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Chair

Mr. Michael Levitt

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● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone.

I will call to order this meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

This will be the final meeting on our study of Canada's support for international democratic development.

We have two panels this morning.

In the first panel, I want to welcome Christian Lamarre, senior program officer, from the United Nations Secretariat of the United Nations Democracy Fund.

We also have, from Global Canada, executive chairman Robert Greenhill.

Thank you for being here.

The Chair: Gentlemen, I will ask each of you to give around 10 minutes' worth of remarks. Then we'll open it up to members who I'm sure will have lots of questions for you.

Mr. Lamarre, we will start with you, please.

Mr. Christian Lamarre (Senior Programme Officer, United Nations Secretariat, United Nations Democracy Fund): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members.

It is an honour for the UN Democracy Fund and for me as a Canadian to be here and to thank Canada for being a donor to UNDEF.

[*Translation*]

I will make my presentation in English, but I can answer questions in French also.

[*English*]

In the decade-plus since this committee's 2007 report, UNDEF has garnered rich experience relevant to the call for an arm's-length Canada foundation for international democratic development.

In order to keep this presentation brief, I am sacrificing details and examples, but we stand ready to provide further information during the questions session and subsequently.

UNDEF was privileged a few years back to assist the then-nascent European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. It would be an honour to be of similar service to Canada.

Over the past 12 years, UNDEF has helped to design, fund and generate more than 750 projects in more than 120 countries. Our two-year grants amount to between $100,000 and $300,000 U.S. each, and they support partners in countries at various stages of democratization.

UNDEF's work is funded entirely by voluntary contributions. In addition to Canada, we count 40-plus donor countries. Many of these are middle- and low-income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Their support sustains a staff of seven people at UN headquarters. We're a team of seven people. That's it. We have no field offices of our own. We minimize our staff and operational budget by leveraging the extensive presence and infrastructure of the United Nations and other partners. We help with assessing the viability of applicants in some cases, or monitoring project milestones.

We often find ourselves at the forefront of grassroots struggles against rising authoritarianism and against the closing of space for civil society, yet our experience shows that even in challenging environments, entry points for democratic development can be found.

A government wary of outside involvement in areas deemed political will, nevertheless, consent to a capacity-building project in what is thought of as the social sphere, let's say a project aimed at improving access to local infrastructure and services for people with disabilities or those with HIV. Another example might be a project aimed at stimulating youth involvement in local environmental stewardship. I can give examples during the question period.

While the immediate aim, that is, to meet a community need, is politically neutral, participants come away with skills and capacities they can bring to bear in asserting other rights and in holding duty bearers to account, and therefore to help build a democratic culture.

This is why UNDEF's thematic areas range from more narrowly political ones, like support for electoral processes, the rule of law and human rights, to more foundational ones, like youth engagement, gender equality, community activism, and strengthening civil society interaction with government.

When I served in peacekeeping with the UN stabilization mission in Mali, I saw just how difficult—impossible, really—it was for vulnerable communities to assert their rights and interests where civil society is weak and disorganized. Drawing on those lessons, UNDEF has sought and supported projects that advance freedom of information and speech, and that enable Malian civil society to engage the defence and security sector.

In such challenging environments, and everywhere we work, local partnerships are absolutely critical. The vast majority of UNDEF funds go to local civil society organizations, small community groups often passed over by others in favour of larger, better-known entities practised in the administrative business of managing international projects.

By providing advice and mentoring, and by facilitating the exchange of lessons learned among grantees and partners, UNDEF strives to ensure that applicants will have the technical capacity to implement the project they are proposing. We do this because such organizations can make the most of relatively small sums of money, and because for change to be durable, it has to be locally driven. Put another way, we need to invest in the ability of local people to assert their rights and improve their well-being long after our involvement has ended.

● (0850)

I saw this for myself when serving with the UN Development Programme in Afghanistan, where many international actors merely subcontracted to intermediary NGOs rather than working with community groups and leaders who were addressing locally identified needs and priorities.

Of course, UNDEF also works with international NGOs, including Canada's own Journalists for Human Rights, which has done groundbreaking work in South Sudan and Syria and now is a partner in Mali, but UNDEF goes beyond operational collaboration with international civil society organizations. We include them in our governance structures where they serve alongside donor and recipient member states, eminent individuals and UN agencies. Because of this diversity of donors, advisers and governance partners, and because being a largely autonomous member of the UN family gives us multilateral bona fides, UNDEF often has an edge in situations where bilateral interests might be regarded with suspicion.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, much has been said about the difficult times in which we find ourselves and the challenges confronting the democratic experiment. I hope my remarks on behalf of the UN Democracy Fund will prove useful to you. I look forward to trying to answer your questions today, and we at UNDEF will be honoured to answer any questions you might have subsequently.

Thank you for this opportunity to be of service. *Merci beaucoup.*

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Greenhill, please proceed.

● (0855)

Mr. Robert Greenhill (Executive Chairman, Global Canada, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Good morning, everyone.

I feel very honoured to be here with you today.

[*English*]

On behalf of the international community, I'd like to thank you for your clarity of insight to be looking at this issue today, because if this report that you're reviewing was important in 2007, it's arguably absolutely critical today. If history has taught us one thing, it's that authoritarians who attack the rule of law at home are more inclined to undermine the rule of law abroad. This is not just a human rights and a diplomatic issue; this is a rule of law and international security issue.

I was president of CIDA when the original report came out in 2007, and then spent many years at the World Economic Forum where I was able to observe first-hand the decline of democratic governance around the world, and speak privately with literally hundreds of people from different stakeholder groups in those countries.

Today, I'd like to share my perspectives in three areas: first, why is this deterioration taking place; second, what actions could Canada take; and third, what can this committee do in a unique way to ensure that this time their recommendations lead to real impact.

First, why is this occurring? Many of the people who came before you have underlined the role of almost an "authoritarians are us" club, sharing best practices on how to dismantle systems of rule of law in their various countries. An important question is why those authoritarians are there in the first place. In the vast majority of cases they were elected, and often they were elected through processes that were reasonably transparent, so it wasn't the elections; it's what happened after the elections that is most disconcerting.

To understand why so many authoritarians have been elected, even in countries that had a certain degree of democratic consolidation, it's important to acknowledge that there is a wave of democratic disenchantment or disillusion among citizens in various countries around the world. People who rejected authoritarianism in the 1970s and 1980s, such as in Latin America, end up finding themselves disenchanted with the reality of what democracy does or does not deliver.

Three areas come up in many surveys. First is deep, pervasive corruption. Unlike other indicators that tend to get better as countries get richer—like poverty or health care issues—corruption often gets worse as there are more rent-seeking opportunities. Second, there is crime and lack of security in cases where the police are the predators rather than the protectors, and there's no justice. Third is weak institutions, systems that do not constrain leadership and do not deliver services, hope, prosperity and opportunity. Where the world is not just, it's not fair.

Polls in Latin America have shown that dissatisfaction with democracy has increased from 51% in 2009 to a stunning 71% recently. More than half of Latin Americans still believe in the concept of democracy even though the support for that has dropped by 13%. But the overwhelming majority right now are saying, “We believe in this, but we're not seeing it.”

Let me underline once again the incredibly important role of corruption as a corrosive element on democratic systems. Transparency International came out with a key report last year which concluded that as long as corruption continues to go largely unchecked, democracy is under threat around the world. Patricia Moreira noted, “Corruption chips away at democracy to produce a vicious cycle, where corruption undermines democratic institutions and, in turn, weak institutions are less able to control corruption”.

I'd humbly suggest if your report does not address the need for a concerted push against corruption, we will not be providing an up-to-date perspective on what we need to do to enhance democratic promotion and resilience around the world.

More broadly, if we look at these issues of corruption and crime and hypocrisy, if we don't put more emphasis on the governance part of democratic governance, we may lose the democratic part. I think that is the key learning of the last decade. The importance of governance has been underlined more recently by a World Bank development report in 2017 that focused on governance and the law. It was a breakthrough with sustainable development goals in 2015 when, for the first time, STG 16 notes peace, justice and strong institutions as critical to development. There is an international recognition of this gap. The challenge is that there is no systematic filling of this gap with capability and support.

● (0900)

Bilateral development agencies, if anything, have reduced their support for democratic governance over the last decade, for two reasons.

One is the unintended consequence of the understandable focus on short-term, concrete deliverables—showing results. You can show how many babies you've vaccinated and you can show how many children you've put in school. You can't show in an electoral cycle the impact you've had in building an effective public sector, putting in place checks and balances, or helping to strengthen a generation of public prosecutors in Latin America, and so it tends to get less attention.

The second reason is that many of these countries have what is called “graduated”. How development works is that it appropriately focuses on those most in need in the low-income countries. Just to remind ourselves: you move to lower-income countries at less than $1,000 per capita; then you graduate from the World Bank's IDA program for subsidies at about $1,145; then, by $2,000 per capita, there is very little development support, which makes sense, in that countries can support their own education or health care.

When we're looking at issues around supporting freedom of the press, human rights, civil society and institution building; when we look at some of the countries that have had challenges or opportunities—Ukraine, Tunisia, the Philippines, South Africa, Brazil, Chile, Russia, Malaysia, Turkey, Hungary—we see that these countries are all outside the box of traditional development.

So you have a situation where, in Canada, of the $5 billion a year we spend on development, very little of it can be programmed to meet moments of opportunity in Tunisia. In South Africa, where there's a special commission looking at state capture, and there's a real need and an appetite for them to get international support on reinforcing their institutions, it's outside the box. We've boxed ourselves in by defining the need for support based on per capita income. It was understandable in the past, but it's at odds with the learnings of the last decade.

A second structural challenge is that there is no central multilateral organization dealing with this. UNDP has been playing an important role, but it's not its central focus. There's no World Health Organization for good governance. There's no place the old president of Malaysia could call to say he wanted to get the best international capabilities to help deal with an outbreak of corruption. Who does he call? If it's an outbreak of disease, you call the WHO. Who do you call? There is no central organization on this critical issue.

There is a global structural challenge. In fact, it's like the situation facing the international community in the 1990s with infectious diseases. With HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria there was no sufficient funding, structure or strategy, and there was a whole set of new initiatives, including the Global Fund, GAVI and others to deal with that. That's the situation we're in today with this infectious disease of authoritarianism.

What should we do? Canada can play a leadership role at this point. First of all, we have huge credibility. The Freedom House report that talked about the rise of authoritarianism also noted that Canada has the highest rating for freedom in the G7. We also have, by various other criteria, a view in the international population that we are one of the most benevolent countries, in terms of actually engaging to do good. We have credibility, capability and self-interest in terms of trying to play a leadership role on this critical issue.

What can we do? First, before talking about new institutions, we can shift how we're doing our existing development from an I-shape to an L. This would mean that although the vast majority of our aid goes to the poorest countries we also recognize the underlying foundational support for democratic governance and the need to build explicitly into our policies the ability to continue to support the democratic governance of countries as they graduate, as will Vietnam or Bangladesh in the next few years, from our traditional aid. This would recognize the need to keep those governance engagements.

Second, when there are moments of opportunity, as in Tunisia, Malaysia or other places, we can engage in a meaningful way for an extended period of time.

This shift from an I to an L—you can call it L for liberty, after the underlying freedom that comes from doing this—actually seems simple. It would be pioneering in developing the role we could play. That's the first recommendation I would make.

The second is that there are unique Canadian assets for us to deploy.

● (0905)

The Canada foundation for international democratic development was a good suggestion in 2007. I think it's an essential recommendation today and I hope this committee supports it, not to copy or compete with the NDIs and the Westminster Foundation, but to complement and complete them.

We can actually go beyond that. We have a set of unique Canadian assets we can deploy more fully. I call it the justice corps, but it really is doing three things under that justice corps recommendation.

The first is to take the Canadian police arrangement, which is a unique institution that allows us to deploy some 200 RCMP provincial and municipal officers into fragile states and conflict situations around the world. It's made a huge contribution. We should increase that to 500 per year and we should be using it to help build the rule of law not just in the fragile states, but in the consolidating democracies. We should complement it by leveraging the assets of our justice department and our highly respected judges, to help build justice systems around the world. We should also provide for all the clerks of superior and supreme courts—our best and brightest young people—the opportunity to spend a year or two abroad, immediately after their clerkships, working with justice institutions around the world.

Through that, we could actually deploy unique Canadian capabilities on this rule of law issue. Those are ways we could deploy unique Canadian assets.

The third element is that we can create that global hub for SDG 16, for peace, justice and strong institutions. In the 1970s, we created the global hub for research and science that was applied to development with the IDRC, with the first chair, Lester B. Pearson. We need an IDRC for good governance. This is actually mobilizing the best thinking around the world on this from a Canadian hub.

My recommendation is that we set up an international centre for peace, justice and strong institutions, based in Ottawa, and maybe housed within the IDRC or with a similar leadership structure. One of the elements we should do is, every year, in the week before the United Nations General Assembly, when heads of state are travelling to this part of the world, they should stop in Ottawa first because every year there should be a global conference on key issues of justice and the rule of law.

Let's talk about anti-corruption. Let's talk about indigenous governance. Let's talk about reform of the police. Then we are shaping the agenda every year the week before the United Nations General Assembly and we're putting a maple leaf flag on this important issue.

Those would be the set of recommendations. They're bold, but I think they're timely and they're doable.

The challenge is making it happen because—

The Chair: Mr. Greenhill, we're over time, by about two minutes now. If I could just get you to deliver those and then we'll open it up and explore them more in the questions.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Thank you.

In terms of how to make it happen, it is clear that the key recommendations from the report of 2007 weren't adopted. Key institutional support that existed at that time has been dismantled. There is a very partisan period we're about to enter into with the elections. This committee can play a unique role in showing that partisanship ends at the border on this critical issue.

There are three recommendations. The first is to work to come up with a unanimous set of recommendations, unlike the last time, for Canada's commitment to international democracy promotion. The second is to ask every party to endorse it and include it in their election platform. Every party would say, “We endorse these recommendations and if elected, we commit to implement them in the first two years of our mandate, working with other parties and Canadian civil society.” Period. Every party.

The standing committee should agree to look at the implementation of this six months after the next election, and to preplan a follow-up for one year and two years after that.

With those sets of recommendations, I believe you'll have a chance at not just having some very important recommendations, but some very consequential impact.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you both for your testimony.

We'll move right into questions and we'll start with MP Aboultaif, please.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Good morning, Mr. Lamarre and Mr. Greenhill. Thank you for appearing before committee today. It's quite refreshing to hear your thoughts this morning.

The first question is for Mr. Lamarre.

In 2019, your organization invited applicants to submit applications for a wide range of projects under the democratic development umbrella. I believe that you always need those collaborative efforts to get the best out of these programs. If you were to choose among the programs, which one do you think you'll focus the most on in order to get the best results?

● (0910)

Mr. Christian Lamarre: Interestingly enough, we don't get to choose. At the pre-selection stage, we hire external assessors to go over the 2,300 applications for a grant. Afterwards, we have resident coordinators. The resident coordinator system is a network of UN senior leadership in almost every state in the world. Through them, we get feedback as well on those applicants. We also have a program consultative group made of headquarter UN entities that go over the applications and the project proposals.

This entire consultation process shrinks the number to about 50 projects that we can fund because we have a budget of about $9 million a year. Then this is approved by our consultative board. We don't get to choose, in terms of the secretariat. We are not the ones deciding that there's going to be a priority in that country or we will select this exact project in that country. This has all been driven, based on the best application. There have been years when we have said, “Okay, this year we'll welcome, as a priority, youth engagement demands or electoral processes-based demands“.

This year was actually open to all. We never looked only at one thematic. As such, in every one of our project proposals, there has to be a part about gender balance or gender equality. Every project proposal also needs to assert how they are helping vulnerable communities.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: That leads me to my second question. We need to insert elements like gender, youth engagement and all of that. We know all of these will help to enhance democracy in one way or the other.

The main question will always remain: How do you measure your success? That evaluation process is most needed, in order to be able to evaluate.... I'm a great believer in doing the best you can and becoming involved in something, so that you can provide the best result. Those funds don't come around all the time. If they come to be helpful, we need to make sure the measures are there and the result is there.

Although, when we are measuring democracy, as you guys mentioned at the beginning, it's very hard to precisely measure the result. At least maybe one of the best outcomes we should get out of this is to be able to get some benchmarks over what we need to achieve out of this and how we can know that we are achieving, in order to be able to correct our efforts and to maybe focus our efforts better.

Can you brief us on the rules or methods of evaluation that you use?

Mr. Christian Lamarre: Benchmarks or performance indicators are enshrined in our project document. For each project, there is a project document, which acts as a contract, binding the implementing agency, the local NGO or a local civil society organization, with UNDEF.

During the project life cycle, there are moments when we do evaluate. We call this a milestone monitoring mission. We set milestones in the time cycle of the projects, so we can go and observe how they do things, to see if it works out and to get the feedback from participants directly as well.

At the end of the project, there are audits and narrative reporting as well, but there is also sometimes—not always and I'll tell you why—a full-fledged project evaluation. We don't have project evaluations for all our projects because this is costly and we're working on a limited budget. We did this in the past. We had to gather a critical mass of project evaluations to really understand the results in the field, to see what was happening. We did this a few years ago. It was at the demand of our donors and our board. We evaluated some 90 projects a few years ago. Nowadays, we do 10 a year out of 50 proposals that are funded, so about 20%, which gives us a good measure of achievements and sometimes things that we need to correct along the way as well.

● (0915)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Greenhill, I echo your call to shift the focus toward enhancing, encouraging or working on democracy further and further, because I believe that if Canada is number one in the world in that area, and proudly, that gives us an opportunity to play a meaningful role.

How far should we go? You also mentioned some dollar numbers in terms of what we have and what we should have. How much further do you think should we go, and which areas of interest or focus should we have?

The Chair: Mr. Greenhill, could I ask you to give a relatively short answer to that? Maybe we can come back to it in a subsequent question.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Very briefly, I would focus on the key governance institution building, the rule of law, justice and internal checks and balances. The cost of what's being proposed is bold, but it's less than 1% of what we spend on development, defence and diplomacy today.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Vandenbeld, please.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you. I'll give the first minute to Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

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

Very quickly, thank you for that excellent presentation, Mr. Greenhill.

You've pushed us to think outside the box, but one of the items that you did not touch on is another unique characteristic of Canada, which is our multicultural nature. You talked about, for instance, sending judges or police officers. We have people who speak the languages and understand the cultures. It's something that we have and that other countries don't, so it further enhances this potential leadership role. I believe that we can unanimously agree to some of the recommendations that you've made.

We have a parliamentary internship program here where we bring young Ukrainians to Canada. It has been running for 25 years and has been hugely successful. Over 200 of the program's graduates are now at various levels of government in Ukraine. Often we rely on them. They're agents of democracy within that country.

What are your thoughts on Parliament perhaps taking on a project of that sort and targeting countries undergoing an evolution in their democratic development?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: I think the specific program you're referring to is an excellent one and definitely could be applied to a limited number of other countries where we have a real role to play.

Ukraine's a wonderful exception to the rule of our thinking inside the box. Because of the extraordinary engagement of the Ukrainian-Canadian community, governments, including when I was at CIDA and elsewhere, continued to engage with Ukraine even though it fell outside of the dollars per capita, because we all understood that there was work to be done on governance. It's a great example of the kind of thing we should be doing more broadly. If we were doing in Tunisia and other places what we've been doing with Ukraine, we'd be making a huge contribution.

The point you made, sir, on the quality of our police officers and justice officials is very strong; they have linguistic, cultural and contextual understanding. In fact, on the issue of evaluations, when the Canadian policing arrangement was evaluated a couple of years ago, the evaluators said that Canada is one of the “few countries which deploys serving police officers, is a leader in both civilian policing and Security Sector Reform,” and they particularly noted how people in those countries appreciated the cultural sensitivities and linguistic capabilities of our police officers. That's something that we're just going to get stronger at, which is why the idea of focusing on that is a powerful one.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: I want to thank you very much, Mr. Greenhill, for some very fresh ideas, and also ideas on how we make sure that this happens this time. For 20 years, there have been various incarnations of this, not just the 2007 report. I think there's a lot of political will for that, but you've given us a bit of a blueprint and framework, so I thank you for that.

Mr. Lamarre, I managed a project that was funded by UNDEF on women in politics where resident coordinators were placed on each continent. I thank you for that. There's one thing I wanted to specifically ask you about because you have that global perspective. It's on project-based funding.

What are the limitations if it becomes a funding mechanism that's project to project? Is there a possibility of having something that maybe cross-fertilizes knowledge, allows for knowledge transfer and knowledge creation, and then becomes sort of a clearinghouse for these lessons learned? How can we transfer this, not just from project to project but also when those opportunities arise and globally, not just in terms of what Canada is doing but trying to become a clearinghouse for some of the things that are happening globally? What would be the danger if it's something that is just project-driven or “funding to” as opposed to something that has that over-arching mechanism?

I'll let you speak first, Mr. Lamarre, and then I'll go to Mr. Greenhill.

● (0920)

Mr. Christian Lamarre: Thank you.

I wouldn't see the project-based way of doing things as a limitation. We do it this way because we're a fund. Other UN entities have different programs and projects. On our end, though, we've managed over the past 10 years to gather those experiences and we've learned a lot of lessons.

For one thing, on our websites we have developed a system whereby we can consult on lessons learned for different projects. We can make a search by thematics and by countries. This is something we've done.

We also have recurring funding. In some cases we will give a second grant to an organization. Our board decided to go this way a few years ago in order to frame better a situation and give it some longevity as well.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: I want to get a bit of policy from Mr. Greenhill.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: I think you raise a critical point. The issue is, how do we collectively become wise about how to make democratic governance work and how do we build more resilient democracies to push back and build immunities against the infection of authoritarianism? Doing so needs a central organization. The World Health Organization does it on infectious diseases. We don't have one yet. That's why I was suggesting we need an SDG 16 institute or this IDRC for good governance, because Canada should help build a global gathering point for this. If not, we'll do a lot of interesting one-off elements, but there's no place for a critical mass today.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you.

The Chair: MP Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): I have to say that personally I find you the most important witnesses we've had here, and I wish we could have you all day.

Some committees have expanded into six hours as of last night, but I don't think this one will, unfortunately.

Whatever entity might be set up, I think it would be very valuable to continue dialogue with both of you and your organizations.

There are many questions. The first is—and we talked at the beginning about this—whether the answer to Canada's providing more assistance in building effective democracy and human rights and justice and anti-corruption is to create yet another organization or whether we should be flowing the money through the number of entities we have already in Canada. That's the first challenge we have to face.

If the decision were that we recommend yet another organization, where did we go wrong with the last organization we had?

The third question is: If we create an organization, should it be an organization that directly helps to deliver this knowledge and support, or would it become a funding entity like Mr. Lamarre's organization? We've heard from both.

I welcome your advice on this. Frankly, I think it would be good to follow up, if you're willing to send to us your best advice, because obviously Mr. Lamarre's organization simply funds.

Mr. Lamarre, I'm very interested in the process you follow. I used to work for the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. We were established by Canada, the United States and Mexico. We had a program with a slush fund, and funds were given out to local organizations.

I know that Canada already does some of this work—building judiciary and so forth. Some of the groups we've talked to actually have bases in some of the receiving countries, and that helps them to identify appropriate organizations. You, however, seem to have a unique process whereby the local organizations themselves apply to you for funding. Could you speak to me about why you've chosen to go in that direction?

● (0925)

Mr. Robert Greenhill: In terms of having a separate organization, when the report came out in 2007, I thought it was a useful report and I thought there was some merit in the idea of having a separate organization. Now, over a decade later, I'm convinced it's essential. The history of what's happened in Canada—under both Liberal and Conservative governments, so this is not a partisan issue—shows *l'effritement* that can take place on these issues unless we're really focused in a significant way. The testimonies from the NDI and IRI on the importance of having firewalls, so that whatever the issues or partisan challenges of the day, a country's continued engagement and support for democratic development can continue, makes me believe we need it.

I'm actually proposing two separate institutions. There's one that is leveraging the best of Canada, including, by the way, supporting key organizations such as the CANADEMs and the Parliamentary Centres and others. This group shouldn't be in opposition but should be supporting the existing groups. Then we should have that second IDRC for good governance, which is leveraging the capabilities of the best.

I think institutional commitment is necessary for us to change the momentum around democratic governance globally today.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'll go back to you and you can tell me how we can impose that firewall, but maybe we can hear from Mr. Lamarre.

Mr. Christian Lamarre: Thank you.

The fund is created in such a way that we are.... Having offices in various countries means that you're part of country programming. We are funding local civil societies in countries some of whose governments, I would say, would prefer us to go through them. We actually go through them; we inform them that we're going to carry a project in their country.

UNDP, for example, works hand in hand with the government to decide on a country program. We've decided to go to see another layer of society in each given country to give a chance to civil society to reach out to us. From the UN side, we want to look for local architects and we want to avoid intermediaries.

There's a question of our size as well. We're small in numbers as well as in funding. We want to avoid an extra layer of bureaucracy. We want some accountability as well. By doing this work directly with civil society, I think we can achieve this. The goal is to empower them.

Yes, they have to reach out to us. They have to present themselves. We on our end, I would say, manage to stay in an area in which we can say that we're the United Nations but as well can engage directly with the local civil society in each country. There's a fine line in my line of work requiring us to be careful.

Our fund is actually designed in such a way that it operates slightly differently from other UN entities. It was made this way, as well; if not, we couldn't carry out what we're doing.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I have so many more questions, but my time is up.

The Chair: It is, sadly.

We're now going to move to MP Saini, please.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Good morning to both of you. Thank you very much for coming in.

Mr. Greenhill, I'll start with you, because I think you gave voice and eloquence to something that has troubled me over the last few years.

Part of the issue is that right now there has been a vacuum in leadership in the United States. You've seen recently the engagement of eastern Europe, especially Hungary and Poland. The Visegrad nations are becoming more populist, although they are somewhat established democracies. You also have nascent democracies in Africa, where you have an entrenched history of clans and tribes. You have an internal geopolitical issue and you have an external geopolitical issue.

Leaving that aside, of everybody we've spoken to, nobody has yet stated the economic argument. If we're going into a country and developing democracy, side by side I think there should be a development of the economic system also. I don't think you can have one without the other.

If we go back in history and look at Bretton Woods in 1944 and the development of the IMF and the World Bank, part of the reasoning was to stabilize Europe, to make sure there was financial stability so that further complications would not arise because of financial issues. I know there is important work to be done on democratic governance, and I think it's great, but so far, nobody has said that we should also develop the economy side by side.

You've raised some very interesting points, points that are actually very profound, when you talk about deep corruption, crime, lack of security and weak institutions. All of that is pervasive because the economic system is not in alignment. When you have a lack or scarcity, you're going to have economic issues that will further impact and corrode democratic institutions. That's why democracies don't always work for everyone.

Where is Canada going to be aligned with stabilizing societies not only on the democratic side but also on the financial and economic side?

● (0930)

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Let me make three quick replies to that.

The first is that for the countries that are already upper middle income, actually correcting the governance issues can unlock tremendous economic opportunities, both from the talented people who are being constrained by kleptocrats in the country, and also by creating opportunity for investment.

The second point I'd make is that it's also an incredibly important issue for Canadian business, because corruption is a major non-tariff barrier to Canadians' being able to invest and engage in those areas. If we unlock that problem, it also helps Canadian investment support them.

The third is that for the countries that are poorest—the least developed countries—getting this governance right is necessary but not sufficient. As Madeleine Albright said, people want to vote, but they also want to eat.

Here, this committee was very articulate, two or three years ago, about the need for Canada to step back up in terms of our level of international engagement. This year is the 50th anniversary of the Pearson report that argued for us to be at 0.7%. We are at the worst level we've been in 50 years. We are well below where we were in 1969 when the Pearson report was put out, and actually, because of our stepping back on that issue, we're rather fumbling the ball on the five-yard line. We could in the next 15 years eliminate deep poverty around the world, but it would require countries like Canada to sustain the course on official development for the next decade or two, and we have fallen back on it.

This committee's important work on governance is absolutely essential, but I also think the important recommendations you made on official development assistance as a complement to it cannot be ignored.

Mr. Raj Saini: The second question I have is the geopolitical question. We have now countries—Venezuela, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and those countries especially in Africa and in Latin America that have resources—that experience an intervention by outside countries who may not want that country to follow the path of democracy.

We walk into a country and are trying to explain to the leadership of that country that this is the path forward, yet an outside, more powerful country comes in and says to forget about this, that there are more economic opportunities by doing it this other way: “Forget about the rule of law, forget about environmental standards, forget about good governance; we're going to provide you with the resources you need”, in many cases in a corrupt way.

How do we counteract that narrative? As you said, people want to vote and they want to eat, so how do you counteract that narrative?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: That's a great question. The short answer is that it requires very sophisticated long-term commitment. It involves working with civil society groups and young leaders there who actually want to see a better path forward for their country. It involves ensuring that in international development and other agreements there is a greater focus on the rule of law, and it requires actually having tough conversations.

One thing we used to say in a partnership against corruption initiative that I oversaw at the World Economic Forum was that when you fight corruption, corruption fights back. We saw in Malaysia the scandal with former Goldman Sachs executives being accused. They're using the best capabilities in the world. We need to be equally clear-sighted.

● (0935)

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Because we have to stop a little early to do drafting instructions on this report after the next panel, I'm going to suspend here, take five minutes and bring the next panel in so that we have an equal amount of time for both panels.

That being said, I concur with what we've heard from some of the members, that this was exceptionally important testimony for us to get on the record as we come to the end of our study. I want to thank you both for coming this morning and providing such insightful perspectives to us.

Colleagues, we shall suspend for five minutes.

● (0935)

(Pause)

● (0940)

The Chair: Colleagues, we shall resume.

We're going to begin with our second panel, and an esteemed panel it is.

I want to welcome, from CANADEM, Paul LaRose-Edwards, who is the executive director.

From the Parliamentary Centre, we have Jean-Paul Ruszkowski, who is the president and CEO; and Maureen Boyd, who is the chair of the board of directors.

Thank you for being here.

You will be the last witnesses as we go forward with this study. Let me ask both groups to give 10 minutes of testimony, and then, as is our practice, we will open it up to the members.

Mr. Edwards, if I could get you to lead off, that would be fantastic.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards (Executive Director, CANADEM (Canada's Civilian Reserve)): Mr. Chair and members, thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

CANADEM has been doing democratic promotion for two decades. I've been doing democratic promotion for three decades, starting with my diplomatic posting to the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, England, in 1989—a long way back.

I've circulated a short brief on just one aspect of CANADEM's two decades of democracy promotion work, specifically our election observation work. I hope it makes it clear that already, in CANADEM, Canada has at least one strong and very competent platform for international democracy promotion, and I would suggest that there are others.

We have proven ourselves adept at scaling up and performing well in difficult situations, as we did in Afghanistan as early as 2002. When we were suddenly asked to deploy police and legal reform teams, we did. Then again, in 2008, with just a month's notice, we were asked to set up a free-standing, permanent team of governance capacity-building experts in Kabul, including with the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan. In both instances, not only did we have the right experts, but we were also robust enough to find our own compound, provide our own security, vehicles, food services, admin and logistics, in a rather challenging environment.

You, in Canada, already have at least one strong democracy promotion agency, CANADEM, and we are capable of much more. We have over 48,000 people on our roster, and 8,000 of them have democracy credentials.

You've posed three questions. The first was how the field of democratic development has changed since 2007. As you've been hearing, it has changed substantially. Various agencies outside of Canada have become very much stronger, including various NGOs based in countries outside of Canada. This is very positive for democracy promotion worldwide, but it has also narrowed the scope for Canada to easily re-enter direct hands-on democracy promotion and capacity building.

Your second question was about Canada's role and effectiveness within that landscape. Over the past decade, Canada has cut back its direct hands-on involvement in international democracy promotion. For example, as you know, Rights and Democracy in Montreal was wound up. Funding for democracy work by Canadian NGOs, like the Parliamentary Centre or CANADEM, was reduced to almost zero. Election observation involvement was curtailed and then cancelled completely in 2016. It has only come back partially with regard to Ukraine. At the same time, Canada's indirect involvement, the funding of non-Canadian NGOs and other non-Canadian agencies, has continued but seemingly at a reduced level. I say "seemingly" because the lack of transparency as to how Global Affairs Canada spends its money has only increased.

I would urge the committee to press Global Affairs to make it clear to all of us what it funds and whom it funds. All indications are that Canadian NGOs are receiving less and less funding while non-Canadian NGOs still receive some funding, and UN and other multilateral agencies receive substantial non-accountable and unexamined funding, for which they are not audited as to how well they make use of Canadian funds. Don't get me wrong; I'm a big fan of the UN.

The third question that you've posed was forward looking, how Canada can best support democratic development internationally. This, of course, is a much harder question. Your deliberations will shed light on why Canada, since the late 1990s, has been so limited in its direct hands-on democracy capacity development work, and why, over the past decade, Canada has even reduced its direct hands-on democracy promotion. Clarity on that stepping back will help shed light on if and how Canada might move forward.

As my final point, do we need to create a new Canadian democracy promotion agency or is the first step to fund and scale up existing Canadian NGOs, followed by an assessment as to which ones are succeeding and can be even further scaled up to become Canadian democracy champions internationally? Are existing Canadian NGOs not capable of scaling up to that extent, and does Canada need to pursue the costly and time-consuming option of creating a new Canadian democracy promotion agency? I'm really not too sure which way to go on this.

● (0945)

Thank you. I'm pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Ruszkowski, please.

Mr. Jean-Paul Ruszkowski (President and Chief Executive Officer, Parliamentary Centre): Thank you very much. It's a real honour to appear before you following some distinguished witnesses prior to our visit.

The witnesses have made three persuasive arguments, which I think we need to highlight: the increased global need for democracy development, the need to regularize the funding and resource allocation, and the opportunity for Canadian experience and expertise to bloom. We will speak briefly to each, based on our 50 years of experience working in 70 countries on more than 120 projects.

In terms of the increased need for international democracy development, I would like to quote Dr. Derek Mitchell, who referred to challenges posed by economic inequality, corruption, the mindset changing more slowly than the institutions, and the resulting frustrations and backlash that we see throughout. He also pointed out the role of digital technology, which we believe amplifies that backlash.

Other witnesses have mentioned the United States pulling back from its leadership role. Dr. Twining, the president of IRI, testified that development assistance should focus on democracy, on rights, on governance, transparency, accountability and anti-corruption. We agree. At the Parliamentary Centre we believe all citizens have a right to participate meaningfully through democracy and that effective parliaments are crucial to that governance. Our projects work. I will give you a couple of examples.

The Parliamentary Centre has been involved in more than 30 countries in Africa implementing 50 projects in the last 20 years. Its support has focused on strengthening committees for oversight and law-making purposes, supporting regional interparliamentary networks and building the capacity of parliamentary secretariats.

We are committed to offering tools for measuring results. We developed the African Parliamentary Index, measuring individual parliamentary performance. We are committed to inclusivity and gender equality. In Indonesia, our award-winning pilot project Our Voice used innovative technology—an SMS polling platform—to allow women to use their cellphones to register their opinions on public services. It helped break down traditional barriers to women's participation in decision-making and in bringing tangible changes to work at the village level.

We collaborate with other organizations. For example, in Indonesia we co-operated with women and youth development institutions. We are willing to support them. We collaborate also globally. Canada funded a very forward-looking project in Burkina Faso to fund the strategic plan for the National Assembly of Burkina Faso. The European Union, the Swedes and the Swiss have decided to fund the implementation of this for $10 million over the next three years.

The parliamentary secretaries Kamal Khera and Andrew Leslie both spoke on the Burkina Faso project as an example of international co-operation. This took place at an event hosted by the European Union ambassador, the Swiss ambassador and the chargé d'affaires of Sweden.

We want to continue to create, innovate, co-operate and partner to promote international democracy, specifically to sustain our efforts in strengthening the capacity of parliaments and individual legislators. Canada provided substantial funding for elections monitoring. This has sometimes left the parliamentarians who were elected without any tools, so we have to think about complementarity of the efforts. We want to build a governance component for every military involvement that we have abroad.

● (0950)

A democratic development plan should include strengthening the oversight of the security services by the country's parliament. We need to train leaders, support leadership schools, engage youth and promote inclusivity. We need to work with new technology, including artificial intelligence, to develop tools and promote strengthening.

To do that, we need money and multi-year funding. This speaks to the second area where we agree with previous witnesses that we need to nationalize and regularize funding in our resource allocation. From 2006 to 2016, our resources to support the strengthening of governance declined form the Canadian government.

I would be happy to discuss more specifically all these facts and how we compare with other countries.

Anita Vandenbeld spoke about IRI and NDI flourishing because there's an endowment fund from Congress allowing them to build resilience, consistency and a permanent presence to support democracy. We don't have an endowment fund. We don't have core money. We don't have any guarantees of multi-year funding.

Christopher MacLennan, assistant deputy minister of global issues and development, spoke earlier to you. He said that there was no dedicated envelope of spending and that, instead, there are the bilateral programs and there are other programs to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. He said that was the reason we see numbers up and down depending on the year.

That is, in a nutshell, our problem. The problem for Parliamentary Centre and other NGOs is we never know where the money is and when it is coming. The centre and the NGOs need a faster decision-making process so we can rapidly respond to situations that are volatile, like Ukraine and Venezuela. However quick and predictable decision-making is, it will make it irrelevant if there's no funding. That's the importance of funding.

Our third area of agreement is how we can get more Canadians involved. As Tom Axworthy mentioned, “Canadians everywhere are advising on a charter of rights, on the court system, on federalism, on party development. The whole world is employing Canadians on this except Canada.”

Even while individual Canadians are finding work, there are situations in which we co-operate with other governments, but those governments do not permit Canadian organizations to access those funds.

The real question is: Why would Canada not want to benefit from the Canadian brand? We're world renowned for our excellence in public service, in the justice system, legislative bodies, and civil society, including political parties. Our Canadian way is pluralistic and inclusive. I think we are ready to do the job, and we want to do it.

Thank you very much.

Maureen.

● (0955)

Ms. Maureen Boyd (Chair, Board of Directors, Parliamentary Centre):

I will take about three minutes. Is there enough time?

The Chair: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Maureen Boyd: Perfect.

As Jean-Paul said, I'm the volunteer chair of the board. My day job is director of Carleton University's initiative for parliamentary and diplomatic engagement.

In addition to offering orientation to newly elected MPs and annual orientation of foreign diplomats to Canada, I've organized more than 20 policy panels. One of them was Promoting Democracy Abroad, which I co-sponsored with the democracy caucus and with the Parliamentary Centre nearly a year ago. Our panellists, by the way, were three Canadians who work for non-Canadian organizations abroad.

As you know, the Parliamentary Centre began more than 50 years ago by providing support to the Canadian Parliament. Later, as more support was given to committees and to individual parliamentarians, the Parliamentary Centre shifted its focus to serving legislatures abroad, but we value our excellent relations with members of Parliament and senators who participate in our projects abroad and with foreign delegations here.

We know we're appreciated. We celebrated our 50th anniversary last March with an honorary reception committee composed of every former prime minister and every former governor general. There were 300 guests, with remarks from Speaker Regan, David Johnston, the acting Minister of Democratic Institutions and a trio of female parliamentarians including MPs Vandenbeld and Laverdière and Senator Andreychuk.

The Parliamentary Centre is preparing for the next 50 years. We've revitalized our board of directors. David Johnston is our new honorary patron. New members include Allan Rock, president emeritus of Ottawa U; Catherine Cano, CEO of CPAC; Graham Fox, CEO of IRPP; Audrey O'Brien, Clerk Emerita; Fen Hampson, director of CIGI's global security and politics program; and our vice-chair Yaroslav Baran, among others.

This is a strong and determined board, and we have a lot of initiatives planned. We want to reconnect more closely and strengthen relations with Parliament. We've created a group, Parliamentarians for the Parliamentary Centre, that endorses our objectives. We hope that those of you who have not already joined will do so today. We want to move into the area of thought leadership.

Other witnesses mentioned the need to encourage democracy at home. We agree. We want to engage Canadians, and in particular youth. We're organizing a hackathon later this spring that we're calling “Democracy Rebooted”, bringing together youth, government and the private sector to prototype 10 to 15 new tools and policies for a healthier democracy.

I'd like to take one moment to thank our CEO, Jean-Paul Ruszkowski, who has led the Parliamentary Centre for the last nine years but is stepping down this fall. Our application process for a new CEO starts next month, and I would encourage parliamentarians to let us know if they have an outstanding candidate they'd like us to consider. We will have a new CEO in place for the new Parliament.

In 2007 the committee called for the establishment of a new arm's-length Canada foundation for international democratic development or equivalent. We already have that equivalent in us right now—an organization that already can do this. We have an impeccable brand of 50 years' standing and we are committed to serving international democracy development for the next 50 years. Use us.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will roll right into questions.

The first questioner is MP Kusie, please, for six minutes.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ruszkowski, it’s always a pleasure to see you. Thank you for being here today.

[*English*]

Maureen, it's such a pleasure. I feel like I should have met you somewhere before this week, when I finally had the opportunity to meet you. I always start by saying I'm very proud to have been with Global Affairs Canada for 15 years, on numerous postings, the last one being as deputy consul general in Dallas, Texas.

I'm not a permanent member on this committee, so it's very interesting for me. This is my second time here on this study, to sort of take a peek into the different approaches that are being explored. From what I've seen, the focus here is definitely at the civic level, of course, which is going into these nations and making a difference on the ground.

I'm always very interested in the bigger picture, the leadership aspect. We had someone from a UN agency in the last panel. I recently read Madeleine Albright's book, which frankly, I was disappointed in. I felt it kind of gave an overview of every dictator in history and then went on to say that the current U.S. President is a dictator, which certainly many agree with. I preferred the recent book, *How Democracies Die* by Ziblatt and Levitsky, which spoke of the gradual degradation of democracy within the world.

Given that, I'll start with you both, Mr. Ruszkowski and Madam Boyd. What are your thoughts as to the role the UN should take in terms of preserving democracy internationally? Certainly we focus on the civics, and should I have time, I have more specific questions for Monsieur LaRose-Edwards in regard to the nuts and bolts of how we do this.

We go, we create these institutions and we try to do good in the world, especially Canada, which these studies have shown is a world leader in this area. I can't help but feel that if our leadership isn't going into the world at the highest levels with these same messages of strength on democracy, particularly in regard to relationships with dictators and dictatorship nations, what good really does that do to the rest of the work we do?

Could you please comment, first of all, on how you see the role of the United Nations in democracy building, since our previous panel mentioned there's no central organization for democracy? I wish there were. That's what the UN should be in my opinion. Also, how important is the messaging of the leadership of Canada for promoting democracy internationally?

Thank you.

● (1000)

Mr. Jean-Paul Ruszkowski: The first question is the toughest one. The United Nations system, as you know, is a big conglomerate of very distinct missions and different mandates. I am mainly concerned about what I've experienced in the field, which is that it's not always very easy for people to understand what exactly they want to achieve.

I will give you an example. In Nigeria there was a major, multi-basket fund for democracy. The governments of the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom were funding. We tried very hard to co-operate with that office in Abuja. It was very weird in the sense that we never got clarity on how we should proceed. When they told us that we should proceed with the support of the Nigerian legislature, we had the support of the Nigerian legislature and nothing came about.

Our high commissioner at that time, Chris Cooter, wanted very much to have an account of the use of the basket fund, and the British high commissioner wanted the same thing. We never had any answers that would be satisfactory to our taxpayers.

It's a very uneven situation with the UN. They are all over, in many different fields. I'm really concerned about that.

Canada's role on the whole has been positive but not very audacious. We have reached a point where we need to be a bit more audacious. I'm thinking of the work that your chair, Michael Levitt, is doing on Venezuela. It's an example of what Canada should be doing, being more proactive and more visible. We need to pull the resources together and unite our allies, like we're doing in Venezuela.

The Venezuelan case is a good example of what Canada can do. I think Ms. Freeland has decided that she wants to take some leadership. We have a very good special envoy, Allan Culham. I would like to see more of what I saw with Venezuela.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Audacity.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Wrzesnewskyj, please.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

I'd like to thank the panellists.

My questions will be for Mr. LaRose-Edwards.

In your hand-out, on page 2 you have a table of CANADEM election observer missions to Ukraine over the years. They're substantial in number and also substantial in the number of observers.

Is there any other country in the world in which we've had this number of missions with this number of observers?

● (1005)

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: No. Ukraine is, as you know, almost a case apart because of the Canadian Ukrainian community. The utility of having a large stand-alone Canadian mission there as well as of staffing the OSCE electoral observation mission makes a lot of sense.

One of your earlier comments in a previous panel spoke to the fact that we have other diasporas in Canada, and so there may also be a utility to replicating this with some other countries. This is always a challenging thing. Diasporas themselves are extremely political, and this fact increases the challenges to doing stand-alone Canadian missions, but there is a utility to it.

I could go further in that regard. We've done this now for decades. We continually reassess at the end of every stand-alone mission whether it made sense, whether it was value-added in a process both in house and with Foreign Affairs. We've always come to the conclusion that it absolutely was. One of the lessons to be learned was also that perhaps we need to think about replicating this with other countries in the world.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Excellent. Thank you for that.

I can confirm that it's not just the numbers, but often you don't need the same number. You have 500 observers, almost, starting back with the first one in 2004. You didn't need all those hundreds of translators, because diaspora communities—in Ukraine, it's Ukrainian and Russian languages that are spoken, etc.... There's that element, and the cultural understanding that they bring.

In 2006, I was observing the parliamentary elections in Crimea as part of the OSCE and after a long day quickly went to the hotel to shower and change. I saw all my colleagues in the hotel lounge. It was members of the diaspora who actually showered, changed and went back out. They bring, then, a very different energy at times. I've seen this over and over in different places. They bring a different commitment to democracy when it's their ancestral homeland.

Venezuela was referred to earlier, and you touched on it. Clearly our hearts go out to all the people suffering currently under the regime in Venezuela; hopefully, in the future there will be opportunities.

How much lead time and what sort of resources would be required to provide an organization such as yours, CANADEM, a chance to gear up for a country in which they haven't, as in the past in Ukraine, done these large observer missions?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: One of our strengths, being an NGO, is that life is a lot simpler for us than for civil servants. We have very pared-down rules and regulations for ourselves, so we can turn on a dime and can do these things literally in days.

Having said that, election observation has changed dramatically over the past couple of decades. It's no longer an issue of putting in a whole bunch of short-term observers just to observe the election day; it's a full cycle. That means having long-term observers. That's a key component.

Also, following on your earlier comments, the full cycle means that it doesn't end once the election is over. You don't just issue a report and then stop your work. One of the strengths of the Canadian Ukrainian community is that not only do they bring energy to election observation, but they also work on these files in a lot of different ways between elections. That's where the real heavy lifting comes in democracy promotion. Election observation is critically important, and the long-term observer component is becoming more important, but it's the follow-on activity.

For those who are interested, I think you're going to be very pleased with the way in which Mission Canada did this go-round, come next fall when both elections are over—the presidential election and then the parliamentary election.

We're looking at ways to keep this energy going between this fall and the next set of Ukrainian elections in four years. This is something we're all working at trying to figure out: how we can have a more “bang for the buck” process for this than just showing up for short-term missions.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Clearly we can't do this everywhere around the world, but perhaps regionally and continentally we can decide on countries of focus. There's also the whole question—and it was referenced in one of the previous slides—of the dollars spent and the outcomes. It's such a difficult measure. I made an argument back in 2004, made the case for a large contingent of observers at that time, and I just pulled a number out of the air, saying that every dollar spent will save us $100 spent on security if we don't get this right in the future.

That continues to be the case in Ukraine. We've resourced this particular mission well. You've indicated there are follow-up opportunities.

Are you resourced well enough for this mission? Perhaps you can give us a quick update on how things are rolling out on this particular mission, because you have people on the ground as we speak.

● (1010)

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: It's rolling out very well. We already have 50 long-term observers with Mission Canada out there, the Canada mission. We also have another eight over at the OSCE, run by the OSCE. Right now the selection process is just culminating for the short-term observers. They will start deploying in a couple of weeks.

It's going very well. This is extremely well resourced. There are always bells and whistles. One of the bells and whistles that we're actually going to fund ourselves is to look at mapping capacity over the next four years in the larger Canadian civil society—Ukrainian Canadians and others—for ongoing work in their own right back in Ukraine.

This is one of the things we're looking to do ourselves. That's not funded, but we think it's so important we're going to figure out how to fund it ourselves.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Duncan, the floor is yours.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you to all three of you.

I look forward to invitations to your events. I've been here for 11 years, and it's the first time I've heard of the group.

I think it was you, Mr. LaRose-Edwards, who raised this issue. I'm wondering if you think this committee—if we decide that there needs to be an new entity—should potentially be recommending two things.

You're both obviously already doing good work. We've heard from a number of Canadian organizations that are already doing incredible work. We've also heard some from the UN and some from the United States and Europe. Do you think, as the first step in deciding whether to form another group and what exactly its mandate could be, there would be value in doing some kind of gap analysis, analyzing what entities are already out there and the kind of work they're doing related to either the creation of democracy or better delivery of democracy, including all the entities we talked about before, addressing corruption, ensuring justice and so forth? Could you then give some clarification on what is the core need for this group?

Along with that, could you give some kind of recommendations and clarity on whether there's intent to replace everything that's out there, or recognition of the continuing need to support the good work that is being done by the other groups, having got a better understanding of the difference in their roles? I'm curious to get your feedback on that.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: That's a lot for us to handle.

CANADEM's history has followed this track. Initially we had an annual funding of a $147,000. After a while we proved ourselves and we got more funding. Our biggest funder for the past four years has been the British government, because we've proved ourselves to the British government and they fund us big time.

That's always my preferred way to go. The big bang always sounds good, but the big bangs are hard to do. You have to pass legislation. Where do you get the funds? How do you staff it? All that takes a lead time.

Meanwhile, you have existing organizations—Parliamentary Centre, ourselves—that can start scaling up and doing things. That also allows you to look at CANADEM and say, "Paul talked a good line, but he actually can't quite deliver, so you know what? We won't keep funding them, or we'll keep their funding at that level, or the contrary."

You have a lot of organizations in Canada that have the potential to scale up to be strong performers. You then identify four or five of them that can be major champions for Canada out there.

One of the things NGOs can do—and you've touched on the question too—is help to maintain a distance. Well, NGOs, depending on their leadership and their staffing, have a lot of independence. They do things the way they think is the right way, and they have that independence.

I don't know if that wrapped up enough of the issues, but I know Jean-Paul probably has something to add in here as well.

● (1015)

Ms. Linda Duncan: That's helpful.

Mr. Jean-Paul Ruszkowski: One comment you made is to make sure that the organizations that are functioning are not disturbed or distracted by the creation of a new organization.

I am very biased. I think the Parliamentary Centre is very well positioned to do a lot of work. So is CANADEM. It's the idea of preserving what assets we already have.

I also agree about the complexity of getting something bigger done by way of legislation. I'm very disappointed that we lost Rights and Democracy, but who says this could not happen again? The idea is really to preserve the assets we have, make sure they are properly funded, that there are clear multi-year programming efforts and that we are looked upon as partners and not as some marginal groups in the eyes of Global Affairs Canada.

Ms. Maureen Boyd: Can I add one little thing?

In 2007, you made the recommendation for two bodies. Nothing has happened, and that's what is concerning. We're feeling, let's go incrementally; let us get some money.

We have figures here that we can hand out, but they're in English only. If you would like to, you can come and get them afterwards. They show that in comparison with other countries, Canada does not fund very much in terms of official development assistance, and much of it goes, as we pointed out....

Whether it's because it's easier for Global Affairs to give it to the United Nations, because then they don't have to monitor the money afterwards, or for whatever reason, we're not being funded at the same level. From the point of view of the board of directors, we're spending an awful lot of time chasing money when we could be doing a lot more in promoting democracy abroad.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Do I have more time?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Neither of you has really responded to my question.

I think the starting point is that the proposal for a new group isn't in any way to say that we don't think the existing organizations are doing anything. What's necessary as a first step is to clearly define where we think the value is in the existing institutions that Canada decides to continue funding and then identify what the gaps are. These are likely what that group would do.

One value I would love to have people speaking to—and we won't have a chance for more witnesses—is that when an entity is established independently as an NGO or incorporated as a society, they can accept funds from the public or from private corporations, but if you were created as a government entity, you cannot necessarily.

I think, then, there are many issues we need to look at, but I really appreciate your input.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move to MP Sidhu.

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Thank you, all three of you, for sharing your wisdom and experience with us.

I will go to Mr. LaRose-Edwards first.

You appeared in front of this committee 13 years ago. What has changed in those 13 years? Has the change been positive or, with technology changing around the world, do you think the change is going in a positive direction? How do you explain the change, if you see any change?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Certainly, on the the big scene.... I'm actually an optimistic person in this regard. I think the world is moving forward very well. People are paying more and more attention to democratic issues, and so in the big picture I think things are going well. There are many organizations out there that are doing democracy promotion and are doing a great job.

Back here in Canada, I'm not so sanguine. For the last 13 years Canada has actually moved backwards in many different ways. Our funding has come less and less from the Canadian government. As I said, our biggest funder for the past four years has been the British government.

We've been putting in proposals in which we've started to take off our logo, because we're coming across as too Canadian. I'm so annoyed that we have to even think of doing that. If you're seen as just Canadian.... Of the 48,000 people on our roster, 60% are non-Canadians, most from the global south, but we still have a lot of Canadians.

Things have actually moved forward in the world, then, but have either stayed the same or perhaps moved back a little bit in the Canadian context.

● (1020)

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Can you give me a couple of areas in which we can help your organization do better in the future?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: I agree with Jean-Paul on this one. Consistent funding would be helpful. I don't mean unexamined funding—hold our feet to the fire—but there has to be funding. There's also a feeling, and perhaps it's a Canadian disease—I've witnessed this over my full career—that once an organization starts to become medium-sized, we start to say, "Let's push it down again; we don't want to be too big out there. Let's fund NDI."

Okay. Why don't we have our own NDI? We have some incipient NDIs in Canada—the Parliamentary Centre and others.

We don't tend to push forward our own.

I look at the Norwegians. The Norwegians and the Europeans back up their NGOs in the field. We don't get that backing from Canada, because Canada views this as maybe not being appropriate.

I'm going around a circle on this one, but I think that Canada could be more sure of itself and make better use of its funds. It just needs to get out there and take some risks.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: I have a second concern I'd like some light shed on.

Your organization has been working with the United Nations and the European Union on projects related to security sector reform. What are the links between democratic development and security reform?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: They're intertwined, obviously. Also, I'm a big fan of the UN. I think the UN is extremely important. We need to strengthen the UN by getting more qualified people in there. I always view individuals as the ones who make change and make reform.

I think, then, that we need to strengthen the UN, but we shouldn't assume that the UN always has it right. Parts of the UN are terrible. I've been on staff with various parts of the UN. Some are fantastic, and other parts are terrible. Canada, however, has gotten into the mode of simply cutting a cheque to the UN and saying, "Here's $120 million. Good luck." We don't track it and we don't see how well they spend it. Some parts of the UN deserve that kind of largesse, and other parts don't.

I don't know whether that answers your question.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Well, if I hear you right—

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: But, yes, the UN brings a lot of these issues together, and that's the utility of multilateral relationships.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Jean-Paul.

Mr. Jean-Paul Ruszkowski: May I just say something?

This may sound a little crude, but I'm not in favour of outsourcing Canadian values. That's fundamentally my point. If we want to have an image in the world and we want to continue having the good brand we have, we have to be behind it and take charge of that brand and not be afraid of being Canadian.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Since you have the floor, Jean-Paul, you mentioned in your opening remarks that the U.S.A. has rather dropped down on the world stage when it comes to playing a leadership role. The second comment you made was that you need money.

In my little experience in life, money cannot buy everything. I want to know where Canada fits into this puzzle. Is this a leadership role? Is this a consistent commitment going forward for the next 50 years, as Mr. LaRose-Edwards said?

Where do you want to see Canada going with this?

Mr. Jean-Paul Ruszkowski: I think we should take leadership, and we should put in the resources; in other words, walk the talk. I think what we're doing in Venezuela.... I want everybody here to realize that this is the very first time in the history of Latin America that Latin American leaders go to talk and say to the president of Venezuela, "You must leave." This is something that Canada can really take credit for.

● (1025)

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to take a break, but we're going to do two last three-minute questions, from MP Vandenbeld followed by MP Kusie. Then we're going to have to do our drafting instructions or this wonderful report is not going to be moved on.

MP Vandenbeld, you have three minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you.

In the interest of full disclosure, 19 years ago my first international posting to Bosnia was with CANADEM, and 14 years ago I was a program officer with the Parliamentary Centre and actually more recently served on the board. I am, then, very familiar with and well aware of the excellent and good work that you do, and I think that leveraging it is going to be one of the goals of this committee.

The question I have is about the need for some sort of overarching entity that would fund this kind of work but also be a clearing house and be able to fill that gap.

When this started being talked about 20 years ago with Democracy Canada and then leading up to the 2007 study, the Parliamentary Centre at the time, CANADEM, and I think IDRC, Rights and Democracy and a number of organizations vehemently fought against it. I remember that there was talk of the council.

I wonder, if we had actually implemented this in 2007.... I know that Rights and Democracy is gone, and I think your two organizations are largely in existence today, in a much smaller capacity, because of private donations and outside funds. Would things have been different today for you and for some of the organizations that have disappeared, had we actually implemented this in 2007, with a funding mechanism separate from the whims of governments back and forth?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: I think it would have been worse, because they would have sucked up all the funds.

If it were going to be a National Endowment for Democracy such as they have in the States, whose job is to disburse funds, that's a separate case.

This is where my ambivalence is about having this brand new agency: the time and effort to create it and to get the funding for it. If a major part of its role is to fund organizations in Canada to do good work out there, then all the effort to set it up makes sense, particularly if it has guaranteed funding.

You could say, for example, that 10% of all foreign assistance funding will automatically go to this foundation and it will then figure out the best ways of spending this money—some of it with the UN, some with Canadian NGOs big and small—but the foundation itself would not carry out its own programming. I think that would make sense.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Jean-Paul.

Mr. Jean-Paul Ruszkowski: I think we should be open-minded in the sense that we must preserve the assets we have and support them. That will be the first signal that the Government of Canada is really putting in resources and making sure there's a Canadian brand.

That doesn't exclude the possibility of studying and analyzing how we could create an umbrella organization, as you described it, Anita. Obviously, we should not forget that democracy development is really a tool for our foreign policy. People who think otherwise are dreaming; it is an instrument of foreign policy. This is why the umbrella organization makes sense. But then you cannot replace the umbrella organization by talking.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Kusie, please.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Boyd, I wanted to give you an opportunity to respond to my last two questions, please, in regard to the role of the UN in promoting democracy and the impact that the highest levels of leadership in Canada have on democracy internationally in their words and actions.

Thank you.

Ms. Maureen Boyd: Thanks very much.

I don't think I have very much to add to what I said earlier about the role of the United Nations. Yes, we need to support it; there's no doubt about it. My fear is that it's very easy for Global Affairs to give money to the United Nations holus-bolus and then not have to worry about being responsible for it.

We need to increase the pot. People have talked about Norway and Sweden. We gave about the same amount of money in 2016 that Sweden and Norway did—roughly $5 billion in 2016. For us, however, that was 0.26% of gross national income, whereas for Sweden it was almost 1% and for Norway 1.12%. They then are putting their money where their mouth is. We could do a lot better than we are doing.

That's why I'm a bit ambivalent. Yes, we need to support the United Nations, but we need to be supporting Canada as well. At the moment it's too one-sided.

In terms of leadership, yes, we have a brand. We're known around the world for the excellence of our institutions. It's very important that Canadians be out promoting it at all levels, not just at the senior leadership level but in our missions abroad, as you would have done.

I was in Hong Kong from 1987 until 1992, before and after Tiananmen Square. Canada played a huge role in that. So yes, we need to be doing it, but not just at the highest levels of leadership; rather, all the way down throughout—the hidden wiring mechanism.

● (1030)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: With my last minute, Mr. LaRose-Edwards, I'll go back to you with a more technological question.

When Canada is engaged in monitoring an election, how much of the work that you do takes place prior to the election, in terms of identifying threats, possible issues and working to mitigate those things? In terms of election monitors, you mentioned this briefly, by explaining some of the duties and how it can lead to a more legitimate election. That's something that's interesting, as we approach the 2019 election here. It's a different environment, of course, but maybe not from a cybersecurity perspective.

Could you briefly tell us what you do prior to going to identify the threats and possible issues?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Normally, the funding for an election observation mission occurs at the very last minute. So we got the funding for the current mission on Christmas Eve. The workaround for that one is that you find the right experts and they've already been doing this. They've been doing it for years and they're professionals. That's what we've done. We've staffed this mission up, with the 50 LTOs. Most of them are experienced professionals, so they've already been thinking about this and they knew that there was a good chance we would select them. Then they apply for it, so that's the workaround. It may be last minute, but if you find the right experts, they make it happen.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank our three witnesses, and of course, our other two witnesses, who I think are still at the back, for your quite enthralling testimony today.

Colleagues, I'm going to suspend for about a minute and a half, while we clear the room and then we'll go in camera, so that we can get the work done, before we break.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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