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# **Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, April 12, 2016**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Robert Nault**



# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1540)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.)):** Colleagues, I would like to bring this committee to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) we're going to continue on with our study on women, peace, and security.

Before us for the next hour are the representatives of the MATCH International Women's Fund, the Nobel Women's Initiative, and the Women, Peace and Security Network of Canada.

For the record, I would ask you to give us your name and your title. I'm not sure I have a title, but I guess they assume I'm running the committee for now. I assume you have decided who will go first. We will let you introduce yourselves and then we'll get right into the presentations.

Colleagues, we're going to try to stick to the hour for each. We'll talk later about our insistent votes on Tuesday afternoons that are causing us a little grief, but we'll figure that out as we go.

Ms. Tomlin will start.

**Ms. Jess Tomlin (Executive Director, MATCH International Women's Fund):** Good afternoon, my name is Jess Tomlin and I'm the executive director of the MATCH International Women's Fund.

**Ms. Diana Sarosi (Manager, Policy and Advocacy, Nobel Women's Initiative):** Good afternoon, my name is Diana Sarosi and I'm the manager of policy and advocacy at the Nobel Women's Initiative.

**Ms. Beth Woroniuk (Steering Committee Member, Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada):** Good afternoon, I'm Beth Woroniuk and I'm a steering committee member of the Women, Peace and Security Network of Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Tomlin.

**Ms. Jess Tomlin:** Thank you.

Honorary members of the standing committee, I would like to thank you first for the depth and attention that you are giving to this issue. My name is Jess, as I've mentioned, and I'm the executive director of the MATCH International Women's Fund.

This review is timely. Just last week, UNICEF reported on the 98 young women in the Central African Republic who were sexually tortured by UN peacekeepers. Just last month, globally recognized human rights, indigenous, and environmental activist, Berta Cáceres,

was gunned down in her own home in Honduras. Berta had four children.

The stakes are high for women in conflict. I am here today to share stories from our partners around the world in the hopes that their experiences will be considered as you review Canada's foreign policy as it relates to peace and security.

This is an area where my colleagues and I hope to see the Canadian government take immediate action. I know those sitting with me today agree that the world welcomes Canadian leadership in this area, an area that is so fundamentally tied to the universality of human rights.

The MATCH fund has supported women's movements globally for 40 years. Our funding comes entirely from individual Canadian donors. We channel these resources directly into women's organizations that are led by women for women and girls in more than 25 countries. We believe that brave women working at the grassroots are the most catalytic in bringing about change for women and girls.

I would like to share with you this afternoon two short examples from our partners in Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo to help illustrate the realities for the women working at the grassroots to bring about peace.

Nubia Sanchez is the director of our Colombian organization, working with women affected by sexual violence, displacement, and forced disappearance after decades of armed conflict. Over the past year, the organization has directly supported more than 200 women with legal assistance and psychological support. As you can imagine, her organization's work to uncover the truth and demand justice is seen as a threat to conflict parties.

At 9 a.m. last Thursday, Nubia received an anonymous phone call. I can share with you an excerpt from Nubia's message to us that we received from her last week. A man, who did not identify himself, called her and said, "You are Nubia, right? Well, it doesn't really matter. If you aren't, I am leaving this message anyway. Stop agitating about the conflict victims here in Tumaco or there will be trouble. I know your son. It would be really sad if something bad happened to the kid. I don't want to see you around anymore".

Before Nubia could say anything, the man hung up. This is just one of a series of well-documented threats. No progress has been made in the way of investigation. Colombia's national protection unit has not provided any additional minimal security measures, like surveillance cameras or reinforcement for their doors.

By contrast, Julienne Lusenge engages local women's groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She works with them in conflict prevention, peace building, and supports more than 1.7 million women who were raped by armed combatants. Sexual violence in conflict in the DRC has received international attention with the 2014 U.K. summit, which was attended by many governments, including Canada.

In addition, just a few months ago, Julienne was asked to testify at the UN Security Council. Yet Julienne and women leaders like her still haven't received stable funding for their necessary efforts. Julienne's work is tiring enough. She tells me that she dedicates most of her time raising \$5,000 here and \$5,000 there when hundreds of women come to her every week to talk about or receive services for the rape they have experienced.

These women highlight the issues I bring before you today: first, the overall funding picture for grassroots women's rights organizations; second, government accountability for involving and funding women in peace processes; and third, the importance of the role of and protection for the women human rights defenders who are most at risk.

Allow me to expand on these three critical issues. Let me first address the issue of funding for local women's organizations. Local women's organizations, just like here in Canada, know their context best and can creatively rethink approaches to disrupting power dynamics and demanding state accountability.

● (1545)

They often do this with volunteers and on shoestring budgets. The average annual income of a grassroots women's organization working in the global south is \$20,000 U.S. a year. In sub-Saharan Africa, that figure drops to \$12,000. Of these organizations, 48% never receive core funding for day-to-day necessities such as staffing, lights, the Internet, and security. Also, every month, one in five close their doors due to financial shortfalls. This is in spite of significant donor prioritization in the last decade for women and girls, whether for maternal and child health or economic empowerment initiatives.

Here is the challenge. Women working at the grassroots have not seen the financial impact of these high-level commitments because, in reality, women's organizations are often not eligible to apply for calls for proposals due to their smaller budget size and the funders' requirements for sophisticated operational and monitoring systems that don't align with the realities on the ground.

In addition, women's organizations often work across a range of intersectional issues. While the emphasis may be on supporting survivors of rape, many organizations often will be delivering integrated health programming, reproductive rights programming, and supporting leaders in how to engage in the peace process. This recent trend in project-based funding and a requirement for narrow deliverables have left these organizations often ineligible because of either their size or their broad community-based approach.

Herein lies the opportunity. Canada can be a leader in extending high-level commitments to women and girls beyond multilateral agencies and international organizations. According to Canada's most recent report to the OECD, the Canadian government allocated

\$5.19 million to women's organizations and institutions in 2013-14. If Canada were to expand development and humanitarian assistance to local organizations led by and for women working on the ground, this would significantly impact the essential work happening at the grassroots. This could be a national funding instrument that is accessible to women's rights organizations, as well as an earmarked funding mechanism within this for women's organizations that are working on peace and security issues.

I'd like to speak specifically about the importance of involving women in the peace process. Data on the women, peace, and security sector confirms that financial resources have fallen significantly short of government commitments. According to the OECD's DAC, only 2% of aid to the peace and security sector targeted gender equality as a principal objective. This is due to a lack of prioritization and, again, to the absence of aid tailored to reach grassroots groups.

Where is the opportunity here? Canada can build in regular, substantive consultations with civil society—like you are doing right now and I applaud you for that—within the country and internationally, that taps into civil society networks of women at the local level. This parliamentary hearing can be an annual event. Imagine the impact of concrete, regular consultations led by Canadian policy-makers with women in the field, with women peace builders, and with women's rights activists. I daresay that might qualify as feminist foreign policy.

Finally, I want to touch on the role of women human rights defenders and our obligation to protect them. Women, peace, and human rights activists often find themselves caught in the crossfire between armed groups and the state. These are ordinary people who work at great personal risk to defend the rights of their communities. Nubia Sanchez and Berta Cáceres are just two examples of women human rights defenders who work at the front lines and who face violent threats against themselves and their loved ones. They are often accused of treason. They and their families are threatened. It is a sad reality that they often pay with their lives. In 2015, 156 human rights defenders were killed or died in detention.

I implore the committee to see your efforts as essential to realizing human rights in practice and as a key contribution to the broader agenda of women, peace, and security that we are discussing today. That is the opportunity here. Women human rights defenders themselves tell us that it is not only about keeping them safe, but ultimately about sustaining the organizations and movements they are involved in so they can change the situations that put them at risk.

● (1550)

Canada has the opportunity to show leadership in the company of only a few other progressive nations, such as the Netherlands and Norway, and to demonstrate commitment to making the protection of human rights defenders a foreign policy priority.

This testimony would not be complete without stressing UNSC resolution 2122, which speaks to the importance of providing the full range of services to women affected by armed conflict, including life-saving measures for women when pregnancies result from rape.

As you can see, there are many opportunities, and I thank you for the opportunity to share some of those with you today.

There is no reason that Canada cannot be a foreign policy leader that funds women at the grassroots, that insists on the participation of local women at the peacemaking table, and that protects women human rights defenders in their important work.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Sarosi, you have the floor.

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** Thank you so much, first of all, for the opportunity to address you today.

This is indeed a welcome and timely study and we are very honoured to contribute to its findings and recommendations. The Nobel Women's Initiative is led by six courageous women Nobel Peace Prize laureates. Together they use the prestige of the prize to support women activists and movements across the world. The Nobel Women's Initiative has been supporting women peace builders around the world for a decade. We have supported survivors of sexual violence in Colombia to ensure their needs are included in the peace process. We have supported women in the DRC to provide services to survivors and rebuild their communities. We have supported women in Burma to do community training on the importance of women's participation in the peace process from which they have been barred till this day.

We are now supporting Syrian women who are struggling to participate meaningfully in the Geneva peace talks. Many of these women would make excellent witnesses to this study and we would be happy to facilitate their participation here.

This foreign affairs committee study on the women, peace, and security agenda is timely as we have just marked the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 last October. The UN "Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325", which included consultations with thousands of women peacemakers, found that there's a crippling gap between governments' commitments and actual political will and financial support.

Key findings of the study include the comprehensive normative framework that has been developed, especially on sexual violence in conflict. Less has been achieved on women's participation. Progress continues to be measured in firsts rather than in standard practice. There's a worrying lack of funding. Only 54 member states have national action plans for the implementation of 1325, and the rise of violent extremism has led to increased threats to women.

Clearly, business as usual is not what's going to solve today's complex emergencies and conflicts in places such as Syria and Yemen. We need new ways of thinking and doing, and the "Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325" does exactly that. It provides us with a road map of what the new ways of operating should entail. What is so

revolutionary about the women, peace, and security agenda is its recognition that women's security is integral to the security of states and vice-versa. Evidence shows that societies with greater gender equality are more peaceful societies. This means investing in gender equality and women's empowerment is the means to peace.

It is mind-boggling that the international community has made so little progress in the last 15 years when it comes to women's participation. The women, peace, and security agenda recognizes women's participation as crucial to building sustainable peace. Evidence compiled in the global study shows that the participation of women at all levels is key to operational effectiveness, success, and sustainability of peace processes and peace-building efforts. Further, studies show that in cases of women's participation and strong influence, a peace agreement has always been reached. Women's participation also correlates with a greater likelihood of agreements being implemented, yet with each new process under way, women literally have to knock down doors to get inside.

Based on progress reports of the Canadian national action plan, much of the Government of Canada's efforts in terms of women's participation has focused on first, increasing women's inclusion in military and policing operations; second, increasing female officials at its missions abroad; and third, supporting the UN in developing a roster of qualified women to be staffed in senior positions.

Little effort has been made in terms of women's participation in peace processes. In terms of conflict areas, most of the participation reporting in the C-NAP progress report has focused on Afghanistan. With other conflict countries lagging behind, this points to personal commitment rather than government policy.

There is much more Canada can do to ensure women's meaningful participation in peace processes, and here are three overarching suggestions.

● (1555)

First of all, Canada must play a greater leadership role in promoting increased participation of women and ensuring their access in all stages of peace processes. As we are seeing with the current Syria peace process, women face severe obstacles to meaningfully participate in the talks. While they've been assigned an advisory body role, they continue to lack influence and resources to independently engage.

One problem of the current Syria talks, as has been with all other talks, is that it followed the usual method—men designed and set up the process first, and then brought women into a process where most of the decisions are made by a small group of men. According to the global study, there have been very few cases in which women's participation was an integral component of the design process. Generally women's participation is seen as a technical add-on, in a little tick box, once the process is designed and under way. But women must be part of these processes from the design of the preliminary talks, throughout negotiations, as well as implementation.

The Colombian case has been hailed as the best process yet, in terms of women's participation, but we are still very far from what the global community aspired to with UN Security Council resolution 1325. Due to pressure from women's organizations, the Havana peace negotiations included special gender advisers for both sides of the table and the gender subcommittee. However, at the highest level of the negotiation process, you only see one woman.

Now, as Colombia moves forward toward implementation of the peace agreements and the ceasefire, what the under-representation of women at the peace table means in practical terms is a high level of tolerance for ongoing violence against women, particularly against Afro-Colombian and indigenous women, with a 100% impunity for cases dating back to the conflict. Women's groups are now pressuring the government and the UN to include sexual violence as a breach of the ceasefire agreement. Without women at the table, sexual violence will not be properly addressed, and tends to proliferate post-conflict, as can be seen in Liberia and DRC.

Some key recommendations for Canada on concrete steps to promote women's participation include the following: speak out consistently, publicly, and at the highest level on the importance of women's participation as a matter of rights and effectiveness; hold envoys, mediators, and negotiation parties accountable to international norms and commitments; facilitate the participation of women, including provision of logistical support and security, particularly in the early stages of peace negotiations and the implementation of agreements and ceasefires; and hold regular consultations with women to learn about their challenges and collectively find solutions to bring them to the table.

Secondly, Canada must play a key role in strengthening women's movements. Based on the research of 40 case studies, women's inclusion was mostly initiated and achieved via concerted pressure by women's organizations, rather than by conflict parties, the mediators, or the organizers of the negotiations. This is true in the case of Syria, where it was the collective effort of local, national, and international women's organizations that pressured UN special envoy Staffan de Mistura to carve out a role for women in the talks and appoint a women's advisory body.

Research also demonstrates that it is women's movements, not individual women, that have the means to influence the talks. In too many cases, token women are appointed without any meaningful engagement. This was the case in the Myanmar peace process, where two women were appointed who did not have the force of a movement behind them to influence the talks. Yet women's organizations are consistently underfunded, under-resourced, and operating at great personal risks. The global study identified the failure to allocate sufficient resources and funding as perhaps the most serious and unrelenting obstacle to the implementation of the women, peace, and security agenda. Women's organizations need consistent, significant, and reliable funding.

In terms of recommendations for Canada, first, Canada must develop a funding mechanism to ensure that resources reach women's organizations and movements. These mechanisms must include easily accessible, multi-year core funding for women's organizations, with dedicated funding going directly to grassroots organizations. Canada must earmark a minimum of 15% of all funding related to peace and security for programs whose principal

objective is to address women's specific needs and advance gender equality, as called for by the UN.

• (1600)

Canada must also develop a protection strategy for its missions to support women peace builders around the world facing significant threats as a result of their work. While increased funding is one means of protection, Canadian officials must publicly stand up for the women in their countries and demand accountability for threats against them. Such a strategy must include regular consultations with women's organizations and support for their participation in national, regional, and international forums.

Thirdly, Canada must strengthen the national action plan on the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325. The national action plan is a means to set out an ambitious policy directive that ensures that women, peace, and security commitments are reflected across the full range of international policies.

A mid-term review of the C-NAP conducted by Inclusive Security found it was seen as not significantly influencing Canada's overall policy direction with respect to conflict-affected and fragile states. That's tragic. We hope that the second edition of the C-NAP will live up to its potential.

Here are our recommendations.

The C-NAP must set out a vision for Canada's engagement in the world, not just in conflict and post-conflict, but also to prevent conflict. One of the four pillars of the women, peace, and security agenda is prevention. The C-NAP must be positioned as a policy directive to achieve that vision with clear goals, results, and indicators upon which to measure success.

As part of the drafting process, extensive consultations of women in conflict areas as well as key international players working on women, peace, and security must be held, and their views reflected in the new C-NAP. Canada must also take a more holistic approach in addressing all four pillars of the women, peace, and security agenda, building on their interlinkages and recognizing that women's status in peace will determine their experience in war.

Canada must provide a dedicated budget for the C-NAP, including funds for staff as well as accountability mechanisms. Canada must appoint a high-level champion or special envoy that is staffed and resourced to oversee the implementation of the C-NAP, and most importantly, its vision.

Thank you.

• (1605)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll now go to the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada.

**Ms. Beth Woroniuk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, as well, to the committee for undertaking this important and timely study, and for the invitation to appear before you today.

By way of introduction, I'm a volunteer with the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada. Our network is made up of over 65 Canadian organizations and individuals, and we have two objectives. The first is to promote and monitor the efforts of the Government of Canada to implement and support the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security. The second is to provide a forum for exchange and action among Canadian civil society on this same theme. We operate as volunteers with no office, no budget, and no paid staff. Many of the Canadian organizations appearing before you for this study are members of our network.

Over 15 years ago, when the Security Council passed resolution 1325, there was much optimism. Yet you have heard from others that progress in implementing resolution 1325 and the following-on resolutions has been slow. Today's armed conflicts are complex, with multiple state and non-state actors. With the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence, we often hear the lament that it is more dangerous to be a woman in today's wars than a soldier. Women generally play minor roles in political decision-making and the security sector. Humanitarian assistance in post-conflict situations often fails to address the different needs and priorities of women and men, boys and girls. Governments are quick to make pronouncements, yet slow to invest resources.

I could go on. I think it is important to return to several key insights and advances that are at the heart of the women, peace, and security agenda. These elements still hold great potential and provide us with a starting point to revise Canada's approach.

First, the Security Council resolutions recognize and highlight the crucial link between the security of women and the security of states. They legitimize attention to the rights, protection, and participation of women and girls, not just in their own right but also as key dimensions of both peace and security.

What is truly path-breaking about the women, peace, and security agenda is its challenge to rethink the way we approach security and armed conflict. Activists have long told us, and now researchers have confirmed, that there is a clear link between the position of women and girls in a society and whether or not it will engage in violent conflict. We have to move from seeing women's rights as something that we'll get to when more important issues are resolved to a crucial factor that is interwoven with conflict prevention and conflict resolution in the first place. Unfortunately this insight appears to have been lacking in Canada's approach to women, peace, and security up to now, as these issues are often treated as a sideline or marginal concerns.

A second and related insight that my colleagues have also touched on is that women's participation is linked to effective peace building and conflict resolution. From Liberia and Uganda to Northern Ireland, Yemen, and Colombia, there are numerous examples of brave women who organize, resist, and work for peace. They do this despite facing great dangers and many threats. It is now clear that

investing in these women, in their organizations, and in their movements is an effective conflict reduction strategy.

As my colleague mentioned, a peace agreement is more likely to be reached and to last longer when representatives of women's movements are included. There are also numerous examples of women's groups mobilizing to support a peace deal once it is signed, yet women are often seen as secondary and optional players.

Wazhma Frogh, an Afghan women's rights activist, recently spoke of women from a community bringing a warning of extremist recruiters approaching young men in their home communities. When they brought their story to a government minister, he laughed at them and did not take them seriously. Several weeks later, the same young men launched an attack on a public bus and killed 32 people.

In addition to being marginalized, you have heard from my colleagues that women's grassroots organizations receive little support from the international community to carry out their crucial work. In a survey of civil society organizations conducted last year for *The Global Review*, respondents noted the lack of resources as a primary barrier affecting the effectiveness of their work.

A third key element in the women, peace, and security agenda is the growing legitimacy granted to civil society organizations in ending armed conflict. The resolutions have paved the way for the broader inclusion of civil society organizations, in general, in peace processes.

● (1610)

It is not just those with the guns who are entitled to be at the table. We have to make sure that those with a stake in building peace, those who represent all facets of the population, are present. As many women's rights defenders are saying, "Nothing about us without us".

There are many issues that I could explore, but given the mandate of our network, I will focus my recommendations on Canada's national action plan, or C-NAP.

Our first recommendation is that Canada's updated national action plan should be a key policy directive. If Canada is to be a leader on women, peace, and security issues, then the profile of our national action plan must change. As was cited earlier, the mid-term review of C-NAP found that it was perceived as not significantly influencing Canada's overall policy direction with respect to conflict-affected and fragile states. In other words, we need to move our national action plan from the margins of our approach to armed conflict and have it play a more central and influential role. The potential of the women, peace, and security agenda cannot be realized if C-NAP remains marginal, relatively unknown, and invisible in broader discussions and diplomatic initiatives.

Our second recommendation is to ensure that Canada's national action plan covers the full range of women, peace, and security issues and involves all relevant government departments. There are frequent references to the four pillars of the women, peace, and security agenda. These are, one, conflict prevention; two, women's participation; three, protection or attention to conflict-related sexual violence; and four, the importance of women's rights in relief and recovery. It is vital that C-NAP address all four of these issues in an interrelated fashion. This would correct an earlier imbalance in our approach, which tended to downplay the importance of conflict prevention and women's participation.

You have heard numerous recommendations regarding the breadth of issues that C-NAP could and should address, and we encourage you to recommend a comprehensive approach, recognizing the interrelationship of these issues. To address these themes effectively, C-NAP requires the participation of the full range of relevant government departments. Global Affairs Canada, the RCMP, and DND participated in the first C-NAP. We recommend that this be expanded to include Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Public Safety Canada, and the Status of Women Canada.

We look forward to the testimony of the RCMP and DND for this study. Both of these departments report successes. However, it would also be interesting to know how the RCMP is responding to concerns regarding the treatment of women within the force and recent reports of sexual misconduct by officers in Haiti.

Regarding DND, it is important to have a public briefing on the recent chief of the defence staff directive on integrating Security Council resolution 1325 and relevant resolutions into Canadian Armed Forces planning and operations, as well as to hear progress on addressing the concerns raised in the Deschamps report on sexual abuse and harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Our third recommendation, and this should be no surprise, is to dedicate sufficient resources. A commitment without resources is not a commitment. The first C-NAP had no allocated budget, and it was difficult to calculate the level of spending on women, peace, and security initiatives with the information in the progress reports. We urge the adoption of a specific target for women, peace, and security investments. Canada could follow the lead of the United Nations and set a target of 15% of development assistance in fragile contexts and peace and security funds to have gender equality or women's empowerment as their primary objective. This type of target would also require improved attention to gender equality markers to track and report on these investments.

We strongly support the case made by other speakers to substantially increase Canadian funding going to women's rights organizations. These organizations need substantial and predictable core funding in order for them to carry out their vital work.

Our fourth and final recommendation is to ensure that the national action plan includes robust accountability mechanisms. Even the best policy requires accountability checks to ensure that it is fully implemented. Members of our network have expressed concerns regarding the usefulness of C-NAP progress reports. These have been consistently late. For example, the 2014-15 progress report has yet to be released, so we're a year into another fiscal year without this report.

- (1615)

Reporting tends to focus on listing activities rather than understanding impacts, and the reports lack clear data on investments and investment trends. For example, it is impossible to tell if the government is investing more resources now than before the C-NAP was established. Therefore, the next C-NAP should include a results-based framework and relevant indicators. There should be regular, timely, and public reporting that includes full financial information.

On the positive side, since January of last year our network and Global Affairs Canada—START within Global Affairs—have hosted three joint meetings. This has fostered communication and facilitated a constructive exchange of views. We urge the continuation of these consultations. As well, the new C-NAP should be based on extensive consultations both within Canada and with women in conflict-affected countries.

In conclusion, the moment is right for Canadian leadership on women, peace, and security. We know what needs to be done. This is an investment, not just in strengthening women's rights but in improved peace and greater security. The original promise of the women, peace, and security resolutions is an appropriate place to start.

I'd like to leave you with the words of Dr. Alaa Murabit, a Canadian physician who is a women's rights activist in Libya.

Last October, Dr. Murabit addressed the UN Security Council during the open debate on women, peace, and security. She stated:

When the Security Council finds it unthinkable to address a crisis without addressing women's rights; when humanitarian responders have full funding for their gender-specific services; when women grassroots leaders find their work fully funded and politically supported; when it is unimaginable that peace talks be held without women's full engagement; only then will the full potential of 1325 be realized.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your reports and your recommendations.

Colleagues, we'll go to questions.

I think we have enough time for two rounds, so we'll start with Mr. Kent.

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thanks to you all for your testimony and your advice, particularly in the area of the next incarnation of C-NAP. I think some of the advice was very well-grounded and bears consideration by the government going forward.

Given that the United Nations is the agency most often responsible for security on the ground in conflict, post-conflict, and peacekeeping situations, I'm sure you were as troubled as I was when I read an article last month in *The New York Times* by a long-time official in this area and in post-disaster areas like Haiti. He gave a very long list of reasons why he had decided, after all these years, to resign from the organization. One of the most telling examples had to do with the peacekeeping force delegated to the Central African Republic. Against the advice of many groups, grassroots organizations on the ground, the soldiers from the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo were sent in. Since then, for almost two years, they proceeded to systematically abuse and rape the very women that the United Nations had sent them there to protect. One of those peacekeeping groups has been removed in the last couple of months, but the other is still there.

I'm wondering whether you would attribute this to systemic dysfunction within United Nations' peacekeeping in some parts of the world. This is not a new story, certainly, in Africa. Is this cynical politics, or is it the result of male decision-making, disregarding the probable reality on the ground? Or is it all of the above?

The question is to all three of you.

• (1620)

**Ms. Beth Woroniuk:** Thank you for the question.

I agree very much that this article caused a great ripple through many circles in New York at the United Nations and around the world because it was very much a call for support for the UN as it engages in reform processes. I think it's doubly important at this moment when Canada is looking to re-engage with the UN to be part of those general discussions on how the potential of the UN can be recovered from some of the bureaucratic problems.

In terms of your specific question on sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, I think there has been great concern over the last while about the inability of the United Nations to address this. This is one thing where we do congratulate the Government of

Canada for speaking very strongly on these issues in international forums and urging greater attention to this.

I wouldn't presume to have a full analysis of the origins or the causes of this conflict. I think they're rooted in many things, abuse of power. They are also related to some of the general causes of violence against women and girls in general, that they are seen as secondary subjects and not of as much value, so you have that interwoven with who carries the guns and who holds the power.

Then you also have on top of that some of the dysfunctionality of the peacekeeping and how it's structured and the reluctance to listen to whistle-blowers in this context.

Unfortunately, it's a very sad situation and hopefully one that more will be done to address as we move forward.

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** I agree with everything that Beth just said.

The one thing where the world in general is still falling short is in the prosecution of these kinds of cases. It doesn't matter whether it's the UN or state or non-state armed groups, prosecution has been very slow. It was only last month that for the first time an army general was prosecuted at the ICC for sexual violence in conflict.

Again, that points to, first of all, a lack of resources for people on the ground to do the initial collection of evidence. In many cases, again, women's organizations are doing that, but don't have the resources to do it properly or safely. Then, there is a lack of resources moving all the way up the chain. A lot of information needs to be collected to bring any of these cases to court. Again, that's where an investment would be good for women's organizations.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** I guess you would agree that this speaks to the fact that the UN report last year, I believe, showed that less than 4% of troop personnel and less than 10% of police personnel in all UN peacekeeping missions were women. Would you recommend that in peacekeeping, for example, Canadian troops or police officers sent to peacekeeping missions should engage with grassroots organizations on the ground, perhaps broaden their responsibility, change their mission description to achieve some of the ends that you talk about with regard to supporting the grassroots organizations, which are underfunded, under-equipped, and understaffed?

**Ms. Beth Woroniuk:** I think a context-by-context and mission-by-mission clarification has to be made there, because there is a real danger in many cases to women on the ground if they relate to and associate with military forces. You have to be very careful in how that's spelled out and how that's done and what the different roles are for that.

I think it's important to increase the number of women in peacekeeping forces, in civilian police, in peacekeeping missions. That's one issue, but then we have to be much more cautious about the relationship between those peacekeepers and local populations.

•(1625)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will go to Mr. Levitt now.

**Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.):** First of all, thank you for coming here today and speaking before the committee. Hearing from all three of you really shed a light on this issue for us.

Again, I want to thank the honourable member from the NDP for bringing this particular line of study to us.

While I was listening to you, there were four Ps that stood out for me and ran across your presentations: the importance of participation and increasing women's participation through effective funding; protection of women human rights defenders—I think the stories of Nubia and Berta really made clear the severity of the issues that are taking place around the globe; prevention of sexual violence in conflict zones; and then, underlying it all, positive outcomes towards peace that are possible with more participation by women in the process.

For me—again, I like things to be fairly linear—this just shines a light on that, and I thank you.

In terms of the particular question, Beth, you addressed this, but I want to come back to it a little more in-depth. It's progress indicators.

C-NAP has been criticized for the difficulty there has been in reporting on its indicators and how well they measure success. Inclusive Security's assessment of C-NAP implementation and the Women, Peace and Security Network's December report on Canada's national action plan both pointed this out.

I'd like to ask where you think specifically the deficiencies might be. Given the renewal of C-NAP that is going to be taking place, how can we improve it? How can we make it better? How can we make sure that things are going where they need to go, and that we can build on a solid foundation?

**Ms. Jess Tomlin:** I know that Beth will want to weigh in on this, and she really does have some important, substantive recommendations.

I would just say that you are not alone in terms of framing this conversation. There is an incredibly diverse and knowledgeable expert base of support in Canada who would be more than happy to support you in framing these recommendations—the people at this table, but there are many others. There are 50-odd organizations within the Women, Peace and Security Network alone.

As a broad-based recommendation, I really encourage you to have that conversation broadly and tap into this incredible knowledge that has been working both centrally and at the margins for the last decade.

**Ms. Beth Woroniuk:** The first thing we have to do is establish what it is we are trying to achieve within the time-bound period, so we start with the results, and then we go to the indicators used to track those results, rather than starting with the indicators. That's one of the problems with the current C-NAP. There are a number of indicators, but then there is no analysis of progress, of how they relate to what it is we are trying to do.

I think if we look at short-term and longer-term indicators and results, that's something. What are we spending, and how are we dedicating our resources? One of the big indicators that I use is this. When women, peace, and security is not the main topic under discussion, does it come up?

When we are talking about what our strategy is vis-à-vis Islamic State, or what our policy and priorities are in South Sudan, do some of the issues on the women, peace, and security agenda come up? That is a measure of how much we are taking it into consideration as a core framing, guiding policy directive.

**Mr. Michael Levitt:** Thank you.

Canada has recently been elected to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. In your opinion, what kind of impact will this have on Canada's agenda in WPS for the next few years?

**Ms. Beth Woroniuk:** I think this is a great opportunity for Canada.

One of the challenges with the women, peace, and security agenda is to bring in some of the other human rights instruments, such as the Beijing declaration and platform for action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Commission on the Status of Women conclusions.

I think Canada's participation in the commission is a great opportunity to bring these rights-based instruments together and have a broad influence in other areas, so that when we are talking about climate change we can explore the nexus between women's participation, women's rights, climate change, and security. Being on the commission allows us to enter into some of those debates and learn from other countries in a meaningful way.

•(1630)

**Ms. Jess Tomlin:** If I could add to that, I think it's fantastic. You have a standing ovation over here for the bid, and you have civil society's support completely.

I think what's interesting is the opportunity to be influenced and to be influential across the complexity of these issues. We're coming in there and we're talking about the status of women, but within the context of the women, peace, and security agenda. Otherwise, as Canada speaks about its role in 2016 in being a leader in women's rights, particularly in the global conversation, this is an opportunity to really position women's rights as a top strategic priority.

We have an incredible amount of work that's happening and that can happen within the women, peace, and security agenda. We have programs within the maternal and child health agenda, as well as smaller but also very robust programs in relation to early forced marriage and female genital mutilation. All of these are very timely issues of global importance that can all be within a broader women's rights strategic priority, where the government could have tremendous impact.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Madam Laverdière.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Thank you very much.

Thank you for joining us today. Those three presentations have addressed some key issues regarding the participation of women. I found the issue of funding particularly interesting.

Small organizations in Saskatchewan and in Alberta are having a hard time with the fact that, based on the current Canadian policy, there is a bidding process or very complex processes. That makes their lives very difficult and access to funding challenging. So I can only imagine how hard the situation is for a small women's organization from Guinea-Bissau. Personally, I think the issue of core funding must be examined.

I prefer not to talk too much about my personal experience, but the fact remains that I have spent 15 years with the Department of Foreign Affairs, which is when I truly discovered the Women, Peace and Security Network. I was then responsible for developing human security policies. That was part of our policies.

You are saying that this is not really part of the main policy direction. But I am wondering whether something can be done to raise more awareness about the effectiveness of women's participation in peace-building processes and to talk about it more in our representations, our missions abroad. There are regular reports about the Afghanistan mission because people are interested in it, but that does not apply to other missions.

Can concrete action be taken to ensure the message circulates throughout the organization, the Department of Global Affairs, the Department of National Defence and elsewhere?

[*English*]

**Ms. Beth Woroniuk:** In terms of how we get this across as a key message, I think it's important for the ministers to talk about this. I understand that there's something like broadcast policy announcements. This was never done with the previous C-NAP. Many of the people interviewed for the mid-term review had never heard and did not know that Canada had this as a policy within the department.

I think we also have to improve briefing core materials. We have to make sure that when people are looking at security writ large, this message is part of that, and we don't just say, "Here's our approach to security and, oh, by the way, we also have this women, peace, and security policy." We have to find a way to bring that into those major discussions, and that's not easy, because the security sector is still very resistant to these kinds of messages. It's something that we need to do a lot of collective work on in terms of bringing the message to all parts of the department. We can try to bring the message from outside, but I think it has to come from many different angles.

• (1635)

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** Also, as I mentioned, I think it's important to have high-level champions in various departments throughout the government. Right now within GAC, there's one full-time person who is responsible for women, peace, and security. That's not enough.

One strategy could be to publish an implementation guide along with the C-NAP. That is something that Norway has done, for

example. Another thing that Norway has done is to establish a women, peace, and security fund. This is really the only women, peace, and security fund in the world. There are good examples out there from other countries, which we can reflect on, learn from, and incorporate in an overall whole-of-government strategy.

**Ms. Jess Tomlin:** Just to finalize that, one thing that used to exist but doesn't so much anymore is local funds for initiatives. It's an extremely powerful tool for getting money to the grassroots, but it's also an extremely powerful tool for getting diplomats out to the field. It's proven to be a great communication strategy as well.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Yes, I remember the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) well. In fact, I also instinctively thought of it as a funding source for those groups.

I would like to ask a question about Syria. As we know, female representatives act as advisors, but those are still marginal cases. My understanding is that they are not at the main table when real negotiations take place.

Is there a way to do something about it now? Can Canada encourage greater participation of women in the peace-building process?

[*English*]

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** Yes, of course there is.

Yes, it is true. Stéphane, the minister, has appointed an advisory body. The advisory body is made up of various women's groups on a wide spectrum, from pro-Assad to completely opposing Assad. The problem is that, again, it's expected that all women have the same opinion when it comes to the process and the future of their country, which is not the case. It's been really difficult for them to bring a strong voice to the conflict because they have to speak as one. That is a requirement they need to do away with for this advisory body.

Of course, the advisory body was not the type of body that the women had chosen. It was the only thing that they were willing to give to them, so the women are still advocating for being 50% of participants in the talks and having their own group.

Again, investing in either working through international women's organizations or directly with women's groups from there, and really finding out what they want, and where they see the future of their country and how they're going to get there, I think is a key means to supporting these women.

As I always stress, behind-doors negotiations and diplomacy are, of course, necessary, but at some point we need to speak out publicly. It's really publicly speaking out that shows leadership. I think that's where Canada can do a lot more at the highest level.

• (1640)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Saini.

**Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Good afternoon. Thank you very much for your very compelling testimony. I appreciate your taking the time to come here today.

There are a couple of themes I've heard in all of your testimony. One, obviously, was sexually based violence, and the other was the marginal role that women are playing.

Taking the issue closer to the ground, maybe, we talked about prevention. What do you see as women's role in prevention? You also mentioned the justice issue as part of it, where women have a marginal role. On a more personal level, what you said, taking the context that rape is used as a weapon of war and there are pregnancies that emerge, what is the health component behind that?

My question is twofold. What would you advise, or what do you think the solution should be on the ground; and what do you think Canada's role should be in supporting that?

**Ms. Jess Tomlin:** To answer the first part of your question, the beautiful thing is that's not up to us to define the solutions. I think we all believe quite strongly that when the grassroots are empowered to lead, to create, to understand how to nuance the solutions that are going to work best in their culture, in their context, in that moment, in that political moment; and when they are properly supported to do so, those can be some of the most creative and innovative solutions out there. We've seen that. We know that strong movements move mountains.

It isn't to simplify your question, but as opposed to coming at you with a number of complex solutions, one of the best things we can do is to make a strong, sustained investment in women's organizations that are working at the grassroots. That, in turn, gives them a ton of access that they otherwise wouldn't have.

They're right now working and they're extraordinarily resilient. They're organizations with \$12,000 budgets and they're making stuff happen. It's really quite exceptional. If they had the force of sustainable funding behind them, we believe they could do a lot more.

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** When it comes to addressing sexual violence, what we've seen is that in many cases a lot of the funding that is channelled toward addressing that issue is going bilaterally to other governments. It doesn't matter whether it's here in Canada or in the DRC, women are very reluctant to go to the local police station and report what happened to them, and then go see a lawyer, and then go to the clinic, and then.... It's just not the way to go.

Women's organizations like the one Jess mentioned.... Julienne Lusenge has set up a one-stop shop in an area the size of Spain. Women walk for days to get to this shop, where they get medical attention and psychosocial support. They receive skills to restart a life, because most of them will not be able to go back to their villages. They need to find new ways of living and making an income and so on. They have paralegals to help in taking cases to court. They are working with communities to try to reweave the fabric of community that has been so destroyed by rape as a weapon of war. This is also the best practice, the gold standard, here in North America, a one-stop shop where victims can go to receive all the services they need.

But again, it's a huge investment.

**Ms. Beth Woroniuk:** Just quickly, one of the themes of the three reviews that were conducted last year by the United Nations is how, as a global community, we have not invested enough in conflict prevention. Some of the good practices that are emerging on how we stop wars before they become really violent are from our small local initiatives.

One in particular that is getting a lot of attention is women mediators in Burundi. They were trained in conflict resolution techniques at the local level. I believe there are about 500 women who were trained in this, and they resolve things from property disputes at the community level to all kinds of things. People have said this has been a very successful way of trying to unpack and diffuse tensions before they get full blown, and it's a way of trying to build that social fabric that's so important in conflict prevention.

I think if we look at some of these kinds of initiatives that often get overlooked.... Because how do you measure a conflict that didn't happen, right? That's a very difficult thing to do, but those are the kinds of initiatives we have to start investing in to deal with the prevention level.

● (1645)

**The Chair:** I think I'll wrap it up there, colleagues, to stick to our time frame.

I would ask our witnesses to think about one area that we've not spent a lot of time on, which I think is driving this narrow proposal process that we see now in governments generally. I'm very interested on behalf of the committee to talk a little more about the whole issue of accountability mechanisms.

It is my personal opinion that governments have moved away from core funding because they don't seem to think they have the abilities to figure out the accountability structure. I think that's the key for some of the issues you're referring to, that if we're going to go back to core, which I personally think is a pretty good idea, we're going to have to have an accountability structure that works.

With the limited time we have today we haven't really touched on that, but it is a very important part of government change—if there is going to be change in this process. I would really encourage you to get back to us in written form on how you would see that. I know Beth touched on it in her presentation, but we really didn't get into that kind of conversation. I think it would be useful for the committee to get your input on that.

On behalf of the committee, I would say thank you very much. This has been very helpful, and I tend to like the idea of the committee doing this on a regular basis to up the profile. Because it seems to me that the only way you can get people's attention is to keep talking about something, and that's the role of members of Parliament, especially in areas like this.

I want to say thank you very much. On behalf of the committee, we hope to see you again. Thank you.

Colleagues, we're taking a five-minute break, and then we'll go to the next presenter.

**Ms. Beth Woroniuk:** I'd be happy to appear in front of the committee again.

- \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_
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- (1650)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, could we get back to work? I'd like to call Mr. Thomson and Mr. Fairbairn to the table, please.

We want to welcome Mr. Fairbairn from Inter Pares and Mr. Thomson from KAIROS.

Before we get to their presentations, I'm seeking unanimous consent from the committee to transmit Mr. Fairbairn's presentation. It's in English only. With your permission, we will hand it out to everyone.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** We will give you all a copy.

For the record, could you introduce yourselves and the organizations you represent? Then we'll go straight to presentations.

- (1655)

**Mr. Bill Fairbairn (Latin America Program Manager, Inter Pares):** Good afternoon, my name is Bill Fairbairn and I'm a program manager at Inter Pares.

**Mr. Ian Thomson (Partnerships Coordinator, Africa, KAIROS):** Good afternoon, my name is Ian Thomson. I am the partnerships coordinator for Africa at KAIROS, Canadian ecumenical justice initiatives.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fairbairn. You have the floor.

**Mr. Bill Fairbairn:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to a theme that's very close to the heart of my organization, Inter Pares.

We are a feminist social justice organization that's dedicated to empowering people in Canada and around the world to be at the centre of their own development. We work in long-standing partnerships with local organizations in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Canada. We've enjoyed support from Global Affairs Canada and its predecessors CIDA and DFATD for over three decades.

Since our founding some 40 years ago, we have sponsored numerous south-south exchanges with women on issues related to peace and security. We've convened round tables on the issue of sexual violence in countries in conflict or in post-conflict situations. We've been supporting programming, targeting women's involvement in peace processes and political decision-making in countries such as Burma, Guatemala, Sudan, and Colombia.

Within Inter Pares, I share programmatic responsibilities for Latin America, a region where, sadly, sexual violence against women and girls has been used as a weapon of war. Although most of the region's armed conflicts have ended, levels of violence, in general, and violence against women, in particular, remain extremely high. Indeed, femicide, the crime of murdering females because of their

gender, is a leading cause of death among young women today in countries including El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.

Today I'd like to share some developments from the region that highlight the importance of enhanced support to the women, peace, and security agenda, and based on this, to present five recommendations for your consideration.

About a month and a half ago, I was in Guatemala's supreme court attending a trial and meeting once again with a group of indigenous Maya Kekchi women from the area of Sepur Zarco. These courageous women were making history as plaintiffs in what is both the first criminal trial for sexual violence during Guatemala's armed conflict and the first-ever sexual slavery case to be heard in a national court.

Sepur Zarco is a small rural community in the Polochic valley of north-eastern Guatemala. In the early 1980s, at the urging of local land owners, the military government established an outpost there. After forcibly disappearing 15 men from the region who had been engaged in a struggle to get legal title to their land, the soldiers assigned to the base went to the men's communities. There they set fire to the houses and crops. They stole the few belongings they found and before leaving, they raped the wives of the men they had abducted, and subsequently forced the women to move into shacks right outside the military base in Sepur Zarco.

In the following years, the women were held as slaves and were forced to do rotating shifts at the base. They were required to wash the soldiers' clothes; provide them with food, although their own children were starving; and to cook for them. They were repeatedly raped.

Guatemala's legal system has historically excluded and victimized indigenous women. This together with their feelings of shame and trauma meant that the women never sought legal redress. For over 25 years, they kept silent about what had happened to them. But very slowly, over a decade ago, and with the support of grassroots women's organizations that are long-standing partners of Inter Pares, the women began a slow and long path toward justice.

This past February, just a few weeks ago, after decades of impunity, two former military defendants were found guilty of war crimes and handed down sentences totalling 360 years in prison. The men sentenced in this case were just the tip of the iceberg, but the verdict is highly significant. It represents not only a major step forward toward justice for the women themselves but it also serves to promote long-term transformations and behaviours in society, so that what was once deemed to be acceptable or even celebrated is exposed to be unacceptable and repugnant.

If time permitted, I could give other examples of similar milestones that are taking place right now as a result of the persistence and courage of the victims, and the grassroots women's organizations that are supporting them.

•(1700)

Canada provides development assistance and in some cases diplomatic support. In the case of Sepur Zarco, the Canadian ambassador made a public presence at the first day of the trial. The Canadian government has contributed to these outcomes, but suffice it to say these achievements would not be possible were it not for the long-term accompaniment provided by the grassroots women's organizations.

Canada has been a leader in the promotion of women's rights globally, although we have lost ground in that area in recent years. The news that Canada has been elected to the governing body of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, as we heard a while ago, is a welcome development. It also means that with such a high-profile role, we have more responsibility than ever to ensure that we are walking the talk. There is much that we can do.

Firstly, it is clear that without the voice and participation of women, peace is not possible or sustainable. To advance implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security, we must listen to, respect, and support the voices of women at the grassroots level who are actively experiencing conflict. This is done by working with women's organizations in the countries where we are engaged. As one of our partners in Burma told us, and Beth mentioned the same partners, "There should be nothing about us without us".

Secondly, long-term, stable, and predictable core funding to grassroots women's organizations is essential to build local capacities that will hold governments to account. This isn't quick work.

Canada's funding architecture has shifted a great deal over the past years. It is doubtful whether organizations spearheading the cases I referred to would be able to count on the same levels of support from our government. Partnership branch once enabled Inter Pares and other Canadian civil society organizations to be responsive to the needs identified by our partners on the ground. The current framework, which privileges unpredictable funding through periodic calls for proposals based on themes that are pre-selected by the Canadian government, is simply inadequate.

Global Affairs Canada needs to increase its support to fund responsive, comprehensive, long-term, and grassroots initiatives that promote women's active participation.

Thirdly, we have seen a shift in the past years away from supporting the broad range of women's rights and instead focusing narrowly on supporting women as mothers. There has been a further narrowing of support, excluding women's sexual and reproductive rights.

UN Security Council resolution 2122, which one of my colleagues referred to earlier, provides important directions in this regard, in particular, the need of women affected by armed conflict and post-conflict situations to have access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services without discrimination, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape.

Fourthly, and here I am thinking particularly of the situation in Colombia, it is crucial that women play an active role in formal

peace processes and in monitoring the implementation of accords reached.

Women are still largely under-represented at the main negotiating table in the current process between the Government of Colombia and the FARC. With the process beginning now with the National Liberation Army, the ELN, announced in the last days, the situation might be better. The jury is still out on that process. As a result of women's mobilization, relentless advocacy, and international support, it's become impossible for both sides to ignore their concerns.

It is critical for countries like Canada to maintain pressure on all sides to ensure that women's proposals will be transformed into policy options that promote sustainable peace through gender equality and empowerment of all girls and women, and that there is gender parity in the committees charged with the eventual implementation of the accords, especially with respect to indigenous and Afro-descendant women.

In Columbia, our main counterpart, Project Counselling Service, has facilitated exchanges with women who took part in the peace processes in Central America. One of the key messages was that the eventual signing of peace accords does not necessarily mean the end of conflict.

Too frequently, with the formal signing of peace agreements, international support moves elsewhere, or it is directed principally at large government entities, leaving aside the community-based organizations that have made these processes possible. It has been the historic exclusion of marginalized peoples that created the conditions for the conflict in the first place.

•(1705)

Therefore, continued support to women's grassroots and community-based organizations will be crucial to strengthen participatory and inclusive democracy in post-conflict scenarios.

Finally, it's essential to look more closely at conflict prevention and address the root causes of conflict. In my meetings over the past years with the women of Sepur Zarco and the organizations that have been supporting them, and in many other conversations, I've been struck by their comments about conditions for Mayan women in Guatemala. Mayan communities in Guatemala are very similar to those existing prior to and during the armed conflict.

Little has changed in terms of entrenched racism, poverty, and the exploitation of indigenous peoples. Land ownership, which was at the root of the Sepur Zarco case, remains highly unequal. Fifty-seven per cent of the country's land is owned by only 2% of its people, while 3% of the land in Guatemala is shared among almost half of the population.

Today we are seeing a remilitarization of citizen security, including declarations of states of emergency, judicial persecution of community leaders, and once again, the establishment of military bases on territories of indigenous communities where there are existing land disputes. Today, this is happening to support large-scale resource development projects, in particular, mining and hydroelectric projects.

Today another group of Maya Kekchi women, 40 years younger but from the same region and the same ethnicity as the women from Sepur Zarco, are plaintiffs in a case before Canadian courts involving gang rapes committed by private security forces employed by a Canadian mining company, along with Guatemalan police and soldiers. This took place during a forced expulsion of the families from their farms and homes in the remote community of Lote Ocho.

Whereas Canada was once known for its role in peace building and the promotion of human rights, in my travels I am increasingly hearing repeated concern expressed regarding the actions of a number of our mining companies and doubts about the commitment of the Canadian government to the imperative of free, prior, and informed consent.

Inter Pares and our counterparts have a wealth of experiences that relate to this study, but to conclude and sum up, our key recommendations are that Canada must listen to local women directly impacted by the conflict; provide long-term, stable funding to women's organizations before, during, and post-conflict; support access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services; insist that women are at the negotiating table for peace processes; and invest in conflict prevention and address the root causes of conflict.

Thank you very much for your attention. I look forward to answering any questions you have.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fairbairn.

Now I'll go to Mr. Thomson.

**Mr. Ian Thomson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of KAIROS let me begin by thanking you for this opportunity to address the committee as a part of its study on women, peace, and security. It's good to be here with you today.

KAIROS is a national ecumenical organization that works with partners both in Canada and internationally for human rights and ecological justice. We unite 11 national churches and religious organizations from eight Christian denominations.

KAIROS approaches all of our work through the lens of gender justice, understanding gender justice as full equality and equity among women, girls, men, and boys in their diverse identities and in all spheres of life. KAIROS is committed to working for a more just world in which power and responsibility are shared equally by all and to supporting those individuals and organizations working to transform power relations and end historical injustices.

KAIROS and our global civil society partners have a noteworthy history of working together on issues of women, peace, and security, and human rights in countries of protracted conflict.

Together with these partners, KAIROS has developed our women of courage program. This work is rooted in the understanding that while women around the world face many injustices, women are also key catalysts and agents of change when they create and exercise leadership in human rights and peace building. KAIROS works with partner organizations in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the West Bank in Israel-Palestine, the Philippines, and South Sudan to respond to the needs of women in their local contexts. In addition, KAIROS works to build solidarity relationships with

women in Canada who are affected by gender-based oppression, particularly indigenous and migrant women.

Our women of courage programming is multi-faceted.

It includes a psychosocial support and counselling to women who are victims of human rights abuses and survivors of sexual violence, as well as legal support to increase their access to justice and reparations; as well as training and capacity-building workshops for women's organizations and women human rights defenders to assist them in using national legislation and international frameworks and resolutions to protect women's human rights in contexts of militarized conflicts and to advocate for women's participation in peace-building processes.

The program also includes grassroots education campaigns on such things as the women, peace, and security agenda, the UN Security Council resolution 1325, and the other resolutions to increase awareness of these commitments among women and all members of society. Finally, it includes international exchanges between women's organizations and human rights defenders that allow the sharing of experiences and best practices in order to help develop joint strategies and recommendations.

For example, in Colombia in the context of the current peace process and the victims' law KAIROS and our partner, Organización Femenina Popular, are supporting individual and collective reparations for victims of human rights abuses and gender-based violence, as well as the victims committees in which women receive legal representation and support to prosecute abuse and violence.

In South Sudan, KAIROS works with the national women's program of the South Sudan Council of Churches to engage women across tribal lines on advocating for peace locally, while developing an understanding of the international frameworks on women's role in peace building, including UN Security Council resolution 1325.

Although historically women have been at the forefront of movements for peace and human rights, peace-building processes are often dominated by men's voices and experiences. From 1992 to 2011, only 2% of chief mediators and only 9% of negotiators in peace processes were women.

At the same time, studies have shown that peace processes that involve women are not only more equitable and inclusive, but are also more sustainable. There are convincing reasons to support the participation of women's civil society organizations and women human rights defenders in peace process and post-conflict development: equity, inclusivity, justice, sustainability, and the efficiency of the process.

Our first recommendation to this committee would be that the Government of Canada should provide more in the way of financial support to women's rights organizations and grassroots civil society organizations for peace-building efforts in conflict affected and fragile states.

● (1710)

KAIROS supports the recommendation brought to you by the Women and Peace Security Network—you heard from them just a moment ago—around the target of 15% of our support towards a peace and conflict context going towards programming with women's empowerment or gender equality as the principal objective of the programming.

We were very encouraged by Canada's remarks at the UN Security Council in March that recognized the critical importance of supporting the participation of local women's organizations in peace building. In contrast, the Government of Canada has focused much of its official development assistance in recent years through large multilateral organizations, such as UN agencies and the World Bank, and less through partnerships with civil society organizations in Canada and internationally.

There are cases where this makes sense, when Canadians' support can leverage contributions from other donors, but experience in peace building has shown that lasting peace is achieved by supporting the women, peace, and security agenda at all levels. I'd like to offer you an example.

In February I was in the Democratic Republic of Congo. KAIROS and our Congolese human rights partner, Héritiers de la Justice, run a legal clinic that provides legal accompaniment and counselling to victims of sexual violence. To enable these women to defend their rights and engage in peace building, paralegals and women's rights educators from the clinic hold training workshops on domestic law, international human rights instruments, and UN Security Council resolution 1325. Supported by Héritiers de la Justice, local women's committees have been established in the cities and the villages to help women support each other, and most importantly, to break their silence around sexual violence.

In 2013 the Government of Canada made a significant investment of \$18 million through the United Nations Development Programme to fight impunity around sexual violence in Congo. Through this project, mobile tribunals have been created to travel deep into rural areas in eastern Congo and facilitate access to justice. While this institution-building is critical, it requires the participation and trust of women at the local level. Without investing in such grassroots capacity-building by local organizations, Canada's commitment to ending impunity through this larger multilateral project will not be fully realized. In our view, it's not an either-or scenario. For peace building and women's empowerment to be truly lasting, top-down

national and regional initiatives must be accompanied by grassroots civil society-led initiatives.

KAIROS was already planning to expand the legal clinic in Congo in 2009. Back then, we approached the Canadian International Development Agency to partner with KAIROS on this work in Congo and other conflict-affected states. As many of you will recall, notwithstanding a recommendation from the CIDA president, the KAIROS proposal was not approved.

In January of this year, KAIROS submitted a new proposal to Global Affairs Canada seeking support for our women, peace, and security partners. While we are still awaiting a response, we remain hopeful that the work of KAIROS and our partners will complement and help to ensure the success of Canada's current programming in these areas.

We believe our global partners and our international program are transformative, and they deliver long-lasting, sustainable results. We see the lives that are changed, the communities that have been empowered, and the women who regain their dignity and are able to exercise their rights. However, more resources are needed to support women's civil society organizations and women's human rights defenders. Despite the research that they have been the key drivers to defending rights and promoting peace all over the world, the resources they receive are shamefully scarce and dwindling.

Our second recommendation for the committee is regarding the national action plan. We would like to see the national action plan on women, peace, and security be expanded, such that it can serve both as a strategic vision for how Canada will implement and strengthen its international commitments around women, peace, and security, and as a monitoring and tracking tool to facilitate reporting on financial commitments, activities, gaps, and the progress to date.

KAIROS recognizes that the Government of Canada has played an important role in supporting the passage of the first UN Security Council resolution on women, peace, and security in the year 2000, in welcoming subsequent resolutions, and in adopting the national action plan in 2010. As I mentioned earlier, we appreciate Canada's recent statements at the UN Security Council regarding its commitment to women, peace, and security.

•(1715)

Through our participation in the Women, Peace and Security Network, KAIROS has been monitoring Canada's implementation of these resolutions and its commitment to working with partners on the implementation of the subsequent resolutions. We hope the renewal of the C-NAP in 2016 will produce a strategic vision for how Canada can best implement its international commitments on women, peace, and security. The plan must allow Canadians to gauge how Canada as a country is making this a policy priority, where we are headed, and what Canada's particular contribution will be to this global effort.

Therefore, our third recommendation for consideration by this committee is that the Government of Canada hold consultations and collaborate with women's rights organizations and their international partners on policy development and programming around women, peace, and security.

In the first instance, a broad-based public consultation should be held across Canada to inform the renewal of C-NAP. We believe this is an opportunity for the government to enhance the plan with input from a wide range of stakeholders. These parliamentary hearings are building a good foundation, but we hope that Global Affairs Canada will conduct a broad-based public consultation in cities across Canada in 2016 to inform the development of the new plan.

Women's organizations and other civil society organizations like KAIROS have a great deal to share on experiences from other countries, and lessons learned from efforts in Canada to end violence against women and promote women's political participation and empowerment.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to answering your questions.

•(1720)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Thomson on behalf of KAIROS, and Mr. Fairbairn of Inter Pares.

We'll go to the first round now, and we'll start with Mr. Allison.

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and to our guests here today, thank you very much for your involvement in this very important issue.

My question is around national plans. We're talking about trying to refresh this one and maybe seeing if we could do more around that. Are there any national plans that you've seen in other governments that have been effective, and if there are, would you care to share those with us?

**Mr. Bill Fairbairn:** In Colombia, in particular, I know that women's organizations have been pressing the Government of Colombia to adopt a plan. The women's movement in Colombia is extremely strong and courageous. What I'm hearing about the Organización Femenina Popular is that these are women who have borne the brunt of the armed conflict, and they're coming forward to push their government for an effective plan.

I have to admit that I haven't been following their interventions with the government on their plan. That is certainly something I'd be quite happy to inquire about with our partners, as well as with my other colleagues who are working on Africa and Asia, to find out if

there are any positive experiences from other situations. Other than knowing that the Colombians are on this right now, I don't know of any other examples.

**Mr. Dean Allison:** Mr. Thomson, do you have anything to say?

**Mr. Ian Thomson:** I'm more familiar with the African context, where I relate directly to our partners. I can't speak to the other regions.

In Congo, I know that the pressure has been on how to build it from the ground up, and that's where our recommendation around the public engagement and consultation with Canadians emerges from. I do wonder, as others were mentioning earlier, how you can make this a priority that ministers will be working into their speeches out of necessity. I think it is by engaging Canadians to a greater extent in the development and knowledge of the plan. In Congo, to the extent that it's coming from the grassroots, that is where the hope lies. There isn't a lot of hope in the existing institutions.

The context is very different in Canada, and I'm not trying to equate the two. But I do think that building a grassroots constituency in Canada that is committed to women, peace, and security would be very powerful. I also think we are at a unique moment in our country's history where we have just been through a process of welcoming thousands of people fleeing conflict. I think Canadians are open to this and prepared for this. I think their hearts and minds are open. I'm hoping that if the plan is done in a way that is very consultative and engages Canadians, it will become a much stronger document. But more than that, it will become a truly living document.

•(1725)

**Mr. Dean Allison:** Thank you.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today, as well as the witnesses from the previous panel.

I'll start with a question for Mr. Thomson.

Sir, you represent a faith-based organization, a partnership of different churches, so I'd be curious to hear your reflections on that intersection between faith groups and also issues around gender. In particular, what are ways that you see religious organizations around the world being involved in these things, and how can an awareness of that dimension improve our activity in this area?

**Mr. Ian Thomson:** I would begin by encouraging the Canadian government to think of faith-based organizations as partners in advancing the women, peace, and security agenda.

Certainly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in South Sudan, the churches are present in every corner of the country, some corners in which the government itself is not present. If we are talking about how to reach all of the citizens, faith-based institutions are a powerful partner. Likewise in Canada, our presence in so many communities, I think, can also animate this conversation with Canadians.

The example I might provide is our partner in South Sudan. The South Sudan Council of Churches is working very hard to unite women across tribal lines. It is a predominantly Christian country, so their churches do represent the vast majority of the peoples. Their sessions, starting with simple prayers for peace, have been so powerful as a tool to open up conversations, both with women from one ethnic group that may be in a UN camp and those living outside the camp. When these two groups come together they learn to talk about peace. By bringing the women together, they return to their communities and then they talk to the men and the boys, so the women, peace, and security agenda is not an agenda that only involves women and girls, it involves all the participants of society.

I think churches, in some of these challenging contexts, have found novel ways of breaking down barriers and engaging people in conversations around peace and reconciliation that can be replicated in various contexts. That's an example in a predominantly Christian country, but organizations from other faith traditions could help in other contexts.

**The Chair:** Mr. Sidhu.

**Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.):** First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. Thomson and Mr. Fairbairn. You're doing a great job and have great information for the committee.

Last October your organization launched a strategic plan for five years. Could you explain the importance of women, peace, and security, and the strategic plan for the next four years? Could you enhance it a little bit? You gave us some information on it, but on the plan itself, what is your strategic importance or what do you visualize in the next four years under the plan?

**Mr. Ian Thomson:** KAIROS has developed a plan around our programming on women, peace, and security that, as I described, has the different elements of psychosocial counselling and support, and legal support, but the last point I mentioned was the international exchanges between women's human rights defenders. These models, which are very similar in the different elements that are being implemented, are then customized to the context and there can be sharing and learning between how the agenda is being advanced in different countries.

That's really what is key, from my point of view. It is a very unified program, so despite the fact that we're dealing with such different contexts, such different roots of conflict, many of the responses that our partners are implementing bear a striking similarity from one place to the other. That's something that we'd like to promote, more sharing over the five years of the plan.

• (1730)

**Mr. Jati Sidhu:** You have asked about Canada's role in more funding. Is that funding important to implement that plan for the next four years?

**Mr. Ian Thomson:** Yes. We don't have the funding currently to implement the plan we've developed.

Our proposal envisions the Canadian churches supporting 25% of the plan. We are asking for the Government of Canada's support for the remaining 75%. That's the model that historically we had employed in the past and that we're looking to continue.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

There's still some time on the Liberal side.

Peter.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would respectfully defer my time to Karina Gould, if I could.

**The Chair:** That's fine.

Go ahead, Karina.

**Ms. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.):** Thank you.

Thank you to both of you and to all the witnesses today for presenting and intervening, and also for all of the work you do on this topic. It's very important.

I was hoping that you could speak a bit to how you empower women in peace processes and move them from the status of victim to the status of change agent. I think the work of Inter Pares in the Sepur Zarco trial and the women of courage program are emblematic of this transition and how that works. Then, as the Government of Canada is looking at our national action plan, could you speak to how we work to support women to be agents of change and to be participants in peace processes around the world?

**Mr. Bill Fairbairn:** Maybe I'll talk about Sepur Zarco, because it's very fresh in my mind. I was with the women just recently.

I've met them a number of times over the years. In different circumstances, and sometimes when we were taking pictures of them, they would put veils over their faces because it was too dangerous for them to be seen to be involved in the case. When we met with them in the supreme court, their faces were veiled as well. We went into a corridor at one point to have a meeting with them and they took off their veils because they said that they felt that they were among people they could trust.

That process has been very long. The women, as I mentioned, were very traumatized, and sometimes with many problems in their own community, when the community members accused them of being responsible for their own rapes. Fifteen of the men were killed and 11 of the women were taken to the military base. Four women among the widows—because the men were disappeared and then murdered—went up into the mountains. They were hiding. They were trying to eke out an existence in a very difficult situation.

Ten years ago in this process, a group called the Breaking the Silence alliance brought together three Guatemalan organizations: one, UNAMG, which is the National Union of Guatemalan Women; another one, which provides psychosocial support, called ECAP; and another one called Women Transforming the World, which provides legal support.

The initial work with the women was just to meet with them, to start talking, to break them out of their silence, to find people who knew the communities very well—obviously, they were speaking Kekchi, so you needed those people—and to gradually bring the women together so they were able to share their stories and find consolation in the fact that they were sharing what happened to them. It was very long process. Finally, it was about talking with them about the litigation, because it's one thing to bring them together, but the other thing is that they're going to be going before the courts and they're going to have relive and tell the story over again.

I have to say that it's been a very long process. That's why I say that some of these things take decades to do. It's not a short-term process. The women now are very happy. They're very happy with the results. They feel that all of their sacrifices were worth it. One woman died in the last years before the process came about, but she gave advance testimony so that it could be included in the trial.

I think that enabling women to become, to have the transformation from being a victim to having their own agency, is a long process. It involves a lot of multidisciplinary actions at various levels. Yes, this was really an important experience.

• (1735)

**The Chair:** Madame Laverdière.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you both for your excellent presentations. They were very interesting. I will not attempt to go over all the points in your presentations, but I have taken a lot of notes.

Mr. Fairbairn, you are working mainly in Latin America. Are you noticing specific challenges for women's rights activists working in oil, mining and other sectors? Are there specific challenges in those sectors?

**Mr. Bill Fairbairn:** Of course.

I apologize, Ms. Laverdière, but I will answer in English since my French is a bit shaky.

[*English*]

I would say that women are at the forefront of a lot of these struggles. Resource extraction increasingly is a real problem in the region.

I'm saying this from my personal experience too. To tell an anecdote that might get me into trouble, I first went to Latin America in the 1980s. I went to Guatemala and I was studying in a school in Guatemala. I was with people from the United States and they were afraid to tell anyone they were from the United States. They wore Canadian flags on their jackets because they were pretending to be Canadians because of the conflict.

A few years ago, I went back to Guatemala and I was in the region around El Estor where the case I'm talking about took place. Someone said to me when they found out there was a Canadian they suggested a lynching. I'm saying that because as a Canadian I find it increasingly difficult going to places in Latin America and hearing people talking about the actions of our mining companies. I say this

with great concern for the impact of the communities when people are finding their rivers are contaminated or in the case of Guatemala that military bases are being set up in the same communities that have been traumatized by the military for so many years during a very brutal internal armed conflict.

Often women are on the front lines in these struggles, and it's really important to listen to their voices. That's where I come back to the point that we made about the need to support grassroots women's organizations so that conditions can exist for there to be free, prior, and informed consent, because currently in many of the countries that I'm visiting in Latin America, the conditions aren't there. People are frightened, they're still traumatized, and the women have experienced sexual violence as well when the military base comes in. So it's really important to support the women, to demilitarize, and to establish conditions where there can be free, prior, and informed consent.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** That is why it would be desirable to have an ombudsman for corporate social responsibility, but that's another story.

Mr. Thomson, I was particularly interested in your comments about Sudan. I have to say that this issue concerns me a great deal. You talked about working

[*English*]

across tribal lines. I remember seeing situations that were using a woman's group to work across actual conflict lines by talking about common problems and common issues that women on both sides of the line had. Then indeed they go back to their community and they talk to their husband, their father, their sons, whatever, and there's a great impact.

I also heard that you were working on the West Bank and I was wondering if anything like that can be done in the region, and if possible I would also like to know more details about what you're doing in the West Bank.

**Mr. Ian Thomson:** I would be happy to put you in touch with our Middle East partnerships coordinator, who could give you a full briefing on that. I won't do it justice here today.

In South Sudan it has been a particularly effective strategy, the concern being that really, before you can even engage in it, there is such a great deal of counselling and support needed to bring people to the point that they can even engage at that level again. Our program has focused in the town of Malakal, which has been one of the hardest hit over the past year in the internal conflict in South Sudan. The atrocities committed—and there's no side whose hands are clean in this case—are just horrendous, so the challenge is even bringing women together who are able, as Bill was describing a moment ago, to work through their own experiences as the first step.

They are such powerful agents for peace, once they have received that support. In the Christian tradition we talk about conversion experiences. This is a conversion to being an agent for peace. Women have told me, "I literally thought my life was over after the sort of violence I experienced. I couldn't see what tomorrow would bring." I meet with them after they have been through the program, and they are the most energized, committed, and passionate advocates for peace that you will ever meet.

This is where the promise lies, I think, in this agenda, that it is long-lasting and will sustain us through and create the sort of society that will not fall back into conflict. South Sudan, the newest newly independent nation on earth, realizes that this is their opportunity and that they have to build a society of peace.

• (1740)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Before I go to the Liberal side, I would take the opportunity to ask Mr. Fairbairn a question related to his comments on page 3, at the very bottom, that very often what happens, once there's a formal peace agreement signed, is that international support moves elsewhere.

Is this anecdotal, or is it in fact easy to gather information and statistics about this tendency? It's an extremely important role of organizations. Having had some experience as a negotiator myself, I've had the opportunity to see people sign agreements. They're not always happy when they sign them; it doesn't mean it's over. It means that there's still a lot of work to go.

Could you give us some examples of this? Is there some information we could get to see how this has been happening, whether in Latin America or in other parts of the world? I'd be very interested in that matter, because it's an important exclusion of our role, if we're just there and then leave right after the agreement is signed. I'd be interested in that information.

**Mr. Bill Fairbairn:** I would be happy to give you more information about this. It was a general sense that we're getting from partners on the ground, that often when peace accords are signed, the attention span of the international media disappears.

We think about the wars in Central America. At the height of the Cold War you had the United States, the Soviet Union, and there were so many interests in the region. The international press was there. Every day they were reporting on the war in El Salvador and in Guatemala. It was in the news every night. Then the peace accords were signed and they disappeared, because peace had arrived.

What we find from our work is that it has not. People are saying, "Peace? What peace? We're still living in the same conditions as before, with racism and exclusion as high as it is." The statistics I gave about land ownership in Guatemala.... That hasn't changed very much through all this time.

Obviously the peace accords are important, and they represent the will of civil society to bring an end to the armed conflict, but when we see the statistics today in countries like El Salvador, the number of killings is the same as during the height of the war. That's why I'm saying that often the international attention disappears and people think, the peace accords have been signed; it's time to move on.

In a country such as Colombia, people have been speaking for years about a post-conflict scenario, almost as if they're already in a post-conflict situation, and it's not the fact on the ground. The war is raging in Colombia, despite the very positive signs that there might be a possibility of bringing an end to the armed conflict.

It wasn't directed just at Canada, but in general, that we seem to have a short attention span and tend to move on far too quickly.

• (1745)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

What I was also referring to, for the committee's thinking as it relates to this report, is the whole issue of when we sign these agreements, is it formally the case, then, that we're pulling our funding and moving elsewhere? In fact, if it can be shown that we're basically leaving a particular area and removing funding from grassroots and others who have a lot of work to do, that would be very useful for the committee I would think. That would be helpful to us.

Mr. Saini.

**Mr. Raj Saini:** Thank you very much for your testimony today.

The question I had was maybe for Bill. You expressed the work that you did in Guatemala. Are there any other countries where you have done the same work, and also what is the follow-up with these women, specifically in Sepur Zarco? Are you still following through with that? Is there any sort of support given to them afterwards in terms of health care and in terms of education and somehow trying to rebuild their lives? I know there was the legal process where there was support.

**Mr. Bill Fairbairn:** Personally, I've worked since the 1980s in a number of countries in Latin America, mainly on human rights issues. I've been working very closely with human rights defenders.

In terms of Inter Pares, right now we're working in five countries in Latin America: Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, and Peru. Those are the five countries where we have the focus.

In terms of the Sepur Zarco, out of the sentence there will be.... The women have asked for education, health care. They've asked for a number of things to support their community. What they kept telling us is that they're doing this because they don't want it to ever happen again to anyone else, and that's the real motivation. That's what you hear, whether it's Guatemala, Colombia, or Peru. When you talk to women who have experienced sexual violence in the way that these women have, they have the courage to come forward because they don't want it to ever happen again to anyone.

They want people to know the truth about what happened. Often I think about the work of many human rights organizations in past years, and I think violence against women has been absent. People would talk about torture and forced disappearance and summary executions, but violence against women did not always make it into the reports. I think that's changing, and it's because of women like these courageous women from Sepur Zarco, or another group of women from Manta.

Again, I think the Canadian government has supported some of our grassroots organizations. Right now there's a campaign going on in Peru because during the Fujimori dictatorship up to 300,000 women were forcibly sterilized. They were pressured into it. These are women in the Andes, in the departments of mainly Ayacucho and Huancavelica, and the government of the day wanted to reduce the population in the area. They forcibly sterilized up to 300,000 women and 20,000 men, forcing them to have the operation or else they would not be getting food supplies or they would have other things taken away from them. That's another area that we're extremely concerned about.

Human rights groups and women's organizations in Peru are at the front of this struggle to draw attention to this. Because of their work, last year the Peruvian government set up a national registry. Our partners right now in Peru are from the Andes region, and they're working with local women to make sure that they register and that there are reparations to the women in particular who were affected by this policy.

**Mr. Raj Saini:** It seems that Fujimori's daughter might come back now.

**Mr. Bill Fairbairn:** Yes. She's a front-runner. On Sunday she was a front-runner, and there will be a second round.

● (1750)

**Mr. Raj Saini:** Do you think your work could serve as a model for other countries, especially because of your involvement on a personal level in Guatemala?

**Mr. Bill Fairbairn:** I think that Inter Pares as a model would work. The name "Inter Pares" means among equals. I think that we're structured as a feminist collective. Internally, we have an interesting structure. A lot of our counterparts are very interested in knowing how we operate in a very non-hierarchical fashion. I think it's very important for us to be engaged in Canada—this is our country—as well as supporting counterparts overseas.

Ian was talking too about lessons learned. That's really important for us, to work with counterparts. We've been sharing experiences. We brought counterparts together from Burma and Colombia to talk about what is the peace process in Colombia and what are the challenges. When you bring people together things happen and you don't know where it's going to go, but they're really interesting things. I think as Canadians we have a really important role to play in our country in helping to bring these voices together.

**Mr. Raj Saini:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you colleagues and thank you to our witnesses, Mr. Thomson and Mr. Fairbairn.

The hours go by quickly in this place, so we want to thank you very much for taking the time and making the effort to spend some time with our committee.

Colleagues, I want to remind you that Thursday we will have two witnesses on our first video conference of the session. That will be here and then in the second hour Minister Dion will be here. We will hopefully see you all on Thursday afternoon.

The meeting is adjourned.

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