, I know that Mr. Martin would see it as remiss if I didn't raise the question about the follow-on work on Somalia. I'm wondering, I just throw this out as a possibility: it was a very good briefing today from the Department of Foreign Affairs and CIDA, but I think another follow-on panel with members of the diaspora and relevant NGOs would bring a unique perspective to this. I would encourage the committee to do it.

The Chair: The problem there, Mr. Cullen, is that no members have brought forward any witnesses for it. Again, that's the problem.

We as a table, the clerk and the researchers, invite witnesses on the list brought by committee members. Unfortunately, none has come, so it would be too late.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, on the issue of what Roy Cullen just said, I know you're trying to fill up Thursday, but I was just wondering, in light of the crisis in Kenya, in Nairobi, the motion that we've put forward here would send a strong signal that Canadians are concerned about the events in Kenya.

I was wondering if I could get from the committee unanimous consent to move this motion right to the top for a quick discussion, a quick passage, so that it can be tabled in Parliament as quickly as possible. We would like this message to be sent straight back to Nairobi, Kenya, so that the Kenyans understand that Canada is concerned.

I'm asking this because the problem, the violence, is happening right now. Kofi Annan's peace mediation requires a diplomatic push. I can tell you that the Minister of Foreign Affairs talked to President Kibaki today about what Canada can do. I think we as a committee, as parliamentarians, should look at this motion quickly.

I honestly don't see any member having difficulty with the motion, so I was wondering if I could have unanimous consent on the matter.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

It's up to the committee members. This motion is in order. First of all, wouldn't we need unanimous consent for Mr. Obhrai to speak to it?

Mr. Goldring's mother passed away. He is the one who brought this motion forward and he isn't here to speak on it. I know you're doing this with his permission, but we do need unanimous consent even to have Mr. Obhrai bring the motion forward on the part of Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Do we have unanimous consent?

The Chair: There are two things. First of all, Mr. Obhrai will speak to the motion, and then we will bring it forward. It's not a long study. We will not be hearing a bunch of witnesses. I think we all understand the severity in Kenya. At this point, I think, with Kofi Annan there, this is to say that this is what Canada expects. Human rights and all of those things are included in the motion.

Do we have unanimous consent to have Mr. Obhrai speak to this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent to bring this forward today as the front motion we would discuss?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay, we're unanimous on that.

Madame Barbot, did you want to speak to another point?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I would like to talk about Somalia, but if you wish to discuss the motion, I will come back to this topic later on.

[*English*]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Go ahead. I just want Kenya to be taken up so we can do the things concerning the level...and then we can move back to Somalia.

The Chair: Is that all right, Madame Barbot?

So we will go to Kenya, and I'll ask Mr. Obhrai to perhaps repeat some of his concerns there.

• (1655)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: As you see, the motion coming from my colleague, Peter Goldring, says the following:

That the Committee recommends to the government that it calls on all parties involved in the disputed Kenyan elections to reach an immediate, peaceful agreement in order to stop the tragic and continued violence, and that the Committee notes with deep concern the violation of human rights in Kenya during this political crisis.

I don't know if many of you know this, but Kofi Annan has called what is happening in Kenya quite clearly ethnic cleansing. He has used the very strong words "ethnic cleansing". There has been a mediation effort going on with the African Union. Nevertheless, unfortunately, positions have become quite entrenched in Kenya on both sides at this time.

I'm not going to go into the merits and demerits of the election results. We know what that is all about. What we really need to do, number one, is to stop the violence that is taking place. It has disintegrated to the level of gangs from each tribe trying to kill those from the others. Two members of Parliament have already been shot dead in Kenya in the last week.

Historically, Canada has been very strongly engaged in Kenya. Kenya is our CIDA partner. We have invested a lot of money in Kenya.

I think at this given time, this motion calls for the government to act. We will present it to the Parliament very quickly.

I'm saying that the authority is coming from us as parliamentarians, although by adopting this motion we are telling the Government of Canada to do it. The parliamentarians of Canada are concerned about this whole issue.

That is why Peter wrote this message here: so it would be not only the Government of Canada doing it but the parliamentarians of Canada as well. We have had a lot of visits from the Kenyan parliamentarians, so we do have good relations.

For that reason, I ask that we adopt this motion as quickly as possible so that the message can go out.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: I'm supportive of this motion. Perhaps I'll be suggesting what I would consider to be a friendly amendment for the consideration of our colleagues across the aisle.

Some of us have watched quite carefully how this has evolved, and it's of tremendous concern. We heard recently in the discussions about Somalia how neighbouring countries impact on each other. Kenya, up until now, had been an oasis of relative calm in this region of East Africa and the Horn of Africa, notwithstanding the fact that there are millions of refugees. In fact, there's a sizeable Somali refugee community within Kenya, and in fact even in the capital, Nairobi.

Of course we all agree that we want a peaceful resolution, but how do we get there? Having watched the very difficult negotiations that have taken place, it appears that there is an international consensus building that what is needed is a transitional period for a unity government of all the parties involved, until such time as security is re-established. So this would be a transitional period. Once that security is re-established, there would be an opportunity for a rerunning of democratic elections, with a very large international contingent to make sure that we don't fall into the same situation a second time.

There is a general consensus; it's just working out the mechanisms and the details of how we get there. So I would like to make a friendly amendment—and if it's agreed to unanimously, that would be tremendous—that would add on to Mr. Goldring's motion and say:

We call upon all parties to form a unity government for a transitional period until security is re-established, and at such time we call upon a rerunning of the presidential election with an adequate international observer mission.

• (1700)

The Chair: Do you have that written out, Borys?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: “Scratched out” would be a more accurate description, but I could write it out.

The Chair: I think our clerk could use that.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: And I am amenable to wordsmithing on that.

The Chair: I'm hesitant on that. I don't even know if I could allow that to be in order. This is definitely changing the motion. This is now becoming more procedural in how we're going to do it.

This motion was given not to lay out any major game plan for Kenya. It was there to say that Canada wants peace; we want it in this way.

Mr. Obhrai, I'm going to reserve judgment on this. If you want to speak to the friendly amendment...

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I want to speak to a point of view on this one.

I agree with what Borys and the international community have been saying and that this is one of the routes to take towards achieving a peaceful settlement. But what we must always be careful of is not to pull the carpet out from under what is already going on,

which is the Kofi Annan peace mission. The moment we put any of these things, we are presupposing and telling, and making Kofi Annan's mediation effort...

The idea right now for us to do is to get this motion out here on this thing. There's nothing telling us not to write to Kofi Annan and say this is what Canadians feel, but I would say, as a public expression, we must not undercut Kofi Annan. He's doing the mediation, he's having a hard time, he's having a hard time about this re-election and everything, so let him do that job. Let him finish that job. We are standing behind, but we are adding our voice to tell the parties to come to the table. That's all we're saying. Further down the road, we can look into more detailed studies, if you want.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Dewar, Ms. Barbot, and then Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I was actually going to bring a motion forward on Kenya, so I'm supportive of this. But I would like to change it slightly to widen it, and hopefully, for Thursday, to invite appropriate officials from DFAIT and CIDA to give us the latest, and perhaps there are other relevant experts we might be able to tap into...whether we have time to do that or not.

That's an amendment I would like to make, simply because what you have here is not, in fact, a study on Kenya, but a statement on Kenya.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, a statement.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay. I think you used the word “study”, so I just want to clarify it.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Did I use “study”? I'm sorry, it's a statement.

Mr. Paul Dewar: As we did today, I would like to actually hear from DFAIT and CIDA as to what the latest is, and I'm sure there will be changes by the time Thursday rolls around. It might help us to examine ways of improving Canada's presence, based on what they're saying, and obviously to help constructively to resolve what the crisis is and the underlying causes, etc.

If we can, I would actually have DFAIT and CIDA representatives here on Thursday to present to the committee, because what we have here is a motion, and I think people are grappling with what we should be getting our teeth into. So I guess that's a request to amend the motion as it's written, to actually invite appropriate officials from DFAIT and CIDA and other relevant experts, to review Canada's existing—

The Chair: To me, that might be a great motion. I don't think that by passing this motion here it would prevent us from bringing forward another motion or those witnesses to do it. I think what we're asking for here is motherhood and apple pie, basically. This is a statement that's given, especially at the point we're at right now with Kofi Annan being there. Do we want to undertake a briefing? Absolutely. I'm open to that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm sorry to interrupt, Chair. I thought the fact was that we were talking about Thursday, having some time, and then this came up and then we were talking about a study and now we're—

●(1705)

The Chair: As far as that goes, I wouldn't say it's unlikely, but it's very questionable whether or not they would come at this late a date, like the day after tomorrow. Angela won't get an invitation to them until Wednesday, and that would be for Thursday. So we could still try that, but I think it would be something that might be discussed at the steering committee.

I also have to say that it wasn't so much an amendment. We are on an amendment here too, so keep that in mind.

Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chair, I would like to be recognized. I would really like it if you could stop giving your opinion on motions, aside from determining whether they are in or out of order or something of that nature. You give your opinion and you direct our responses. With all due respect, I do not think that that is the chair's role.

I would like us to stick today to the motion that Mr. Obhrai moved. He wanted—and for once I agree with him—to have it made known that there is a problem that we want to solve. So, we want Canada to adopt this stance.

Furthermore, if there are other motions, they can be brought back and studied in committee and we can see what is to be done. We are all aware that this isn't enough. However, I don't want us to rush into dealing with other considerations. For the time being, I should like to stick to Mr. Obhrai's motion and take it from there.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Obhrai, I'll take that as.... Or, Madame Barbot.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Madame Obhrai. Okay, I agreed with him once....

The Chair: You disagree with my opinion on that.

A point of order. Yes, I was expecting to hear a point of order a little quicker than Madame Barbot on that one. I apologize.

My point is that we have the motion, but Mr. Wrzesnewskyj has brought forward what he calls a friendly amendment.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: I'm happy to withdraw the amendment until after such time as there has been a briefing. This is a general statement and a very uncomplicated and clear expression of Canada's will. My intention with the friendly amendment was that was exactly the path that had been developed by the former secretary general, and the intent was to reinforce what he has been trying to argue. However, if it complicates the matter, I am more than happy to rescind it.

The Chair: Okay, so he rescinds that, withdraws it.

Mr. Cullen.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Thank you.

It seems to me that if the idea is to get a motion onto the floor of the House, you'd want to keep it general, like the way it's drafted

now. To suggest that you have witnesses come to committee is not going to really play well in the House of Commons, so I think you want to keep it general. I agree with Mr. Obhrai that you don't want to start pre-empting what the solutions might be. I think this is a good motion to get into the House.

Mr. Obhrai, you mentioned, though, discussions with President Kibaki and moneys that have gone into Kenya. Just for the record, President Moi was probably one of the more corrupt leaders in Africa, probably in the area of \$3 billion to \$5 billion. President Kibaki, when he ran, ran on a platform of good governance, and he ended up being more corrupt than Moi. So my hope is that the federal government is not putting bilateral aid into Kenya, because we know the election was skewed. This is not to pre-empt any thoughts. So just by way of background, this chap, Kibaki, is pretty horrible as well.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Do I have a chance to—

The Chair: Yes, I'll take that.

I also want to caution you that we're not in camera here, so as a foreign affairs committee, we've got to be very cautious as to what we say. These are all opinions. Bring them forward.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I agree with what is being said here about the roadmap, and what has happened historically in Kenya. At this time, the focus of the statement, which you just rightly pointed out, Madame Barbot and everybody else, is that this is a motherhood statement trying to stop the violence and trying to show Canada's concern. I think, Mr. Chair, from what I'm hearing, there is unanimous consent for this motion here. I would recommend that you ask the question.

I will just end by saying that, in case, as Mr. Dewar pointed out, he needs more hearings and all these things, I think we can discuss it at the steering committee to bring that factor to them.

●(1710)

The Chair: All right, I'll call the question on Mr. Goldring's motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: May the clerk note that it was carried unanimously.

Thank you, committee.

There are a number of other motions here. We have probably 15 minutes left, and the bells will start.

Madame Barbot, do you want to move ahead with your motion today?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: No.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Obhrai, do you want to move your motion today?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Which motion?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Are you referring to the first motion which is...?

[English]

The Chair: Yes, it stays.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Which one?

The Chair: Your motion on food aid convention:

That pursuant to standing order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development undertake a study investigating the effectiveness and quality of Canada's food aid policy and whether current methods of delivery meet the objectives established under the Food Aid Convention.

Do you want to bring that motion forward today?

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, , BQ):
Mr. Chair, on a point of order.

I think the Bloc Québécois moved two successive motions. Ms. Barbot refused to table the first one. I don't think you asked her what she wants to do about the second motion.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry. You're absolutely correct. Thank you.

So we'll take yours off right now. This is a second motion.

That following the tabling and release of the government's response to the advisory group report on the national round-tables on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive industry in developing countries (tabled on March 29, 2007), the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to appear before the committee to explain the government's response.

Do you want to bring that forward, Madame Barbot?

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Yes, I do, based on the fact that we still haven't received a response. Once we've gotten the government's response...

[English]

The Chair: All right. Madame Barbot, do you want to speak to this motion at all?

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: No, I don't, I think that it is very clear.

[English]

The Chair: It's self-explanatory.

Anyone else on this motion?

Mr. Obhrai.

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

I spoke on this motion. When did it come back?

• (1715)

The Clerk: It was November 2006, I believe.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I spoke to this motion, and the government is committed to give a response to it. The government is now in the process of preparing a response. There is no question of the government's not giving a response to this motion. The issue is that they have to look at [*Inaudible—Editor*]...

The round table of conferences was quite an extensive exercise in corporate social responsibility. Coming out of it was a report. The

government is committed to corporate social responsibility and is working towards getting this response made and approved. It will be quite an important response.

For us at this time the motion is irrelevant. The minister would tell you exactly what I'm telling you, which is that the government is in the process of preparing...

Why is this motion talking about the Minister of Foreign Affairs? It is not the Minister of Foreign Affairs who is going to give this response. It is the Minister of Trade, the Honourable David Emerson. Because it deals with extractive industry, as you pointed out in your motion, it is the Minister of Natural Resources who will be preparing and making the response. The Minister of Foreign Affairs cannot speak for other ministers. Only these ministers will be making the response, because it falls under their jurisdiction.

The Chair: Can I ask a question of Madame Barbot or Mr. Obhrai? Would it be in order, Madame Barbot, for you to amend your motion to say "pertinent" or "whatever ministers"? Are you committed to naming the Minister of Foreign Affairs? It's not his jurisdiction. Would you be open to having other ministers appear on this?

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: It still is linked to foreign affairs. I would have been amazed, when the mining report arrived, had it not had a foreign affairs component. Every minister will have input on this issue. That is crucial, given the importance of the matter. It could read "the lead minister". That would not exclude any of the ministers, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[English]

The Chair: That's a friendly amendment. Would you agree with that motion? She has basically moved her own motion.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Our difficulty at this stage is that we are saying there is no response.

The Chair: This motion is in order.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm just giving you my position.

Mr. Chair, what I am saying on this motion is that the government has not finished its response. This is asking for a response. We haven't finished the response.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, if you look at the motion, it says: "following the tabling and release of the government's response".

Obviously, it is after the government's response that they would be invited. We can still deal with it today. I don't want to give my opinion, but as I see it, if this thing is responded to, we can still invite the minister as soon as the government's response comes. We don't have to wait to deal with it until then.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, am I to understand that there will be a government response that is going to go to this thing...?

The Chair: It's still in order to adopt it now so the clerk can automatically do it at that time.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: The clerk can do what at that time?

The Chair: The clerk can invite the ministers.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: You mean once it is tabled. But with the chain of relevant ministers....

Mr. Paul Dewar: You won't get in trouble with the PMO.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Dewar, I know this. You have been trying to get rid of me on this committee, and it isn't going to work.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Are we operating within the timelines? Have they exceeded the timelines?

The Clerk: There are no timelines, because it's not a parliamentary report.

The Chair: All right.

Go ahead, please, Madame DeBellefeuille.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Chair, this is the first time that I have replaced a colleague on this committee. I am very surprised at how this committee is run. I find that you have quite an imposing presence as chair. And I also find that the parliamentary secretary is very outspoken compared to the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, who listens and only speaks at the very end. So I am quite surprised.

The report was tabled in March 2007. We believe that by immediately adopting this motion, a very clear signal will be given to the government that it is time it table its response. The committee wants to hear the government's response and debate it. I can't see why all members of the committee don't support this motion since everybody wants to hear the government's response. It has now been almost nine months, and I think that it is time to debate it.

• (1720)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm going to backtrack on something I've said here, because this was not a government report that was given, was it? Then there are no timelines on the response.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: It's not something that the committee presented. A round-table conference presented the report, and it was tabled in Parliament.

The Chair: Am I correct, Mr. Obhrai, that this would not necessitate a response by a certain day?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: You are right, it won't, but when the government—

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Chair, can you explain to me why there is a discussion or a dialogue between the two of you? We have to debate a motion and he does not represent...

[English]

The Chair: There is no dialogue between the two of us.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Yes, there is, that is exactly what it is: a dialogue between the two of you. The motion is on the table for debate. If he is against the motion, well, he should vote against it.

[English]

The Chair: We're making it clear that we're stepping back from what we had said before, that we were waiting for government's response. We have now been made aware that this was not a committee report that was filed, so there is no timeline on the government response. If we're going to wait for that response, when there is no timeline, we could be waiting a long time, so I'm asking Mr. Obhrai that question. As the chair, I think I have the ability to do that, and I'm going to keep doing it.

Mr. Cullen, I'll go to you on this point.

Hon. Roy Cullen: I was going to ask the same question, because previously I was led to believe that there was a timeline. Now there isn't. So it seems to me it comes down to whether the government is being reasonable on the timeline that has been taken to respond. Parliamentarians have a right to hear an answer from the government, so we either pass the motion or the government gives some indication of when the response is going to be forthcoming. Surely the government can give some indication. Otherwise, the motion should say the minister will come to the committee by such and such a date, response or no response.

The Chair: Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chair, I suggest that you find out what the rule is. I won't necessarily rely on what Mr. Obhrai has to say on this issue.

Personally speaking, I'd like you to go and check what it says in the rules and for you to give your answer at the next meeting. We are not sitting on the government side. We sit here as parliamentarians. I find it somewhat incongruous that Mr. Obhrai is constantly being addressed as if he had a political role to play within this committee. It is interrupting the flow of business.

[English]

The Chair: Would you rather have me address you?

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: No, I'm saying that you can...

[English]

The Chair: If I were to address you right now, I would ask when you were expecting a response. Were you aware of the fact that the government was not forced to bring a response at a certain period of time? Were you aware of that?

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: All I'm asking for, Mr. Chair, is for you to find out, because you don't seem to know any more than I do. Find out, and at the next...

[English]

The Chair: I know. This is not—

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Then why are you asking?

[English]

The Chair: I'm going from what the clerk has told us. When we issue a committee report—as I think most members who have spent some time in the House realize—the government has so many days to report back. This is a different report that you've called for a response to, a round-table report. There is no time limit for that. So according to what we had mentioned before, do we wait for the government's response? Well, how long do you want to wait? I think I brought that forward to you.

The government side here is saying that I'm actually helping your argument, as I want to see a government response on this, and I don't want to wait until they table, or however they do it.

So there is no time limit on a government response to this. That's why your motion is in order and we can ask them to come and explain it.

Now we're going through the order here, and I have Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, let's just see what this report was and what the government promised. This report was out of a round-table conference; it was not done by parliamentarians, as Roy said. It was not a parliamentary thing, but was done at the round-table conference with all of the stakeholders.

For you to say that parliamentarians have a right to know, you should first have attended the round-table conference to know exactly.

The government undertook, at the time it was doing the round-table conference, that when the report was completed and presented to it, it would study the report and then report back to Parliament. This commitment was made at the round-table conference; it was not a commitment made to the parliamentary committee, under which timelines are set according to the bylaws. There were no bylaws for this. It was a commitment made at a round-table conference outside of the parliamentary bylaws, or whatever they are called. But the government is committed on its part to give its response, and it is studying and working on this.

Mr. Cullen, you have been in government and know very well that the government has to look at all the i's to be dotted and the t's to be crossed, and everything like, which they're now doing. At the given time, the government will present its report to Parliament. Now, at that time, I am sure the committee could say it wants the relevant ministers to come forward to talk about it. That would be my thinking. However, you are having this thing sitting until the government gives a response.

But at the same time, this motion, Mr. Chair, has a problem, because you are talking now of two other ministers. You are talking of the responsibility of the Minister of Trade and the Minister of Natural Resources who will do the presentation in Parliament and be responsible for providing answers—not the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I don't know, but it's up to the clerk to say whether we really need to call them. Would it be appropriate? I'm sure my colleague Mr. Dewar will not agree with this, considering that he wants me kicked off this thing, but would it be appropriate if the trade committee

wanted to include this thing as part of its responsibilities, since it concerns the trade minister, or it will be part of the natural resources committee's responsibilities, if they want to do this?

So it's quite an open situation at this time as to what each of the relevant committees is going to do, but the Minister of Foreign Affairs does not have to take the lead in responding to this round table, but the two other ministers do. So there are no time limits. That is what I'm saying, Chair. So let's be very clear this is not what these parliamentarians want to do—and they can't put a timeline on it.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Lebel.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Lebel: Mr. Chairman, I would simply like to say that as far as I am concerned you play a necessary role and you play it very well. When we require clarification from the government in order to move ahead with our business, you communicate with the secretary in order to obtain information on what position to take and how to advance the debate. That is my opinion.

I would just like to re-emphasize the confidence I have in you and the enormous appreciation I have for the work you do. I know that our adversaries do not always agree on that. I have not been here for long, but I believe you are doing this in order to enlighten the debate and to help us make the right decisions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lebel, for that vote.

Madame Barbot, did you want to continue on in Mr. Lebel's—

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: That is exactly the type of comment that is making it more and more difficult to work here. Everyone is working on specific issues. This is not a question of the government or the opposition, as you often put it. It would be very helpful if that were the spirit and if there were not a constant effort being made to protect certain ministers or to prevent debates from taking place.

Given that the motion is in order with the amendment that was tabled, I think that we should proceed with our work. Mr. Obhrai's comments do not affect the motion in any way. I believe we have a proposal before us.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Perhaps I'll try a friendly amendment again, and I might be a little more successful this time.

The friendly amendment would read as follows, if it's acceptable to Madame Barbot:

As ten months has passed since the round table of the Advisory Group Report on the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries (tabled on March 29, 2007), and the Government has not tabled a response, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to appear before the Committee to explain the Government's intentions.

First of all, we need to know whether that's acceptable.

• (1730)

The Chair: First of all, we're either going to deal with this motion or we aren't going to deal with the motion. As soon as we bring forward an amendment, we open it up for debate all over again.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: First of all, we need to know whether it's acceptable.

The Chair: All right. When the bells start we need unanimous consent to continue. I really don't want to go through all the debate on this motion the next day. If you accept the amendment, then we go into debate and we will not vote on this motion. If you don't accept the friendly amendment, we may have time still to make a vote on this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: That's just wonderful Mr. Chairman! That is truly the Conservative way. So, either I accept—

[*English*]

The Chair: No, excuse me. Just hold on.

A point of order on this, Madame Barbot. As soon as those bells start, if we're going into a vote, according to process procedure, we

need unanimous consent to continue. That is set in procedure. That's our standing orders. That's not a Conservative view; that's our standing orders.

What I'm saying now is that if you don't accept that friendly amendment we can still have this vote.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Can we stop now given that the light has come on, and continue next time?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Fine, perfect.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Chair, let's stop it here.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

We are adjourned.

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