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Chair

The Honourable Robert Nault

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.)): Colleagues, I think we're all here and accounted for.

Thank you for your presence.

I want to go back to our study on women, peace, and security, as per Standing Order 108(2).

Before us today are Anne Marie Goetz, professor of the Center for Global Affairs at New York University; and Robert Jenkins, professor, faculty of political science, Hunter College.

We'll have opening comments by both presenters and then we'll go right into questions.

Ms. Goetz, the floor is yours.

Professor Anne Marie Goetz (Professor, Center for Global Affairs, New York University, As an Individual): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, vice-chairs, and members of the committee for inviting me today.

I want to commend the committee for holding these hearings and for its serious approach to improving Canada's role on women, peace, and security internationally.

I'd also like to express my appreciation and endorsement of the recommendations in the brief presented to you by Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada.

My remarks come from 10 years of experience working on women, peace, and security at the UN as the chief adviser, first to UNICEF and then UN women on governance, peace, and security. I'm also an academic and have conducted research on this topic, including with Rob here.

The first point to make is that Canada is not starting from scratch. In the past, it has played a strong role. It's funded women's organizations in fragile states. It's built up the female component of its peacekeeping contingent and encouraged others to do the same. It supported efforts to increase the numbers of women in mediation.

Canada's support for these efforts has, at times, been uneven, and Canada could and should do more to be a standout international leader on women, peace, and security.

You've heard, from previous testimony, that resolution 1325 and related resolutions have been, maddeningly, poorly implemented. You've heard that the protection component, and notably the effort to address sexual violence as a tactic of warfare, has received much more attention and action than has the participation or the leadership component.

Let's get straight to the reasons for this poor or uneven implementation.

Sexual violence in warfare committed or condoned by warring parties is a very serious international crime. A failure to include women in peace talks is not. A failure to address gender issues in ceasefire agreements is not. A failure to contribute women soldiers and police to peacekeeping is not an international crime, nor is a failure to promote women's participation in international foreign affairs decisions. There's an obvious difference in the strength of the accountability frameworks between international law and the more political challenging project of promoting women's participation and leadership.

To promote women's progress in the area of domestic competition for power and voice in conflict resolution, this is a political project. It's a tricky process and no one knows exactly how to do it.

A lot of hope is put into ideas, such as supporting gender quotas in post-conflict elections. We all know very well that building the physical presence and visibility of women in decision-making forums doesn't necessarily lead to influence in advancing gender equality policies, although it can help. What is needed is consistent efforts to support gender parity and other forms of inclusiveness among those who participate in conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery, but also a strong support for gender justice in the agreements reached in these processes. By gender justice, I mean full attention to gender differences in the harms experienced in warfare, and full promotion of gender equality as a crucial component of inclusive recovery and of democratic governance.

The tough question is, if it's no crime to fail to include women, then what are the tools available to Canada to make women's participation a bigger international priority?

I'm going to touch on a few processes through which Canada could do this, or could do it better. I'm going to look at the following: first, leveraging Canada's position in international institutions and global affairs; second, building a global community of practice on women's political leadership and gender equality in ceasefires, peace deals, constitutions, and other political settlements; third, building capacities for effective spending on women, peace, and security; and fourth, linking the national action plan to all areas of Canada's footprint in fragile states, notably in extractive industries but also in relation to climate change and natural disasters.

● (1535)

First, on leveraging Canada's position in international institutions and global affairs, as we all know, Canada is planning a Security Council bid for 2020. Between now and then is the time to be very strategic about asserting Canada's role as a global human rights leader. Let me mention a few opportunities in which this can be done in a stitched-up and strategic way.

First of all, of course, Canada is the long-standing chair of the UN friends of 1325 group, which is a collection of about 45 like-minded countries that meet regularly to support a strong constituency to back implementation of resolution 1325. I have to say that you are very lucky—we are very lucky; I'm a Canadian too—to have had such dedicated staff at the UN mission of Canada working on this committee, and I'm going to name them: Mel Stewart, Chantal Walker, and Simon Collard-Wexler. They have done an amazing job in promoting 1325, emboldening support amongst member states.

Canada plays other crucial convening roles, and we could ask whether more can be done in these other forums. For example, Canada is chair of the C34, which is the general assembly committee on peacekeeping operations. As chair, Canada has to play a neutral brokering role, but it's also a member of the committee and negotiates usually in common with Australia and New Zealand. This is known as the CANZ group. In the past, it has tried to negotiate gender-related proposals through the CANZ voice, and this could actually be intensified. For example, last year there was an attempt to influence issues around corrections facilities to ensure the application of principles on gender equality and protection of women in the UN's corrections work.

Canada has been working to support troop-contributing countries to include more women in their military and police deployments. This includes a valuable program where Canada provides coaching to vetted women police officers in some contexts. But I think we should ask, and especially Canada, as the 10th largest donor to peacekeeping, should ask whether enough is being done seriously by troop-contributing countries to address this issue of low contributions of women to the police and military. The common excuse is that women don't want to go into these security sector jobs. I think we need to look at that again. These are highly desirable positions, especially to be recruited to a peacekeeping contingent, which comes with funds, salary, and career advancement. These are things that usually men have the first crack at in many countries. What can be done to encourage more women to be promoted to these opportunities?

Last year, UN Women presented a memo in the process of the three reviews of the UN's peace work. The memo suggested that a gender premium could be supplied, a financial premium, to troop-contributing countries to encourage or to create an incentive to promote more women to peacekeeping.

If we look ahead, Canada has other crucial policy-influencing roles coming up. It's going to be a member of CSW from 2017 to 2021, as we know. This is a position to ensure that gender, peace, and security issues are addressed. Beyond the UN, Canada will host the 44th meeting of the G7 in 2018. This is a valuable midpoint towards 2020 and the Security Council bid, and an important opportunity to use this platform to advance key concerns around the neglected elements of women, peace, and security, especially this issue of women's political leadership.

Lessons could be learned from the way William Hague championed work on sexual violence via Britain's chairmanship of the G7 in 2013. Is there scope to do something similar around women's political leadership?

My next point is around building a global community of practice on women's political leadership. One of the problems with advancing women's influence in these processes is that they often lack the network and the political experience of male counterparts. Political power, credibility, and legitimacy is not something that external actors can build, and it's not something that happens overnight. But there are things that can be done, actually, to build women's skill and networks in these areas. The first has been mentioned over and over in previous testimony—support for women's organizations, core operational support.

But a second element could be support for training and for networking. The trouble with training is that it's often ad hoc and random, but Canada actually has a very interesting model that could be expanded. It could build on its practice in supporting the Justice Rapid Response initiative, which I think was mentioned by one of your previous witnesses.

● (1540)

Justice Rapid Response is a multi-stakeholder facility that brings together states, international and regional institutions, civil society, and private sector. Canada is a core and founding member and has been an important funder until recently. Justice Rapid Response offers training to magistrates, police officials, judges, lawyers, prosecution, and defenders all over the world on a range of international criminal, human rights, and humanitarian law matters.

Recently, about five years ago, it started working with UN Women to develop a training course on prosecuting and investigating sexual violence in conflict. The professionals who are trained in this course become part of a global network and are deployed very quickly when opportunities come up to strengthen domestic investigations or investigations of regional bodies or international bodies when it comes to abuses of women's rights during conflict or related to conflict.

Barbara Fleury, who was one of your witnesses a few weeks ago, is the police adviser to the UN mission here in New York. She mentioned three women police officers who've been deployed to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia to support the investigation and prosecution of crimes of sexual violence under the Khmer Rouge. Those three police officers were trained by Justice Rapid Response.

This is a valuable initiative that really merits your consideration. It's very much paid off. You can tell by looking at the quality of the output of international and regional criminal tribunals and international commissions of inquiry that the quality of investigative work on gender issues has improved dramatically in the last few years.

Could a version of this model be developed to support a global community of practice on the range of skills needed to support women's participation and leadership in conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery? For example, skills are needed in ceasefire monitoring, mediation, negotiating peace agreements, conducting political analysis, constitutional and legal drafting, and economic planning. Region-specific expertise is needed to ensure that these skills are context appropriate. Such an initiative could, above all, support the vital networking that's needed to generate technical and political support for women's efforts to get through the doors to peace talks and political settlements.

Third, on building capacities for effective spending on women, peace, and security, a lot has been said about reaching 15%, but could Canada support this process by providing data on what is actually happening on the ground? We have to remember, we actually know very little about the real amount spent. The estimates are all based on using a gender marker, which is applied by project managers when they're developing projects. There have been no serious gender audits of actual spending on women, peace, and security. There are also trust funds and women's rights funds that could really use greater investment.

My time is short, so I'm rushing on this, but more details are in my written statement.

The fourth area—and I've run out of time—is linking to all areas of Canada's footprint in fragile states. I'm going to mention two. The NAP can't cover everything, obviously, but many witnesses have spoken of the need to avoid silos. I would have thought an important connection to make is between Canada's women, peace, and security work and its work on disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response, whatever the cause of the crisis. We all know that climate-related displacement will increase, and that gender and age greatly affect people's capacity to cope with these crises. Linking the national action plan to Canada's work on climate change, both adaptation and mitigation, is crucial.

Second, Canada has a large extractive industry sector that is active around the world. Currently, international and domestic regulations on oil and mining companies tend to focus on issues such as corruption or environmental impact. Is there a national or a global code of conduct that could be considered or developed that addresses the relationship between the personnel of these companies and local populations to avoid instances of sexual abuse?

Finally, let me return to my starting point. Canada is not approaching this subject from scratch; it has a track record. It would be valuable to learn from and build on good experiences and good practice and to revive institutional memory.

● (1545)

Canada has made unsung and sometimes very modest but often hugely significant investments in some areas that are relevant to this discussion. I want to leave you with one example.

In 2008, the then DFAIT and its global peace and security fund provided a small grant to enable UNIFEM and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to convene a meeting in Wilton Park, Sussex. This brought together Security Council ambassadors, as well as Ambassador Henri-Paul Normandin, UN force commanders such as Patrick Cammaert, police commissioners such as Colin Farquhar, who has just served in MINUSTAH in Haiti, and human rights defenders such as Leymah Gbowee. The topic of discussion was sexual violence in conflict. At the time, this was seen as a humanitarian problem, not a matter for the Security Council's attention.

In that meeting in May, parts of what was to become Resolution 1820 were drafted and debated. Three weeks later, it was passed. Canada made a crucial contribution at that moment, and the rest is history. This tiny catalytic investment was extremely important.

Surely this is Canada's strategic challenge that you're addressing in your committee. Canada is in a unique global position to use its diplomatic leverage, its resources, and its principles to make a significant difference for women in conflict-affected situations. My point today is that it is a political project, not a technical project and not a legal project. It requires unswerving political determination in every possible area of Canada's engagement with fragile states.

Sanam Anderlini has just joined us, so we'll bring her to the table.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Goetz, and welcome to Sanam Anderlini.

Now we'll go to Professor Jenkins for his comments.

Professor Robert Jenkins (Professor, Faculty of Political Science, Hunter College, As an Individual): I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me to testify today.

You've already received a wealth of valuable testimony over the course of the preceding weeks from an impressive array of experts and practitioners, including Dr. Goetz who spoke before me. Much of what needs to be included in Canada's national action plan on women, peace and security has already been spelled out and discussed, often more than once. Rather than reaffirming the importance of the compelling recommendations already offered, I'll use this opportunity if I could to add one proposal to what is, admittedly, already a very crowded agenda.

The proposal I'd like to make is that Canada make the right to work a central element of its strategy for preventing the outbreak and recurrence of armed conflict, and that women's empowerment and gender equality be at the forefront of the government-run employment programs that will be created to operationalize this right in fragile and conflict-affected states. While this proposal falls most directly under the relief-and-recovery pillar of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, it's intended to be just as relevant to the participation and conflict-prevention pillars as well.

I'll start with some background. Works programs to provide temporary employment have been used in many post-conflict settings, and have received financial and technical support from UN agencies and other international actors. The specific approaches adopted are varied, but the general thinking has been that a lack of livelihoods drives popular disaffection, and that providing even temporary employment through such programs, doing things like repairing drains, painting road signs, and so forth, could serve as a visible peace dividend in places where conflict has decimated economic life.

Government provision of waged labour would, in other words, enhance state legitimacy and reduce the incentive to return to violence. That's been the logic. Guidelines for the operation of temporary employment programs have been issued by the International Labour Organization, and in recent years have included provisions to ensure gender parity in access to such programs. The UN committed to fulfilling this commitment in its seven-point action plan on gender-responsive peace building, which was introduced in 2010. UN Women is working to advance this objective.

The international community's approach in this area needs to be much more ambitious, I would argue, if employment programs are to reach their full potential as instruments of both peace building and women's empowerment. Not only have too few conflict-affected and fragile states actually had jobs programs, but where these have existed, such as in Sierra Leone for instance, they've been far too small and extended for much too short a period of time.

Three other crucial shortcomings should be noted of these employment programs in post-conflict settings. First, they have not been conceived in terms of rights or a rights-based approach to development and recovery. Second, they lack the means of ensuring public participation in the prioritization of the works projects that will be undertaken through such programs. Third, they lack civil society engagement in ensuring accountability for how funds are used. Yet, it is by carefully designing each of these three key elements—rights, participation, and accountability—that gender equality and women's empowerment can be placed at the forefront of large-scale employment programs in conflict-affected and fragile states.

As it happens, a rights-based framework, avenues for public participation, and civil society engagement in program accountability have also been defining features of what is currently the world's largest and most successful public-sector jobs program, which is India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, popularly known as NREGA.

NREGA, which I should mention is the subject of a forthcoming book I co-authored with Professor James Manor of the University of London, fulfills the right to work by guaranteeing every rural household in India 100 days of work annually at the statutory minimum wage, on government-operated public works projects located no further than five kilometres from their homes, to be made available within 15 days of workers submitting an application. NREGA is a legal obligation of the government, not a temporary relief activity. Workers build roads, dig wells, maintain irrigation works, and undertake many other activities. But crucially, the program has built into its authorizing legislation a far-reaching set of institutional mechanisms to ensure participation, transparency, and accountability.

● (1550)

Local residents and workers engage in a consultative process for identifying which works to undertake, and they work with civil society groups to carry out social audits of the projects for which financial and administrative records are made publicly available.

In addition to its many benefits for distressed rural communities, NREGA's design and the way it's been implemented have provided direct benefits for women. Thirty per cent of the workdays created must be allocated to women, and it has often been 50% or more in practice, which is very unusual internationally.

Child care must be provided at NREGA work sites, and NREGA creates opportunities for women to serve as work site supervisors. Research has shown that women's priorities are different from men's, for the most part, and women's priorities for which types of work projects to carry out get a fair hearing and are often adopted.

NREGA wages are the same for men and women, which is not usually the case in private employment in rural India and many other places, including the United States, I should mention. Women must be paid their wages directly rather than through their spouses.

India's employment guarantee scheme also makes indirect contributions to gender equality by creating opportunities for women to enter the public sphere in places where this has been constrained by cultural practice, and by incentivizing women to enter the formal financial sector by setting up individual bank accounts to receive their NREGA wages.

One study found, on the basis of research conducted only in certain parts of India, that women who participate principally in NREGA experience lower rates of domestic violence. While NREGA was not conceived as a means of reducing conflict-related violence, recently conducted research has found that the extension of NREGA to districts in rural India where anti-state armed group violence had been prevalent has led to a decrease in the levels of violence they experienced.

This is a finding of relevance far beyond India, including for practitioners in the field of conflict prevention in general, and women, peace, and security in particular.

India is of course not a conflict country as such, though it faces a number of long-running insurgencies that might allow it to qualify according to some definitions. India is also endowed with a functioning state bureaucracy, an enduring democracy, and growing financial means, so replicating India's right-to-work experiment in war-torn countries that have none of these assets is not what is proposed here.

The proposal rather is for Canada to advocate and financially support, both in individual country settings and through its engagement in multilateral institutions, the creation of suitably adapted forms of rights-based employment programs in fragile and conflict-affected countries, and to do this on the basis of a model that makes gender equality and women's empowerment an explicit and highly visible element of these efforts. This would apply to countries that have not yet descended into a state of armed conflict, just as it would to post-conflict countries.

As a first step, Canada could work with like-minded governments and international actors, official and non-governmental, to develop a model program and assess potential buy-in amongst its partners. Among the multilateral settings where this might be pursued are the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, etc.

Of particular note is the possibility of undertaking a rights-based and gender-equality focused “jobs for peace” initiative through the Commonwealth, of which Canada; India, whose technical expertise would be essential here; and many conflict-affected states are members.

Let me close by echoing a former senior UN official, Graciana del Castillo, whose research has demonstrated that the economic policy dimension of peace building, including its gender dimensions, are far too often constrained by excessive faith in markets to speed recovery and move on to long-term development. Supporting entrepreneurship and promoting market access—useful in training women entrepreneurs—and easing their access to credit are worthwhile endeavours, but market-oriented solutions are insufficient and budget austerity can make matters worse.

Ambitious public sector action financially and technically supported by international partners is a necessary complement. Placing the right to work at the centre of such an effort through a rights-based, government-implemented employment program that forefronts women's empowerment can send a strong signal about a fledgling state's commitment to transformative and inclusive peace building.

I look forward to any questions or comments the committee may have, and I thank its members again for the opportunity to speak here today.

● (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Jenkins and Professor Goetz.

We are going to take this opportunity to ask you some questions so we'll go right to that.

We'll start with Mr. Clement.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): I'm deferring to Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Thank you, Dr. Jenkins and Dr. Goetz. The paper you wrote last fall on missed opportunities echoes in different ways many of the bits of testimony we've heard from previous witnesses. There are echoes in former Under-Secretary Banbury's writings earlier this year that suggest between fine theories and concepts there is a gap between the conceptualizing and the actual implementation. In fact, one line from former Under-Secretary Banbury's paper said, “There is today a chief of staff in a large peacekeeping mission who is manifestly incompetent.” It goes on to say “...it is virtually impossible to fire someone at the United Nations.”

I'd like to ask, in this year when the United Nations will be electing a new Secretary-General, whether we should address structural problems in the organization responsible for overseeing all of these fine concepts of gender, of women, peace, and security in an organization that seems to be not just somewhat structurally dysfunctional, but as Under-Secretary Banbury characterized the United Nations, it's a Remington typewriter in a smart phone world.

I wonder what you might suggest Canada could do constructively. Your suggestions are all exceptionally worthy, but I wonder what can Canada do to help shake up what has been going on at the United Nations for too many years now.

● (1600)

Prof. Anne Marie Goetz: Anthony Banbury's op-ed in *The New York Times*, of course, articulated what a lot of people feel already. There's actually a network of individuals very committed to reform at the UN who are coming up with proposals for whoever the new Secretary-General is, which we hope she will be able to take up on her first day in office.

There is no question that profound structural reform is needed. When you were talking I was thinking of what Churchill said about democracy, that it's an awkward system but it's the best that we've got. Likewise, the UN is really in trouble, but it's our best hope for global governance and it needs a huge amount of work.

I see Canada as actually a very constructive player inside of the UN in terms of supporting reform processes. It's very active in General Assembly committees in seeking value for money in UN spending, and in looking at reform in staffing processes. But there is absolutely no question that Canada could strongly support things like really much clearer, stronger, and more transparent action around culpable sexual harassment of all kinds, including, of course, what is called sexual exploitation and abuse but is sexual violence committed by peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. There needs to be much stronger and decisive action in those areas. This is a difficult thing to push, there's no question, but more has to happen on that. There is also the matter of corruption involving financial mismanagement, and also there have to be measures to dismiss staff. There is no question of that and it's not impossible.

It does happen, but it does require serious backbone.

As you know, I'm a member of a small organization that campaigned to elect a woman to be the next Secretary-General, so we do hope that the next Secretary-General will be a woman, a feminist, and someone with extraordinary management experience, and the spine and the backbone to take up these challenges.

Prof. Robert Jenkins: I'll just chime in briefly by saying that I think you've put your finger on many of the deep structural problems of the United Nations. These are not simply those having to do with some of the administrative constraints that were outlined in the Banbury op-ed, such as the difficulty of posting people to field missions and having them work under the guidance of other departments as a result of the inability to harmonize the conditions of service amongst people working in two different UN agencies.

The difficulty of untangling those administrative knots is something I don't know the details of, but at root it would seem to be a difficulty that many of the reforms that are being driven to try to make that system more streamlined seem to be coming from some of the countries that are already seen to have disproportionate influence over the United Nations through their funding, etc. That tends to kick-start an automatic reaction from other groups of countries who feel that any such reform is clearly being done to further heighten the power of certain groups in the United Nations. Then you end up with a standoff.

Some people have argued that until the basic political settlement around the Security Council's permanent membership is figured out, it will be impossible to take all the necessary steps, some of them obvious and some of them non-obvious to those of us who are from the outside. It's certainly the case that the more one layers within institutions—let's say specifically the peace and security sector, such as the creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, the UN Peacebuilding Fund, and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office back in 2005—the institutions aren't leading to the coordination of work in other parts of the UN system. They're just adding new voices around the table, which has grown increasingly cacophonous.

That's not always the case, but it's frequently the case. Canada has been a member of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and has done great work there, but I'm sure those who've engaged with it on a day-to-day basis would have the same feeling, that there needs to be a streamlining rather than a layering of additional reform elements, because that's what UN reform tends to be—new layers, more difficulties.

● (1605)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fragiskatos, please.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Thank you for participating. These are very interesting comments all around.

I wanted to ask both of you a question. It stems from the comments that Professor Goetz raised with regard to Justice Rapid Response.

I agree wholeheartedly with your comments, Professor. At the same time, there are critics who would say that this approach would really be an imposition of a foreign model or an outside model.

How do you address that concern? I have certain perspectives on that, but I'm much more interested in hearing your views on that, because I think it is so critical. One thing we have really learned in this study as a committee is that local ownership over a peace process is vital. How do we get around that argument about the imposition from outside, so to speak?

Prof. Anne Marie Goetz: Sanam also wants to pitch in and certainly she's responsible.

The JRR model is targeting justice and security professionals in fragile states; it's seeking to train individuals from those states. It's training them in international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law. Certainly an argument could be made that these are international laws. This is not about imposing western or northern positions or internationally agreed frameworks. Many of the people who are deployed to commissions of inquiry or to regional or international criminal tribunals are people from the region or from fragile states. It's a remarkably democratic initiative in that sense.

It also has another element, which is very interesting, an apprenticeship or mentoring component where specialists in international law—police, magistrates, and so on—work side by side with people in fragile state settings.

Rather than imposing anything, they work with people, look at their portfolio, look at the challenges they are facing, and provide support. This is hugely valuable, and also takes advantage of the fact that a number of international criminal tribunals have closed, releasing a wealth of expertise that can be sent to the regional levels to support strengthening justice responses there.

The same is not true when it comes to the kind of thing I was talking about, a global repository, a community of practice on mediation, on constitution building skills, and so on. There are plenty of experts around. Sanam knows most of them in Islam, but more has to be done to build up that wealth of knowledge.

When it comes to imposing a foreign model, we hear this all the time. Of course one of the things that's very important is women's role in peace building, in promoting equality, comes from societies all around the world, often predating western feminist movements.

I'd like to give an example of how this kind of thing can work so effectively and not be seen as an external imposition.

In 2011, Swisspeace and UN Women, jointly trained women up and down the coast of West Africa in mediation skills, peace building, and engaging in constitutional reform. It was really interesting training. It lasted two weeks. These were women who had been ministers of gender, who had run NGOs and private sector organizations, been in government and out, and it was all over West Africa.

Six months later the Islamist groups and radical groups took over the north of Mali. Three of the women who had been trained in this course marched into UN Women's office saying there had been a horrible invasion, and President Compaoré in Burkina Faso next door was holding peace negotiations and preliminary ceasefire talks, and not a single woman from the women's group had been invited. What was the point of training them if they were not invited?

So UN Women put them on a plane, and they got in there, but the point is they were able to use the networks they had developed and the training—much more important than the content—and the networks to call up people in Burkina Faso, to call up women up and down the West African coast, to lobby for their inclusion. They ended up being successful.

This kind of thing isn't seen as a foreign imposition at all, these were women in Mali who took it upon themselves to get themselves to the table.

● (1610)

Ms. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini (Co-Founder and Executive Director, International Civil Society Action Network): Thank you. You'll be hearing from me in a minute, so I'm not going to take up too much of your time.

My organization, the International Civil Society Action Network, works with an alliance of independent and locally grounded and founded women-led organizations across many conflict zones. What we're finding is that they often are the answer. If we engage them and they're included in the processes that we're talking about, they have the most culturally relevant and sensitive approaches to engage on these issues.

I'll give you an example. We have a colleague in Sri Lanka who founded an association of parents of missing servicemen. Her own son went missing in the war in Sri Lanka in 1998. She led a group of mothers into the jungle. They were the first ones to make contact with the LTTE—the Tamil Tigers back then—and much of the engagement that she then had subsequently led to the peace talks that ultimately failed when the government got involved.

The access she had to that region has served her well, because people in that area know her and they trust her, and now, as the reconciliation process is going on, she's able to reach out to communities and work with them. She's been working with the police up in the north and northeast of Sri Lanka.

One of the things she's done is that she's adapted the Resolution 1325 agenda, the women, peace and security agenda. She has taken the materials that we've developed internationally and used them in a local context to work with the police and to inform them about what this broad agenda is. She has asked them what they thought the issues were that they were dealing with. The police identified gender-based violence in the communities as one of their key concerns, and they came up with their own ideas of how to engage communities around issues.

As a result of this entry point, the trust between them and local communities has also gone up. By virtue of being a local actor herself whose son was in the army, she also had access to the defence ministry, so she was also able to lobby the defence ministry to send Tamil-speaking women to serve in these police stations and in the military units up there so they could communicate directly with local populations, because the army was mainly Sinhalese-speaking.

This was nothing imposed externally. It was a local actor who took the norms that we had, adapted them to her region and to her context, and has now had an incredible multiplier effect in terms of making it indigenous and responsive to the needs on the ground.

In the Middle East-North Africa region, we are finding that one of the things we'd like to do—and we would welcome Canada's involvement and support—is that it's really important to pull together the different ways in which women's organizations around the Middle East have dealt with the issue of sexual violence in their communities. These are huge taboo subjects, but in Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, etc., there have been all sorts of different innovations.

What we want to do is bring that diversity of approaches to the Iraqi context so that our Iraqi colleagues can see and learn from that, and then, with seed funding, enable them to carry on that work. It doesn't have to be expensive. It is culturally relevant, as they're learning from each other. That peer-to-peer exchange is absolutely critical, but we, as international actors, have the access to and the knowledge of what's going on, so our role really has to be to facilitate and enable our local partners to have that information and enable them to have the best practices and adapt them to their own context.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, do I have time for a quick follow-up? No?

The Chair: No, unfortunately not.

We'll try to keep the answers a little shorter, if I can be so bold, so that we can get in another couple of questions from each member.

Now we'll go to Madam Laverdière.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you for these very interesting presentations. I particularly appreciated the explanation about why more attention is very often given to sexual violence than to the participation of women in the process, because it is not the same accountability framework, as you said. It's quite interesting.

Generally, I prefer the carrot to the stick. When it comes to including women on the forces of countries that provide peacekeeping troops, I think you mentioned that funding for those countries could be increased. That said, could there also be a stick-type aspect that would prevent troops from participating if they didn't have a minimum number of women?

● (1615)

[*English*]

Prof. Anne Marie Goetz: I'll send you the memo that goes through a range of options about how to encourage troop-contributing countries to increase their contribution of female peacekeepers. Like yours, their preference is to choose positive incentives and positive reinforcement. This memo calculates that the cost of a gender premium wouldn't be enormous, even if you raised considerably the financial contribution to countries providing troops. It would actually be manageable.

Of course there could be a penalty. Of course many troop-contributing countries are very eager to contribute troops, so they would not want in any way to lose opportunities. In relation to sexual exploitation and abuse, there has finally been a discussion of a penalty. Finally, the Secretary-General has said no further deployments shall be permitted from countries whose troops are abusing or committing crimes against the local population. There will be no further deployments until they have an action plan to deal with this and show a commitment to prosecuting.

I just want to say that the UN has for many years been terrified of imposing an obvious penalty like that because of the fear of not getting troop contributions, which are so desperately needed. The fear was that as soon as you did that there would be no more contributions. The surprise was that as soon as the Secretary-General announced this at the end of last year, some of the countries that were in trouble immediately went to the department of peacekeeping operations and asked how they could get out of this mess and what they would have to do step by step. They were eager immediately to sort out the problem.

I think more creative thinking is quite possible on the idea of penalties or shame or disapproval, and that we will find that we're not discouraging troop-contributing countries. We might find much more alacrity in response.

Prof. Robert Jenkins: I would just briefly add that I agree with everything Dr. Goetz has just said except that I would introduce a distinction between penalties for sexual exploitation and abuse, which I think can be imposed without undercutting the supply, as it were, of peacekeepers. However, on the question you specifically raised, about penalties for countries that cannot supply contingents with significant proportions of women, I think that would be a much harder penalty to impose, because it's really a seller's market in the current environment.

I would argue it's probably going to become more of a seller's market if the trend towards more robust peacekeeping continues. In other words, if peacekeepers are going to increasingly be put in harm's way, it becomes more difficult to penalize those who don't produce a contingent of the sort we might all like to see.

On the question of sexual exploitation and abuse, that is definitely something that the international community should press hard for penalties on.

Ms. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini: I would just add that I think there's a certain scope to offer the incentive of jumping the queue as a troop-contributing country if you meet the 20% or 30% target of women. If you think about Nepal, Sri Lanka, and many of the African countries, there are many women who were actually in non-state armed movements, so they have the military training and they would be perfectly capable of being trained as peacekeepers and would welcome those opportunities.

We've had conversations with them. They've been involved in workshops and so forth. They would be extremely good as peacekeepers if there was an incentive to draw them into these processes. There's no reason why there can't be small incentives, so if you jump the queue there's a little more money or something. We need to set those targets, because since 10 years ago the UN has been saying they can find only 2% women, and we know that unless there is some measure of a stick and a carrot, that 2% will remain a problem for the next 10 years.

● (1620)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Hopefully, when the next Secretary-General comes in, she will work on this.

Prof. Anne Marie Goetz: She certainly will.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Levitt, go ahead, please.

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Good afternoon. Thank you for making yourselves available and joining us this afternoon.

Professor Goetz, my question is going to be for you based on some reading I did, an article that was made available to us. It gets to the larger issue of accountability and the issue of political will. It's particularly around a quote taken from the article:

> Despite the creation in 2011 of UN Women, an agency dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment, neither objective appears to be a priority for the most powerful parts of the UN secretariat: the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).... are male-dominated and resistant to the idea that women's empowerment is central to their missions.

It also talks about their paying lip service to getting to the 15% of their funds being used to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

How do we go about moving this forward? We've heard from so many of the witnesses over the last month that this really is a sticking point and that it takes the creation of political will to move it forward. I heard from the previous comment that the answer to this might be a woman secretary-general, but maybe that's oversimplified and wouldn't change it enough and wouldn't move it forward enough. How can we start advancing this when the push-back is coming at the highest level in some of these organizations?

Prof. Anne Marie Goetz: Thank you. It's a great question.

I think that may have been from an article that we wrote together, certainly we've made this point in writing together.

It is a huge obstacle within the UN that the departments responsible for political work and the more military work lack, in my view, serious commitment at the very top. It's complicated and it's a long story, and what can countries do?

I want to throw that back at you because Canada is in a great position within the UN. It's an important country. Its views matter. It's got a lot of money. It's a huge international promoter of human rights, or should be. In bilateral discussions or with the leaders of DPA and DPKO, there is room for saying that this has to change, that we need to see more concerted effort.

To give a small example, DFAIT funded UN Women and DPA a couple of years ago to get more women on its mediation rosters, which is important, but still, with every single mediation appointment, with the exception of Mary Robinson, we keep seeing a man being appointed and we don't know what the short list looked like. We don't know if there was adequate attention to alternatives within that short list.

To add to that, you may have also seen recently a series of articles in the Centre on International Cooperation's *Peace Operations Review*, for example, on the number of women recently appointed to under secretary-general and assistant secretary-general posts at the UN. Something like 93% of appointments of USGs in 2015 were male.

There's a filtering process here and it's managed by these two major entities. They are hugely influential. They're supposed to have a fifty-fifty short list. We don't know if they do because that information isn't made publicly available.

I guess I'm dodging the question and throwing it back at you. What can bilaterals do to push these agencies? You're the boss at the UN; it's an intergovernmental organization. This is supposed to be your secretariat.

Mr. Michael Levitt: I'll comment on that in just a little bit.

We've made the point that in re-engaging—and we've chosen to re-engage with the UN in a more fulsome way—we've said that we're going to use this opportunity to re-engage to push for reform where it's required most. Maybe we do need to start talking a little louder and making sure that message is getting heard, especially on the issue of a more active role for women, gender parity, and these funding levels being reached.

● (1625)

Prof. Robert Jenkins: Sanam worked for a time in a unit of the DPA, so perhaps she'd like to add some insider/outsider perspective, if I can put her on the spot.

Ms. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini: Perhaps, over a drink, I can tell you the reality of life.

I see different things happening. My organization did a study for UNDP last year on the appointment of peace and development advisers. These are P5s, moderately senior people, who are joint UNDP and DPA appointees to conflict areas, where they look at peace building. Over the last 10 years, they haven't been able to increase the percentage of women beyond 23%.

We went down to the raw data of the applicants, to the type of job advertising that was done and where it was presented. What we saw was that the filtering happens between the long lists and the short lists. The ideal of a notion of a PDA was described as somebody who is a jack-of-all-trades, grey-haired, with gravitas. Many of us may have grey hair, but we don't show it, necessarily, in this field. Jack-of-all-trades, gravitas, or the whisky boys' club, as some of the descriptions were given from inside the system, don't really denote women. These are masculine traits.

Our findings were that, on average, there are 40 PDAs in any given year. Twenty of the contracts are being renewed or no new contracts are being issued in any year. That means if you want to have parity, you have to find 10 women across the world to fill those jobs—10 women. That's not hard to do, right? It's just a matter of making that affirmative action call.

The response we got from our colleagues was interesting. Some were saying, "Yes, absolutely", and others were saying, "Well, you know, we should do this by 2020". Well, 2020 is an eternity away, frankly. It's just dragging feet, so it is about political will at the very top.

The other point I'd like to make is that a lot of the expertise that exists in this realm of peace and security, with the gender lines and so forth, resides in civil society. We need a pipeline from civil society into the UN system. Those of us who have been doing this work for 20 years in civil society have 20 years of experience. If the job advertising says you need 20 years of UN experience, however, or that you have to be a government employee to get in, you're not going to get the best talent across the world. That's a shame and a waste of resources.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Levitt.

I will stop there. We'll get another chance to hear from one of our witnesses. I want to thank both Professors Goetz and Jenkins for this important discussion.

Professor Jenkins, I am interested in the right to work. Are there other papers that you may be able to give the committee? I'm very interested in this subject.

Prof. Robert Jenkins: Absolutely.

The Chair: It's something that has always interested me. Right around the world, we talk about development assistance, but we never talk enough about the right to work and the ability of a human being to have the dignity of work. One way to deal with equality of rights is to address the work of women. I'd be interested in more information on that subject from both of you. I think the committee will do its homework and have a good read of it. We should talk a little more about that.

Colleagues, my thanks to you. We're going to set up with one other person, who will be from Nebraska. I haven't had anybody from Nebraska lately, so I'm looking forward to that. Then there's a person who's here as a witness. We'll set up, and we'll be back to you shortly.

● (1625)

(Pause)

● (1635)

The Chair: I want to bring this meeting back to order.

In front of us today is Dalal Abdallah, who is a Yazidi human rights activist. We also have with us Gulie Khalaf, who is with Yezidis Human Rights.

Then there's Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini, co-founder and executive director, International Civil Society Action Network.

We've already introduced ourselves. If it's okay with everybody, I'll just go in the order that I introduced you.

Ms. Abdallah.

Ms. Dalal Abdallah (Yezidi Human Rights Activist, As an Individual): Thank you so much for having me here, Mr. Chair, members of committee.

My name is Dalal Abdallah, from the Yazidi community here in London, Ontario.

I'm here in front of you today because I was once running for my life in the Gulf War. My parents had to make a split-second decision to walk over to Syria that left five of my siblings behind in Iraq. I spent eight years in the camps in Syria until we were sponsored by the Canadian government. Even though I was a child, I still felt the pain and the struggle around me. I would look up in the sky wishing on those bright stars to go to heaven. Heaven was known to me to be Canada.

August 2014 will never be forgotten. Thousands of Yazidis lost their homes and their culture; some witnessed horrifying mass killings; and some were kidnapped, sold, and endlessly raped by members of ISIS. I remember that day in Canada when I received that call from my brother in Iraq. I picked up the phone and all I could hear was someone crying on the other end and who could hardly speak. He said, Dalal, they are killing everybody. They are taking all the kids, they are taking all the girls, and there are kids dying. I have lost everything. Please help us.

That day was one of the hardest days of my life. I was left speechless. I have heard so many horrifying stories of Yazidi girls coming back from ISIS, one of them being Nadia Murad, who witnessed male members of her family murdered right in front of her eyes. She was kidnapped, sold, and endlessly raped.

Some of the girls have escaped ISIS to return to being left homeless in the streets of Kurdistan. Some come to find some family members and others lost every single member to ISIS. Imagine being a parent to those victims. You, as a parent, cannot provide any help to your child and feel so hopeless. A lot of these girls who have escaped from ISIS have tried to commit suicide.

Without proper treatment, these girls will go through more suffering than they already have. We need to provide urgent humanitarian aid to the Yazidi women and girls upon their rescue, such as an emergency fund for food, clothes, and medical needs; psychological and trauma treatment; education opportunities for our women and youth; educational tools to support trauma therapy and provide new skills, allowing these women to retain self-sufficiency; and connect our support for women with the medical specialists in hospitals, especially for those who require treatment due to physical, sexual, and mental abuse.

We Canadians cannot turn our backs to the most vulnerable. We cannot play deaf to the screams that are crying for our help. I want Canada to open its doors to the Yazidis, especially the girls who have suffered enough at the hands of ISIS. I want everyone in this room to take these girls as your own. If that was your daughter, brother, or sister, what would you do for them?

There was a proposal that was handed by the organization One Free World International to the previous and current governments. I have that document right here in front of me. I want to give a copy to each one of you. We need to take action today. There are thousands of Yazidis, Christians, and other minorities who are left in Kurdistan and who hardly have any humanitarian aid. Canada needs to take accountability for this aid. In a war zone, we need to know where all this aid is going and if it's reaching out to the right people who are really in need of it.

In addition to the ISIL crimes against humanity, the group has also destroyed numerous Yazidi holy sites. Unlike for other Iraqi ethnic groups, ISIL has only given the Yazidi captives two options: convert to Islam or die.

Based on all these available data, compelling evidence suggests that genocide took place in the Sinjar district against the Yazidis ethnic group, which has yet to be fully accounted for, as the Sinjar region remains contested and massive graves remain under ISIL control. I urge Canada to recognize the ISIL campaign against the Yazidi people as an act of genocide.

I want to leave you with the definition of a “genocide”. A “genocide” is “the deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular ethnic group or nation.” This definition speaks Yazidis to me.

● (1640)

I'm the same little girl who wished upon those bright stars, who once had no hope, no future, waiting for Canada to call my name in the hopes of coming to a beautiful country called Canada. There are thousands of little girls right now waiting for Canada to call their names, to have that chance at a better life. Imagine if that was your little girl crying out for help. Would we still be standing here doing nothing? We Canadians cannot turn our backs on the Yazidis. Canada is our only hope and we need to do something today.

Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Gulie Khalaf, who is the Yezidis Human Rights representative.

Ms. Gulie Khalaf (Representative, Yezidis Human Rights): Respected chairperson and committee members, I'm deeply honoured to address you on the plight of the Yazidis. Thank you for this opportunity.

Last year, I visited the Yazidi refugee camps in Iraq and have personally witnessed the horrendous conditions in which they are living.

First, a brief introduction. About 94% of Iraq's population is Muslim. Yazidis make up a fragment of that 6% that is non-Muslim.

The Yazidis are an indigenous people of Iraq and the Middle East in general. They are an ancient ethnic and religious group; however, some community members, as well as Kurds, consider them ethnically Kurdish, while other point at them as Arabs.

This identity question has created conflict and subjected Yazidis to political and economic pressure from Kurdish officials, as well as death threats. In addition, some Muslims consider the Yazidis devil worshippers and infidels.

As a result, the community has suffered innumerable attacks by lslamist militants. They have been the target of 73 genocides in the past 1,400 years. In recent years alone, the estimated Yazidi population in Iraq has fallen from around 700,000, in 2005, to 500,000 in recent years. The population continues to decline as the peaceful Yazidis witnessed their 74th genocide under the hands of ISIS. This recent genocide occurred on August 3, 2014. Kurdish forces had promised to defend Yazidi villages. On August 2, the same people, the same forces, began to withdraw their forces from these villages without informing the Yazidis and without providing them with any kind of means to defend themselves.

ISIS thus began their horrendous acts against Yazidis. They slaughtered 3,000 people and took away as war booty women and children, who were later sold into sexual slavery. The Yazidis were helped neither by Iraqi nor by Kurdish forces, and thus began the worst crime against women today. Slavery that was once wiped out has been fully revived by ISIS. ISIS is raping, torturing, and enslaving women, and has been publicizing it on social media and in special magazines. Many of the 6,000 victims are still in ISIS's custody today. They are being held as sex slaves, sold into servitude, being forced to marry ISIS soldiers, being raped and left to bleed to death from rapes. Women commit suicide to avoid further violation.

There is the case of Jaylan, a 19-year-old who hanged herself to avoid further gang rapes. There is the case of another woman who burned herself, so she could become unattractive to ISIS, and the violation against her could stop. Some have begged the coalition forces to bomb them to end their misery.

The absolute misery of being a Yazidi woman in the 21st century is haunting. There is the case of a 75-year-old grandma, Baigi Naif Tareeq, who managed to be untouched by ISIS and escaped with her grandchildren, only to meet death by drowning with them as they took their chances crossing dangerous seas.

The former sex slaves who managed to escape, along with more than 400,000 Yazidis, are spread across the Kurdish region and are living in subhuman conditions as IDPs. They're living in different camps across Kurdistan, where there's not enough food, not enough water, and no education. There are 10,000 Yazidis in Syrian camps and approximately 20,000 in Turkey living in a similar situation.

● (1645)

On behalf of the Yezidis Human Rights organization and my people, I appeal to you to support the Yazidis through the following, but most urgently, bring the women at risk, the rape survivors, and their families to Canada, so that survivors can overcome the fear of the perpetrators who are roaming free around them in Iraq.

Yazidi refugees currently in Turkish camps are afraid due to the growing numbers of Islamists and the clashes between the forces inside Turkey. They need your help. Please bring them to Canada.

Those still in the Kurdish area of Iraq need your help desperately. The Yazidis have no real protection, neither under Iraq nor under Kurdistan. In fact, they are at times mistreated and beaten, but are afraid to bring charges because they are afraid of retaliation. Even after nearly two years, after the genocide in 2014, there is fear in the Yazidi community in Iraq.

To overcome this fear, some Yazidi women have armed themselves to ensure their safety from ISIS. Under the leadership of Haider Shesho, Yazidi men and women are joining a small group to defend themselves to prevent a future massacre of their families. They support the UN's call for the participation of women in peacekeeping forces and continuous monitoring by the UN Secretary-General and the presence of gender experts to develop a detailed report for time-bound action.

We appeal to you to support the Yazidis on the ground by having the Canadian government give military training and desperately needed military supplies to Yazidi men and women who only want to defend their families against ISIS. They can be either brought to Canada and be given advanced military training or the Canadian government can arrange to provide them with the training on the ground in Iraq.

The peaceful Yazidis are indigenous to the Middle East. The Yazidis, whose prayer calls for the welfare of all human beings, are being exterminated.

I know that Canada has always had a tradition of helping others. I appeal to you and to your offices to help the Yazidis. I appeal to you to ensure that the 74th genocide of the Yazidis be the last genocide.

Thank you.

● (1650)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm now going to go to Ms. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini who is the co-founder and executive director of the International Civil Society Action Network.

Ms. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini: Thank you very much.

I want to acknowledge the bravery of my colleagues who have been speaking out about these issues. It's extraordinary what's happening and how ineffective the international responses have been. I think this is actually an indication of how poorly we're doing on this agenda specifically.

I know that you've had a lot of people speak to you about this agenda and where it's coming from and what the issues are, and I actually wanted to draw your attention back to the notion of the peace in the women, peace and security agenda, because very often we veer toward looking at it as simply about gender equality. And as much as that is important, it's really about women having the right to be part of defining what peace and security means in their countries and in their context, so that they can have a transformative role.

Unfortunately, one of the things that's happening right now, certainly in the United States where we're seeing this agenda play out also, is that when it becomes limited to looking at it from a gender equality angle, then it becomes things like women having equal rights and opportunity to be in combat roles. From an equality agenda, that makes perfect sense. If we want equality, we should have equal rights and responsibilities to be in the military, to fight, to be maimed and to kill, on an equal footing with men. But this agenda was not about that. This agenda was about women being able to be in these places to actually transform and sort of redirect us toward positive peace and human security. This is a peace that I think it would be fantastic to have Canada really take the lead on, precisely because Canada was so involved in shaping the human security framing in the first place, back in the 1990s.

With that in mind, I want to draw your attention to the agenda around violent extremism, the countering violent extremism agenda, and where this nexus cuts across with women. I imagine that you've heard from Nahla Valji and others around this, but I wanted to share with you some of the findings we have from the work that we're doing at the moment.

ICSAN is spearheading an alliance called the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership, which is countering or preventing extremism through promoting rights, peace, and pluralism.

When you bring women into the room across different regions and they're dealing with the problem of extremism and you ask them what is their vision, how do they understand the solutions to be had? It doesn't stop simply at countering the violence. It's really about providing positive alternatives for the young men and women who are being drawn into these forces. That, I think, is something we need to draw attention to because at the moment this agenda has shifted for countering terrorism to countering violent extremism to prevention of violent extremism, but we're not really offering anything positive.

Whereas, when you bring women together in civil society where the peace process is built from the ground up, their analysis of what's going on and what needs to happen is much more in depth and much more complex, and it touches on the kinds of things you've heard about from your previous speakers.

It not only touches on issues of security. For example, what does good policing actually mean? How do we do community policing, so that the police is not a source of people going and joining radicals and is not a source of violence against women?

It's about educational curricula that at the moment we have, both in countries that are directly affected by extremism and in western countries, a real challenge around the question of reflecting the diversity and pluralism that represents our societies. How is that reflected in educational curricula? What are children learning? In Pakistan and elsewhere, our partners are saying that the curricula itself has become quite intolerant and quite exclusive in terms of not reflecting the diversity of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities that exist, let alone the gender diversity and issues around equality for women.

There's an economic dimension to this. It's not enough to say that we're going to have jobs created in the short term. The economic policies that have undermined and cut back social welfare programs are part and parcel of the reason extremism has flourished in many countries, and women on the ground are the ones who are identifying this. In the capacities that they have, they're trying to respond and provide alternatives for the young people on the ground, who are vulnerable to being recruited by groups that are offering them a little bit of money—a phone, a laptop—and some prestige by virtue of being involved.

● (1655)

Conceptually and analytically, when you have women from the ground up, in civil society, in the room, they change the nature of the conversation and shift the direction in a very practical way to many of the critical issues that internationally we're not talking about. So it's really important to listen to their voices, and I just want to emphasize that.

Politically we need to have them there, and one of the recommendations I'd like to put on the table for you is that it's very important for us to have a partnership between parliamentarians and civil society, moving forward, on the nexus of women, peace, and security, and the prevention of the violent extremism agenda. We have a lot to share with you. There's a lot of commonality of purpose, and yet there's a huge gap between lawmakers and where civil society sits, not least around the question of funding. One of the challenges we have right now in our sector, and in the peace building sector overall, is that on one hand, the language is about conflict prevention and peace building, whether it's at the UN, or in the SDG, the sustainable development goals, or in the resolutions that talk about the involvement of women in addressing extremism.

On the other hand, the funding isn't there because the funding pots have gone. There is so much money going towards humanitarian assistance that development assistance is being cut back, and yet nobody is touching their security budgets. I have raised this in multiple settings. Imagine if we just simply skimmed some of the money out of the security sector budgets and put it into development. If $180 million or $1 billion were going out of security and into development and peace building, that would make a tremendous difference, and yet that budget in 2016 is $1.3 trillion, in terms of security spending. We need to start thinking about this seriously, so having parliaments engage with civil society so that they understand the implications of the work that civil society is doing is absolutely essential.

I don't want to take up too much of your time, but I want to end with one very critical issue. At the moment, civil society organizations on the ground across the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and in all the countries we're working in, are in the one sector that is being deliberately targeted by governments as well. Civil society organizations are being targeted under the auspices of the countering violent extremism agenda. University professors have been jailed because they signed peace petitions. In Turkey NGOs are being shut down. In Egypt activists are being threatened both by extremists and by states for standing up and speaking out.

We need support for this sector, because if this sector disappears, if we don't have a moderate space for constructive engagement with governments, for constructive dissent, all that will happen is that dissent will go underground and it will feed the radicalized groups. They will tap into it and use it.

Civil society, in and of itself, is an important good, but as part of this overall issue of voting rights, peace, and pluralism, and addressing the extremist issues that we're now faced with, it is absolutely critical, and we would really welcome Canada's support to ensure that organizations on the ground are getting the financial and technical assistance they need, the political support to be present in the various fora where decisions are being made, and the logistical support to get them there.

I'll give you a couple of examples. There is no reason why, at this point in time, we can't say that when there is an international meeting happening, on any aspect of the peace and security agenda, whether it's a humanitarian summit next week or it's an extremism discussion in June here at the UN, that number one, 50% of people who participate should be women, and number two, one-third of the participants should be from civil society. It should be one-third UN, one-third government, one-third civil society. We need each other. We all bring different strengths to the table, and to be able to move towards positive peace and really address tackling these problems, we all have to be at the table together to shape the future, and yet at the moment, there are silos.

That issue of committing to that and living by that example, I think, is really critical, and Canada certainly is a role model right now and is being touted in every meeting that we go to. Everybody talks about “it's 2015”—now it's 2016—and why don't we have women there? I think it would be really important to just bear that message out more loudly.

Then there's logistical support, with regard to things like visas. We are working with women on the ground who are risking their lives to do de-radicalization and to work in communities, without weapons, without any security provisions around them. We need them to be speaking at international gatherings whether in New York or Ottawa or London. These people should be treated with respect when they go for visas.

● (1700)

As a British citizen, I cannot tell you how ashamed I sometimes feel when I see what documentation my partners, who receive U.K. government funding through us, are asked for in getting visas to attend meetings—to meet with the British government in the U.K. Women are being asked to present bank accounts with $5,000 in them, to show title deeds to their homes, as if these are people who want to leave their countries and seek asylum. They don't; they're the ones who are most committed.

We need from the international community side a profound respect for these people so that they can be in the spaces, so that you can hear them directly. You don't need to hear it from me; you can hear them directly.

These are the recommendations I'd like to offer you: collaboration between Parliament and civil society, with assistance from the UN, and I think you NDPs already raised this; core funding support for NGOs, internationally and at the national level—we have the modalities to get funding all the way down to the grassroots, we can do it efficiently, we can do it effectively, enabling those groups to be sustained on the ground, on the front lines of these issues—then, to be able to hear the women directly and have them as equal partners at the table as we move forward on this, specifically around extremism and the promotion of peace and pluralism moving forward.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Naraghi-Anderlini.

Now, we have about half an hour for questions. We're going to go straight into the questions with Mr. Genuis.

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

This has been incredibly moving testimony, and I thank all the witnesses, but in particular the activists from the Yazidi community for sharing information about the situation. I salute your courage and your work on this.

When I think about the events you describe, I think of the experience of my own grandmother, who was a Jewish child in Germany 75 years ago confronting similar events: fleeing for her life, seeing the devastation, the killing of members of her family just based on their background.

Regularly in Parliament we commemorate and honour these past genocides and we say, “Never again”. Whether it's about events in Rwanda, events in Germany and other parts of Europe, events in present-day Turkey impacting the Armenian people, we remember these events, and yet our Parliament here in Canada has still failed to recognize the genocide facing the Yazidi people.

It should be a source of embarrassment to all of us that the American administration, the U.S. Congress, the European Parliament, the British Parliament, have recognized that your people, the Yazidi people, are facing genocide right now. What good does it do us to remember those past genocides, if we cannot use the word in the present?

I have the definition of “genocide” with me. It's a different definition than was mentioned. There are differing definitions, but this is from the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the genocide convention. It defines genocide as:

> ...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group...:
>
> (a) Killing members of the group;
>
> (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
>
> (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
>
> (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
>
> (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

One of these things with the intent to eradicate the group qualifies as genocide. What we have clearly happening against the Yazidi people by Daesh is all five of these things, clearly documented by various human rights groups. What we've heard from opponents of using this word is that it's a technical word, that it requires study, and that we can call these acts barbaric but shouldn't use the word “genocide”, because there's a technical legal context to it.

Well, I think the technical legal dynamics are clear—the research has been gathered, the work has been done—but this isn't just a technical word; it's a word that drives us to action. When we fail to use this important word, it has a reduced impetus towards action. I don't think we can look away and try to couch this in different wording.

I want to ask the activists from the Yazidi community on the panel to talk specifically about why it is important that Canada, that the Canadian Parliament, finally use the word “genocide”; what the implications are of our stepping up and calling this genocide what it is?

● (1705)

Ms. Gulie Khalaf: It would be really [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] would be acknowledging what is happening as true, and then once it has been acknowledged, it would give us a chance to move on from proving to figuring out what we could do to prevent future ones and also to find ways to provide protection and rehabilitate the Yazidis so there is no further damage done.

Like I say, there is an entire Yazidi population inside Iraq; that is 90% of the Yazidis who are homeless and suffering. We are not able to discuss how we're going to help them out because we're still stuck on whether or not this is a genocide. The Yazidis have no place to return to, because 90% of the Yazidis' homes have been destroyed, even if ISIS is gone. The Yazidis' religious sites have been destroyed. Even their graves have been intentionally destroyed, because the intention of ISIS was to wipe this group of people off the face of the earth.

An acknowledgement would possibly help us to start a discussion on what we can do. A horrific, horrendous genocide took place. What can we do now to help the victims of ISIS?

One of the things that could help for sure is to move many of them from the scene of the massacres so they can recover. Every single day, there are more cases of people committing suicide. It's been two years, and they are left helpless.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to Ms. Abdallah.

Ms. Dalal Abdallah: On the same question, just like you said, for the five definite things that are under the definition of genocide, the Yazidis have been through them.

I want to be a voice for those girls, because I was once one of those girls who had no hope and no future, and Canada brought me to this beautiful country to contribute to this beautiful country and to do the best I can here, and this is what I'm doing. I'm being a voice for those girls who are voiceless.

Canada cannot be the last country to call this a genocide. We are such a compassionate country. I know from experience that when something moves in this world that needs help, Canada is the first one to get up, so why are we not getting up? Why? Why are we not getting up for the Yazidis? Why?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: If I may, I can just wrap up my round with a quick quote from William Wilberforce. He said, “You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know.”

The Chair: Thank you, Garnett.

Now we'll go to Mr. Miller, please.

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, Lib.): Thanks to all three of you for your testimony and, indeed, your courage.

Ms. Abdallah, thank you for being here. Thank you for believing in our country. I believe that I can dare to speak on behalf of this committee and say thank you for making Canada better. It's through people like you that we improve as a country, as a nation.

Your testimony left everyone deeply moved, so thank you.

Ms. Dalal Abdallah: Thank you. I am a proud Canadian of this country, and there is nowhere that I'd rather call home than Canada.

Mr. Marc Miller: It's unquestionable that the behaviour by Daesh is genocidal, disgusting, blood-curdling, and needs to end.

There's a question I have for the three of you. Whoever feels more like taking the question first, feel free.

Are we doing enough as a country? Canada expanded its aid and its engagement in the region significantly, in my opinion. Are we doing enough? What is the international community doing now? What more should it be doing to protect every single last Yazidi? I would like to get your sense of what's missing in this equation.

It's not a mistake, but we tend to conflate long-term solutions with the short-term solutions, and the immediacy of this situation is quite obvious. I'd like to focus on the immediacy. In the long term, obviously getting women engaged as 50% of the armed forces is something that I've pushed even to the top general in the Canadian Army, but the immediacy is what I'd like an answer on today from you.

● (1710)

Ms. Dalal Abdallah: No, we're not doing enough, because we haven't declared this a genocide. We haven't held our aid accountable. Where is this aid going? Is this aid reaching the right people who are in need? I have brothers and sisters right now in Iraq who are struggling. We're not doing enough, and I think we need we need to act today. We can't go back and say, “Never again, never again, we'll never do this again.” We need to act on this today.

Right now, there are hundreds of girls in the hands of ISIS. God knows what they are doing to them. We need to act on this right now. We need to get these girls out of there. We need to get them here.

We brought in about 25,000 refugees. I do not recall any of them being vulnerable minorities such as the Yazidi girls. Why can't we do this proposal? Why can't we bring 500 girls to this beautiful country and give them a chance at a better life? Why can't we do that? If we brought in about 25,000 people, what is 500?

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Naraghi-Anderlini.

Ms. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini: One of the things I find frustrating is that our international system, the media, the UN, etc.... Everybody talks about the issues, the victimization of the Yazidi girls and the Yazidi women. When you actually look and see what kind of systematic support we are providing, it's really very little.

One of the things I think Canada could do very practically on the ground, in addition to what my colleague was saying about providing refuge for so many of the victims.... On the ground, we've been thinking about convening women from across the region, in Iraq, around the experiences they've had in Egypt, in Iran, and in other countries. There are some phenomenal initiatives out in the region that are culturally relevant and can be adapted to the Iraqi context. How do you deal with victims of sexual violence? How do you deal with that in their communities? What kind of psychosocial support could be provided? What kinds of mechanisms are there, both the ones that are more quick and dirty but also the longer-term initiatives? These are the kinds of initiatives.

We should bring those experts together, have the discussions in Iraq, and put the money down, so that the people in Iraq who have been victimized don't have to live with the repetition of that victimization. Something happened to them. They need to reclaim their lives as best as possible. We need to provide the psychosocial and medical care on the ground, along with the economic and so forth, at least for the ones who have come out or the ones we have access to. We're not doing that. It doesn't have to cost that much money. It's just a matter of putting the focus.

I've talked to my colleagues at the UN. They'll talk about having gender advisers and missions. That's great. We need that. We need people to document. But documentation isn't addressing the needs of victims today, and every day they are being re-victimized by our passivity and by the technicality of whether or not something is called a “genocide”.

There's plenty that we can do, and we'd be happy to share with you ideas, concepts, and so forth to move it forward.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll go to Madame Laverdière.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Khalaf and Ms. Abdallah, thank you for your very touching and very moving testimonies. Congratulations on your work. I will echo my colleague Marc Miller's comments and say that you are helping to make Canada a better country.

I'm going to speak in a somewhat partisan manner. It's essential to welcome refugees to Canada. It's very important. Humanitarian aid is also essential. We can't shut our eyes to disasters. Each of you mentioned in your own way that rebuilding was also very important.

● (1715)

[*English*]

I was interested in what you said about convening women and trying, across the board, to share experiences from other countries. I've seen some things like that, which were often very useful.

I have a question for you, Madame Naraghi-Anderlini.

Some people say—and you can chime in, of course, too—that it is time to have some kind of reconciliation process in Iraq among the various communities. If so, I presume that would have to be a process where women are significantly involved.

I'm going to put my question very crudely. Is it a dream, or can it be done?

Ms. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini: To be honest with you, I would defer to my Iraqi colleagues, because I think it's important to be talking to them.

Having said that, I can tell you about women on the ground—for example, the Iraqi Women Network. They're women's rights activists cutting across all the different ethnic, religious, and geographic lines in Iraq. They have continued to work for a long time together. I think if there's going to be something akin to a reconciliation or a vision of Iraq moving forward, then women have to be front and centre in that process, because they've continued working together despite all the differences. They were always the first to warn us about the sectarianism that was being integrated into their constitution by the Americans after the occupation. They've always been the ones to counter, and to try to bring about the more pluralistic social cohesion in their societies, and yet they receive the least amount of support all the time.

I don't want to answer whether it's possible today or tomorrow, but I can tell you that we know people who are active in this agenda. By all means, bring them to the table and see what they can say.

I would also say the same thing for Syrians. My Syrian partners for the last four years have said to us, “Why is the world helping us kill each other, not helping us talk to each other?” Just imagine the money and resources we've put into weapons and destruction—all of us, all of our governments—instead of helping them talk.

That would be my answer.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Indeed your comment is “yes”.

Madam Abdallah and Madam Khalaf, do you think a process of reconciliation is possible right now in Iraq?

Ms. Dalal Abdallah: Of course. I mean, I had a dream as a little girl, and look where I am. Look where I am and look who I'm standing in front of. Dreams do come true to reality. You can make anything happen.

We are Canadians, and we love helping people. We can make everything and anything happen. We just have to put in some hard work. Nothing is easy. With hard work, there will be beautiful things happening.

Ms. Gulie Khalaf: Yazidis agree with the idea of involving women in the process of recovering from this massacre. That's why under the supervision of Haider Shasho, a Yazidi senior commander, 300 Yazidi women have enrolled in and are doing military training to help protect their people. Another Yazidi unit has in it at least 200 Yazidi women who are being trained.

However, Yazidis do need help from Canada and the international community. As a minority group—some days labelled Kurds, other times Arabs—they come from an area that is disputed. In the past, both Kurdistan and Iraq have neglected the Yazidis region and have discriminated against them. Yazidis have realized that in order for them to move forward, they have to make sure they take their fate into their own hands. That means they need a region that has international protection, but they themselves, looking at the future, need to be in charge of protecting their region.

That's why Yazidi men and women have taken up military training. However, they need help. They need help with receiving some weapons and also getting military training.

● (1720)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

I have a couple of questions for the entire group.

With regard to sanctions and the impact they have on women, in 2012 I was interested to read a report, Sanam, focusing on Iran and the impact of sanctions on Iran. Could you talk about that and the impact sanctions had specifically on women?

For Dalal and Gulie, humanitarian aid has come up in the conversation today with regard to Yazidis. Could you talk a little bit more about humanitarian aid, and the type of humanitarian aid that you think Yazidi communities in Iraq need?

As well, Gulie, you actually articulated very well the importance of training local forces. Canada has focused on this in its foreign policy since the new government has taken over. We're placing an importance on that. Could you go into that a little bit and on whether you see merit in that kind of approach?

The Chair: As you noticed, there are three questions, so let's start with the first one, please, on sanctions.

Ms. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini: I hope it was our report “Killing Them Softly”, which I can produce. I don't know whether there were other reports, but we produced the first report on the impact of sanctions. I have to tell you, I am Iranian by background myself. Now I have lived in Britain and America. One of the things we found is that the impact on ordinary people, civilians, is extraordinary. We found this now across the board: in Syria; in Gaza, regarding the embargo; and of course, in Iraq, over the many years they had the sanctions. I will just give you a few things.

When you have sanctions, the state and the entities that are close to the state somehow get away with it. In Iran, what has happened, basically—since 1994, when the oil and gas sanctions were imposed, and then subsequently in 2000, 2010, and so forth—is that the independent private sector was squeezed, companies were shut down, people lost their jobs, and all of those sectors ended up in the hands of government-affiliated entities, the revolutionary guard and others. Number one, we are destroying the middle class and the independent sector. Number two, what you find is that, as people lose their jobs, often poverty comes out, so women who were active in civil society, in social movements, can no longer do voluntary work because the inflation is sky-high and they need to go and find work. The space for civil social activism diminishes as well.

Then, in the experiences from Iraq, we also found that as the poverty increases—and the poor are the most affected, by the way; we are seeing the same thing in Iraq, Syria, all these places—a lot of times what happens is that families, by traditional cultural norms or whatever, end up marrying off their daughters as a way of hoping to provide protection for them but also to reduce the number of mouths they have to feed.

In the case of Iraq, what we documented with our Iraqi partners was that thousands of girls were married off under traditional marriages that were not registered, and it was against the civic law at the time. They were married by local mullahs and imams to much older men. The marriage wasn't registered. Since the marriage wasn't registered, when they had children, the children couldn't be registered. The men left these young girls after a while. Now you have thousands of undocumented Iraqi boys and girls. When they don't have birth certificates, by the way, they can't go to school either. They are undocumented. They are kind of invisible in society, and guess where they are going to go. They are going to be recruited for terrorism, for trafficking. They are going to be the most vulnerable sectors of their society. This has been tracked back to the impact of sanctions, because sanctions always affect the most vulnerable people.

What we found with the work in Iran was that the human rights activists, the women's rights activists, our entire social sector, which itself was critical of the government, was also critical of the sanctions. If we believe that we want to help local populations, then we need to listen to them. The notion that sanctions will create an environment where people are so angry with the state that they will revolt is completely false. Those who said it in the context of Iran completely misunderstood the environment, the public mood, and the public mentality.

● (1725)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Sorry to cut you off, but you would agree, therefore, that Canada's new approach when it comes to engaging with Iran is a positive thing.

Ms. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini: Yes, absolutely. I think engagement is the way to go. I also think that this is an opportunity, as you engage—if companies are going in to establish a business there—to go in with strong social policies around equal pay, child care for women who work, things like that. If you are going to have women working for you, make sure there is transport, and so forth. Basically, it's about setting a high standard of practice around equal opportunities to work in those contexts. It is a very well-educated population, and women are extremely well educated. They are over 60% of the university population. There is no reason why you shouldn't have women in the workplace. If companies are going in, or if you are making contracts with Iranian companies, to set some of these standards as norms would also be extremely helpful.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I have a question was on humanitarian aid. It's come up in the comments on challenges facing Yazidi communities in Iraq.

Could you focus a little more on that, the types of humanitarian aid you're looking for, and whether or not you think a training focus in Canadian foreign policy in northern Iraq is appropriate and would help?

Ms. Gulie Khalaf: First, I went to Iraq in November 2014 and had a chance to visit different camps and compare the situation there.

Before I go on to what I witnessed I want to let you know that just like Dalal, I was a refugee. I lived in camps in Syria after the Gulf War, so I have experienced life in camps.

But once I went into Iraq I could not help but weep at what I found. It was nothing like the camp I was in. It was heartbreaking seeing 14 people having to work and live inside two camps. Sisters and brothers, one of them was 27 years old and the other was 14 and the whole family had to fit into two tiny camps. They had two little mattresses and both of them would get extremely cold at night, extremely hot in summer, but there was nothing to help them relieve that condition.

I took pictures of food and I would be happy to send them. A family of 14 would receive a stack of rice, flour, and sugar and that was it for a month.

I went to another camp. They said they'd been here for three months and had not received anything.

Other people have commented that due to corruption not much humanitarian aid is getting to the right people, those who are definitely in need. To hold people accountable there needs to be a system in place to check into where that humanitarian aid is going .

I work with a non-profit organization and we are constantly in touch with people in Iraq and asking them what kind of help they are most in need of. Some of the things they need are basic food, basic items, but also medical attention. Because of the conditions they're living in, because of the summer heat, different issues are coming up, so they definitely need medical help.

In addition to that there are remote areas like Mount Sinjar. Because of some discrimination, because of the choice of their not wanting to work with certain political parties, the local forces there make it difficult for different non-profit organizations to go into that region and provide them with the help they need.

If the conditions that Yazidis have been living in for the past two years were okay, many of the thousands of Yazidis would not be taking the fifty-fifty chance of crossing the dangerous seas to try to get to Europe. I cannot give an exact number but there have been many cases in the past year of people drowning in hopes of crossing into Europe for a better life.

● (1730)

The Chair: That will wrap up our opportunity to speak to our three witnesses.

I understand, Dalal, you have a presentation that you want us to have.

Ms. Dalal Abdallah: Of course.

The Chair: There it is. Thank you. I want to make sure everybody has a copy.

On behalf of the committee I want to thank all of you. This is a very important part of the discussion. As you know there has been discussion in Parliament in a variety of forms about our engagement with Iraq and whether it's appropriate or not. Part of that is the whole issue of humanitarian aid, whether it's getting to people who need it the most; whether we're having the ability, as has been discussed, to do some training, militarily speaking, or through our own forces on the ground. All those things are important subjects that we touched on today, so I want to thank you very much for that.

As we always mention to witnesses, we have a short time together. If there are other issues you want to bring to our attention, please feel free to put them in writing and send them to us.

On behalf of the committee I want to thank all three of you for being here today. It was very informative.

Ms. Dalal Abdallah: Thank you.

Ms. Gulie Khalaf: Thank you.

Ms. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Colleagues, we will now go to other orders of business. We'll take a five-minute break since Mr. Miller is moving there, and he was supposed to make presentation of a motion.

I have asked Elizabeth May to make a small presentation to us about a motion we will be reviewing. I'm going to get Marc to start off by putting the notice of motion on the table. Then we will go to allowing Ms. May to make her presentation, we'll have a discussion, and we'll then go to the vote.

With that, Marc, I want to turn the floor over to you. Then we will get into the discussion and allow Ms. May to make her presentation.

Mr. Marc Miller: Thank you, Chair.

Should I read it?

The Chair: Yes. I think you should read the whole thing for the record.

● (1735)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Miller: Good afternoon, everyone.

I move the following motion:

> That, in relation to Orders of Reference from the House respecting Bills,
>
> (a) the Clerk of the Committee shall, upon the Committee receiving such an Order of Reference, write to each Member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the Committee to invite those Members to file with the Clerk of the Committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of said Order, which they would suggest that the Committee consider;
>
> (b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the Committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and
>
> (c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the Chair shall allow a Member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thanks, Marc.

Colleagues, you heard the motion. I'll need your unanimous consent to allow our colleague to make some comments, which I strongly recommend you do. I will be asking for consent to allow Ms. May to make a presentation.

Is everyone okay with that?

Go ahead, Elizabeth.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Some of you around this table may be wondering why you're bringing this motion in. What's its purpose? If you're imagining for a moment its purpose is to give members of Parliament such as myself belonging to parties of fewer than 12 MPs in the House greater access and greater rights, I'm here to make sure you understand that is not the purpose of this motion. The purpose of this motion is to take away the rights that smaller party members have or independent MPs have under our current rules, under O'Brien and Bosc rules of parliamentary procedure. I have the right, until you pass this motion, to bring forward substantive amendments at report stage, which gives the House as a whole the opportunity to consider an amendment brought forward by a member who is not part of a larger party.

Given that members of parties with fewer than 12 MPs are not allowed to sit on committee, this—I think it's really parliamentary chicanery—was invented by the last majority in Parliament to deprive particularly me of rights to bring forward amendments at report stage. What it does is create something that I would regard as a fake opportunity to present amendments because I can only provide, as the motion says, brief representations. I can't move the motion. I can't vote on the motion. What I specifically will not be able to do once this passes is present a substantive amendment to any bill from this committee at report stage. Since every committee is being asked to pass an identical motion, this will effectively deprive me of any abilities to present substantive motions and amendments to any bill at report stage.

I've lived with with this since it was first passed in the previous Parliament in the fall of 2013. It is very difficult on a very personal basis. It is impossible to get to two clause-by-clause meetings that are happening at the same time. I've prepared amendments and run to a committee in the last Parliament only to find that they had finished clause-by-clause because I was at clause-by-clause in a different committee and can't be in two places at once.

I know that you've been told to vote for this, but I thought I would try to see whether or not the words of the mandate letters that went to the government House leader are meaningful at all. These said that we're going to respect other parties, opposition members of Parliament are going to be respected, that there will be a spirit of generosity, and that there will be a willingness to let members of committees vote independently of being told how to vote by their party higher-ups.

That's what's at stake here, and I'd be very grateful if this motion did not pass.

● (1740)

The Chair: Thank you.

Colleagues, are there any questions for Ms. May?

Garnett.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's more a separate intervention than a question.

The Chair: You're allowed to make interventions about the motion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I won't necessarily phrase this as a question, but I'd be interested in Ms. May's response to this.

My understanding of the way the process works is that members of recognized parties cannot under the current rules propose substantive amendments at report stage because they are expected to be able to do so through the committee process. Effectively, the existing rules give members of smaller parties, unrecognized parties, or independent members of Parliament an opportunity to move amendments at a stage and in a way that members of recognized parties cannot.

Of course, you as a member of Parliament cannot be in two places at once, but neither can I. If I want to propose substantive amendments, possibly ones that other members of my party don't agree with, at two different committees, I can't do that either under the current rules. It would seem to me to make sense that either we let everybody move substantive amendments at report stage in the House or we have that process happen at committee, but we don't have one set of rules for.... Just because I am part of a party that is represented on all committees doesn't necessarily mean that I, as an individual, would agree with everything that everyone else does on every other committee and I might want to move amendments at report stage that I can't.

I'd be curious for your comments on that.

Ms. Elizabeth May: You're quite right, Garnett, absolutely right. In parliamentary history, for the vast majority of the years since 1867, in fact, right up until the early 2000s, every member of Parliament had a right to submit substantive or deleterious amendments at report stage.

In 1999, the Reform Party objected to the Nisga'a treaty and brought forward over 700 amendments. You may actually recall this. They were in the guise of substantive, in that they weren't mere deletions, but they were essentially, mostly frivolous and vexatious, changing a semicolon here, changing a word here or there. It tied up report stage on the Nisga'a treaty in a significant way.

At the time, the Liberal majority went to change the rules. They actually changed the rules. They didn't do these motions committee by committee, which I regard as removing, by stealth, the rights of MPs. In the past, the larger party did change those rules, and said, “Look, you had a chance, Reform Party, in committee to provide any amendments you wanted to the Nisga'a treaty. This is an attempt to misuse...”, etc. I think there would have been other ways to handle this, such as by saying it isn't a substantive amendment if it isn't substantially different in a context or content sense.

Instead, what they did, the parliamentary process of the larger parties, was to say that this is how it's going to work from now on. If you, as an individual, had access to make changes as a party, which I think is also offensive.... In this place we're all equal, in theory, and the fact that we surrender identity to party status isn't required by Westminster parliamentary democracy or our Constitution. It's a problem of parties having too much power.

They decided to say that if you, as an MP, had access through your party to make amendments at committee, you can't get two kicks at the can, and come back and make them at report stage. By inference, that meant that members in smaller parties such as the Green Party, or the Bloc, or any independents, or for that matter, the NDP once, when they were down to nine members.... Those members not having access to sit on committees as permanent members had the right—and I still do under the rules—to bring forward amendments at report stage.

This motion was invented, as I mentioned, in the previous Parliament, in order to prevent members of Parliament in smaller parties from bringing forward amendments at report stage.

I would agree with you entirely. There is no reason in principle that, in the practice of passing legislation in this place, we should deprive any member of their right to present amendments at report stage. That's been done, and done in the rules themselves. Without changing our rules as they appear in our parliamentary rules of procedures, of Standing Orders, and so on, this is an attempt, committee by committee, under the fiction that committees are the masters of their own process, for the Prime Minister's Office or the government House leader to insist on a change to deprive smaller party members of Parliament of their rights.

● (1745)

The Chair: Thank you.

Hélène, do you have some comments before we wrap this up?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Yes, I just have a very brief comment. I do understand the problem we live through sometimes with, let's say, enormous numbers of amendments. I tend to agree with Ms. May that there's a bit of a mishmash in our rules. If we want to look at the rules, we should look at the rules themselves in a different context from, at the end of the day, in a committee meeting. I won't be able to support that motion. Thank you.

The Chair: Garnett, be short, because I think some of these members have another committee they are supposed to be at. Apparently, I'm supposed to be at it myself, but keep going.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I was just going to say that there would be value, maybe, in exploring other mechanisms for preventing deleterious amendments. But without the passage of this motion, it would seem that there's still very much the possibility that the same tactic could be used by an unrecognized party or an independent to use that method of hundreds of amendments to bog down the process.

It seems that the change that was made at the time under the previous Liberal government didn't entirely solve the problem, while at the same time potentially creating other ones. I just think the value of this motion is that it at least establishes some consistency for the time being with the rules that apply to members of recognized parties.

The Chair: I'm going to cut it off there.

Elizabeth, thank you very much for your presentation.

Yes, I was the minister in charge of the Nisga'a treaty when the Reform Party brought in enough amendments to keep us busy and voting for over two days, so there was a particular view by government that it was not a very good way to govern, so there were some changes made.

This is a discussion that I think we're going to continue to have.

The motion has been put, so I want to go to the vote. We can just do it by a show of hands.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Colleagues, we will see you on Thursday, when ministers will be in front of the committee. Have a good night.

The meeting is adjourned.