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Chair

The Honourable Robert Nault

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•(1555)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we have a briefing on the 2015 United Nations Population Fund state of world population report.

Before us is Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, executive director. We want to welcome this person to the committee and turn it over for 10 minutes or so. Then we'll get into questions and I'm sure we'll have lots of them.

Dr. Osotimehin.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Honourable members, good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

On behalf of all of us at UNFPA, I would like to thank you, the government, and the people of Canada for the steadfast support that we have received to the mandate of UNFPA in delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

We look forward to continuing this partnership as we begin working with countries to implement the global goals agreed to by the international community in September 2015.

Let me quickly remind you that it was actually not one set of agreements last year; there were three agreements: first, financing for development which happened in July in Addis Ababa; second, the September agreement on the goals themselves which happened in New York; and third, the climate agreement which happened in Paris. We need to take the three together, because they all work together in terms of going forward for a sustainable planet.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development calls on all of us to leave no one behind and to start with those furthest behind. All too often these are the ones that we never even reach and when you drill it down, the demography of that are women and girls.

Let's look at adolescent girls. There is overwhelming evidence that investing in adolescent girls, in their education, health and well-being, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights, yields huge returns. Whether girls flourish with opportunities or languish in poverty can determine the long-term development prospects of their countries.

Ensuring that girls are able to exercise their rights, can stay in school, not be married off at the age of 10 or 11, have the skills and

opportunity to join the workforce, are free from violence, for example, female genital mutilation, free from abuse and exploitation, for example, trafficking, is essential for their own well-being, but most important, it is the critical foundation for the health and prosperity of families, communities, and nations.

We need to give these girls unfettered access to comprehensive sex education, remove laws that impede their access to information and services, including contraceptive services, and as I said, protect them from child marriage and other harmful practices that keep girls out of school.

Two examples of the programs that are yielding tangible results in reaching those furthest behind in regard to adolescent girls are the the action for adolescent girls initiative and the global program to accelerate action to end child marriage. In Niger, for example, adolescents who have participated in these programs are married later. Among those who have married, the contraceptive prevalence rate has risen from 18% to 34%. We're able to assist them to actually take charge of their lives and do something more meaningful.

In these circumstances, Canada's support makes this result possible. We would like to acknowledge the Government of Canada for doing this.

•(1600)

What about family planning and UNFPA supplies?

It is widely acknowledged that family planning is one of the best investments we can make for human development. Indeed, I think it is accepted now that it is the most important and most effective intervention in human development. When women and couples can choose when to have children, women's rights are advanced. Women and their families are healthier and nations and economies are stronger and more sustainable. My argument all the time is that family planning is not a health intervention, it's an intervention to empower women, and we will see it in that light. The rights of women to make choices, to take control of their bodies, and make decisions about themselves are critical to human development.

UNFPA supplies is the largest supplier of contraceptives worldwide in the public sector. Since 2007 we have provided contraceptives that have saved over 700,000 lives and billions of dollars in direct health care spending in countries with the highest maternal mortality and highest unmet need for family planning. Last year alone we helped some 33 million women in more than 46 countries receive access to modern contraceptives and reproductive health services, potentially averting an estimated nine million unintended pregnancies and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of women and newborns. Unfortunately, an estimated shortfall of about \$1.2 billion over the next five years could jeopardize our ability to help countries reach additional women and girls with modern contraception and will make it difficult even to maintain existing funding of family services.

Let me give a statistic. Today we estimate that 225 million women in union want family planning and they're not getting it. In union, that is, they are married, so they need family planning. They're not getting it. That number, 225 million, is huge. When you look at it, you look at cost per capita. It's so small, less than \$25 per capita. What we are looking for per capita is small and I would like to think in these hallowed chambers you believe that the life of a woman is worth more than \$25. We're using this to give you a sense of where the needs are.

By resuming the support of this program, which Canada did yesterday, making contraceptive commodity security a reality for women and girls around the world, we're very glad. The amount might be small, but I think it's a mega step forward in terms of the commitment of Canada. Canada has always supported our contraceptive commodity security. This will improve lives and save lives. It will also positively impact across generations, ending poverty and helping boost economies.

Let me share with you a couple of stories. I think it will put things into perspective when we talk about real lives.

I'll tell you the story of Aisha. She was 12 when her parents took her out of school to help with the family farm. She was married when she was 14 and had a child a year later. This is a story that we hear almost every day for those of us who go out in the field. For many girls the story continues predictably: more children, fewer opportunities, poorer health for her—the mother—and her children. What you find in a circumstance like this is that she'll probably end up with six or seven children. They have children almost every year. If she survives, she's in chronic poor health; if she doesn't survive her children are orphans. This doesn't have to be. We can reverse that, and we can help girls like Aisha.

• (1605)

Aisha was one of the lucky ones. When she had a baby, she brought her baby to a health clinic for immunization, and when she got there she received information about family planning. The options they offered were supported by the UNFPA family planning site in our community. She went there and she received information on family planning, and she was able to have a breathing space for herself so that she could look after her baby and recover her health.

She now educates girls and women in her community about the options and has been able to go back to school and continue her education. We also assist some of these girls in going back to school

so that they can pick up skills. As long as they have skills, they are able to do things for themselves. This is how we help to build stronger, more resilient families, communities, and countries, one Aisha at a time.

A big part of the work we do is in humanitarian assistance. Nearly 60 million people have been uprooted by conflict, the largest number since the end of the Second World War.

Sexual and reproductive health care and protection from sexual and gender-based violence are critical for women everywhere, but especially for those who are fleeing war zones or are in war zones. Women don't stop having babies when a conflict breaks out or a disaster strikes. Women don't stop having their regular monthly periods because of disaster. Many of them give birth on the run without even the most basic items for a clean and safe delivery. Natural disasters and conflicts can wipe out medical facilities, and the ensuing chaos can heighten women's exposure to violence. In conflicts women are more exposed to violence than in ordinary circumstances. So, it's a whole continuum of violence, lack of services, illness, and death.

I believe each of you has a copy of the report, "The State of the World Population 2015". It calls on governments and aid groups everywhere to move women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights from the back seat to the front seat of the world's humanitarian agenda. We selected this because we believe that it's something we need to bring to the forefront.

In Istanbul in May there's going to be the World Humanitarian Summit. We needed to do this so that everybody would be conscious of where women's issues are within our framework. The statistics are important. Three in five maternal deaths occur in humanitarian and fragile contexts, three in five. More women die from maternal mortality in crisis than in peace time. Every day 507 women and adolescent girls die during pregnancy and childbirth in crises and conflicts. More than 100 million people need humanitarian assistance this year. Around 26 million of them are women and girl adolescents of child-bearing age.

Two weeks ago, we marked the birth of the 5,000th baby, a healthy girl named Rima at the UNFPA-supported clinic at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. These are Syrian refugees who have come to Jordan. We have offered services there since 2013. We were able to take the 5,000th delivery there. What's significant for us is that since we opened in 2013, no woman has died and no child has died. All 5,000 children have lived and all the women have lived. This is a source of pride for us at UNFPA as a humanitarian agency. I'm not going to get into the politics of it, because this is something we should all find in Syria itself, but suffice to say we're saving lives.

• (1610)

Rima and her two-year-old sister, that is the newborn and her sister, were born in the Zaatari camp, which is also where their parents were married. I don't know if you know that each camp.... You don't want to start a camp because a camp lasts 19 years before you can round it off. People don't want to go home because they're afraid of what's going on at home, so the new normal in many parts of the world is a camp. We need to continue to provide assistance so that we can ensure that people can lead a good life.

Last year alone we provided reproductive health equipment, medicine, and supplies that served 35 million women and adolescent girls in crisis-affected countries. In 2014, we provided contraceptives and family planning supplies targeting nearly 21 million women, men, and adolescents in humanitarian settings from Syria to Yemen to South Sudan. I have to thank the Government of Canada for giving us \$50 million over the next five years to actually provide midwifery services in South Sudan so that we can save the lives of women there. That was announced yesterday.

We're working to ensure safe births and safety from fear and sexual violence. With humanitarian needs increasing, and women and girls' vulnerabilities in these situations disproportionately high, I'd like to urge Canada to support UNFPA in scaling up this life-saving work.

Let me end by thanking the government and people of Canada for their long-standing political and financial support to UNFPA, particularly in the areas I've mentioned: adolescents, family planning, and the issues around disaster-risk reduction. With your help we're going to ensure that more girls like Aisha are able to stay in school and out of wedlock, and can avoid motherhood in childhood. And we can ensure that more women will deliver safely wherever they may be and that more babies like Rima will be born healthy even under the most difficult circumstances.

Honourable members, there are 59 million girls who will cross the threshold of adolescence this year. When you look at what we promised as the international community for the sustainable development goals, we have the opportunity to provide the best possible circumstances and ambience for them to grow and be the best that they can be. With your support, we can ensure that they grow up healthy and safe, empowered, educated, and employed. When you do so, they'll transform the world. I know we can fulfill their dreams and their aspirations, and I believe that together we can build a just, inclusive, sustainable world.

Thank you for listening.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Doctor.

We're going to go right to questions, so I'll go to Mr. Kent, and then over to Mr. Miller.

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

Thank you, Dr. Osotimehin, for this update.

I must say I'm sure that everyone on the committee respects you greatly for taking on the challenge. Your job is incredibly challenging, given the statistics that you quote of the 100 million people around the world in need of humanitarian support, 25% of whom are young women, and the fact that there are 61 million plus or minus on any given day displaced people among whom the most vulnerable are women and young girls.

My first question has to do with a request that you made yesterday in a newspaper interview suggesting that Canada re-engage with Nigeria, with your country of birth, on the long journey to rescue the school girls and suggesting that Canada had skills, abilities, and resources that might help in locating and rescuing the school girls.

I wonder if you saw the article that was published today on a noted Canadian diplomat, of whom we are incredibly proud, Robert Fowler, who himself was a hostage for 130 days and was held by al-Qaeda in the Maghreb, but he was kidnapped in Niger. He said that he was actually skeptical that Canada could in fact provide the sort of help and resources that you suggested to rescue the school girls. I wonder what your response would be to that.

• (1615)

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: It was a telephone interview I had for that and I told her that what Canada can provide, like any of the developed economies, is logistics and intelligence, not boots on the ground, not military assistance. You could, for example, provide cameras to take photographs of the area where this is. You could provide that assistance. I know that around that particular part of the world, intelligence is gathered every day as to movement of people. That's what I meant. That's the sort of thing I was talking about. It was a generic thing. It wasn't a specific Canadian intervention I thought would make the difference.

I was very fortunate to be with the Secretary-General in 2014, and now I can talk about it. I was with him and we went to dinner with Prime Minister Harper and this came up, and he said that's the best they can do, that they can assist the Nigerian military, Cameroon military, Niger military to build capacity to be able to search and rescue them, but I don't think that meant in terms of Canada going in there and rescuing the girls.

Hon. Peter Kent: Okay, thank you.

I have another question, and this is a question of gender. The topic today is gender, it's International Women's Day.

In my former life as a journalist working in many parts of the world it seems that the state of women and girls is very often most likely to improve when women like Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President of Liberia, are in positions of authority, and influence, and power.

I'm just wondering if you could comment on that, because we've invested mightily over the years, both Canada individually and the United Nations with your fund, in some of the countries of the United Nations. However, in a good number of countries governed by men, the improvements we seek have not been found, whereas we have seen great progress in Liberia since President Sirleaf was elected in 2006, I believe.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: I don't want to be simplistic about it, but I don't think it's about government led by women. I think it's about communities deciding that gender parity is going to be a major issue.

When I look at the United Kingdom, it has had only one woman prime minister, but gender parity is a concern and everybody works at it. The United States has never had either a president or a vice-president who was a woman, but that doesn't imply that gender parity is not an issue. I do know the historical perspective of Canada, but what I'm saying is that gender parity as a principle doesn't have to flow from the head of government. I think it's a matter that communities, societies, and nations have to take on as a principle to pursue.

When you look at what has happened in the Nordic countries, you see a deliberate effort for this to happen, and I think that's where Canada is failing in large part. If you then follow what has happened in the intergovernmental process and the political process and public policy, you see a commitment by governments to several things—CIDA, Beijing, the ICPD agenda—that actually provide them with the tools to domesticate and take this forward.

In my country they even voted to say that 30% of parliamentarians should be women. In a country like Rwanda, 60% of parliamentarians are women. I think it's about a national consciousness. I think it's about making sure that we mobilize communities, and mobilize men and women to look at governance from a gender-neutral perspective, and I think change will come.

• (1620)

The Chair: Mr. Miller.

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, Lib.): It's International Women's Day, and in that spirit, I would propose that you permit me to switch my time with Hélène. She can take her six minutes, and I would be glad to do that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Thank you very much. That's very kind.

My thanks to Dr. Osotimehin for his presentation.

[*English*]

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: Sorry, I don't speak French.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: I can continue in English.

I found your last intervention particularly interesting. Congratulations also on the announcement yesterday by the Government of Canada, which I think was good news, and for the work you're doing.

Congratulations again. I don't know if it's the right word, because I don't think anybody can speak as eloquently as you do about family planning, and it's important not only as a matter of health but also as a basic social issue. We know it's true that when women have control of their reproductive lives they're more productive in society. We have a healthier society and healthier babies too.

But there are a lot of challenges and some barriers. You mentioned some of them, such as the issue of the services. You also mentioned laws, and I was wondering if you were doing anything in that respect. We also know that one of the big challenges is cultural. I'm not pointing at any country, because even here in Canada we have cultural barriers. I think it's 26% women in our Parliament, so we're not yet up to the level of Nigeria in that respect.

Could you comment on those three levels?

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: Thank you very much.

Let me say this. The way we work the fund is one country at a time, understanding the context within the country itself and also understanding communities within countries, because not every country is homogeneous and indeed, Canada is not. To an extent, being able to understand what the levers are within a community, particularly in terms of family planning is what enables us to penetrate and to offer services. I can tell you that we've scored very significant successes in many parts of the world just by being able to get down to communities and understanding and working with communities.

When you look at a country like Indonesia, it's the largest Muslim community in the world. It has a 50% to 60% contraceptive rate. That's good. We need to do better, but we've done well there. When you look at countries like Tunisia and Algeria, we've done well, because they're Muslims, but they have accepted it. We had success in Egypt until the fundamentalists came, but we also made progress.

I don't think it's a question of religion or whatever. I think it's our understanding of it and our ability to sit and work with people.

One of the things that I believe is also important and which the last questioner asked was on political support, political will, and leadership. Once you have the political will and leadership, things move better than you expect.

I was talking to one diplomat from Bangladesh last week. Bangladesh is one of the poor countries in the world. It has reduced the number of children per woman from 6.2 to 2.5—family planning—and it's a Muslim country, a totally Muslim country. Bangladesh has about four million women in the workforce now, so education is there. Things are moving.

I think it's just our ability to understand the context and also work with systems on the ground, government being in the lead. I think we can make a difference.

In my country, and I say this, there is a difference. If you look outside of Nigeria, progress is being made. If you look at some parts of Niger, progress is being made. About two or three weeks ago, we had a teleconference with religious leaders from northern Nigeria. They said that they were prepared to work with us on family planning. I think it is an understanding.

One of the things that I think is there that we still have to work with and that I totally see is an ability to work with young people, because even parents in modern economies don't like to talk to their children about contraception. In a sense that's the basis we need to work with, but work with them we have to, because when you look at the demographic of those who die from unsafe abortions, 40% to 50% of them are young people who are not married. We need to save them from themselves and we need to also reach them with services.

• (1625)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Yes. In fact, I was very interested by your story about Aisha, and she's now teaching her peers, I would say.

How do you work with grassroots women's organizations? Do you have programs to support young women like Aisha?

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: Truly, we do, because what we do as the UNFPA is provide resources through channels to government organizations and also to civil society organizations, the IPPF and similar organizations, to be able to go to communities and work with people. That is very, very productive.

We think and I believe that in more sophisticated communities working with young people, using cellphones and information across cellphones is going to increase and liberalize the space and give them more information, so they know where to go and they know where to get services.

We're experimenting with that and I believe that's what is going to happen.

The Chair: Thank you.

The way we're working this, Hélène, is that we gave you the Liberal round so you have your own. We're all good with that.

We're going to go to the second round, okay?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Okay.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Miller in the second round, because the Liberals start again.

Mr. Marc Miller: Doctor, walk us through the life cycle of a contribution from a state for a random amount of, say, \$81 million.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Marc Miller: If you could, just walk us through the life cycle, if you will, of a contribution from a country. Any amount would do. What portion is attributed to which indicators that you measure as success as part of your reports? Which ones, for example, go to administrative costs? Where does the final amount end up, and how does that tie in to your indicators of success? I'm sorry, but it's a multi-faceted question.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: Well, I'm going to have to do this. Canada is on the board of the UNFPA, and what we do on a four-year basis is put together a strategic plan. The strategic plan actually has outputs and outcomes that are approved by the board, of which Canada is one member.

Ideally, what we seek support for from our donors is to give money to us as core to enable us to work on those outcomes and outputs that we all agreed to. For example, what Canada did yesterday was give some money to that core. That core enables our establishment to do the work in the strategic plan and also to be able to report back on those results.

Beyond that, as we've seen in the last five or six years, many of our donors aren't actually giving us support beyond that core support. Indeed, when I started as executive director, what we had was more core support than non-core. Now what we have is more non-core than core. As for what that means, as I said, there is the adolescent girls global program, for example, or the early marriage program. Canada will give us money for it, but it will give us money for it directly to report on what we are doing to stop early and forced marriage.

For those indicators, I agreed completely with the donors. For example, on what we spend in this area, I say that I need to be able to provide resources for the dignity of women and girls. I can tell you how many thousands of those dignity kits I want to buy, and I can show you evidence for it.

In a sense, we have two streams of funding. One of them is core and enables us to implement strategic planning that is agreed to by donors and all, and the other one is the non-core, which actually gives us money for specifics in terms of what we do on the field. I've given two examples in terms of conflict and in terms of adolescent girls' education.

• (1630)

Mr. Marc Miller: Thank you. I was originally going to ask you about contraception, but I think you focused on that.

I want to focus on the other bucket indicators that you put at the back. Which one of those, if there is any, and if it's a number of indicators, is the better correlation as to whether you've achieved your goal in development?

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: That would be very difficult, because you're asking me to choose one.

We have a number of indicators. If you ask me where I stand and what I see, I think it's the empowerment of adolescent girls: their ability to go to school and stay in school, to not be violated, protecting their rights, making sure they don't get pregnant, and making sure they can actually be educated and get a job. That is probably one of the most significant things we can do in the life of a girl and a community. It's long term, but I think it's significant. I think that's the sort of thing I would like to see.

Also, when you take on the 2030 agenda, it's probably the most significant thing to do, because it speaks not only to education. It speaks to health, good governance, the rights of people, and to things like gender-based violence prevention and gender parity. There's a whole lot of package around that, which I believe would be important. Of course, within that frame are also comprehensive sexuality education, services, and contraception. It all comes together.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you very much. It's fortunate to have you here on International Women's Day to talk about some very important work. I'm sure all of us in this committee agree on the importance of protecting and advancing the fundamental dignity of women and girls all over the world.

I want to ask you a question about the activity of the UN Population Fund. Maybe that goes in a bit of a different direction. Does the UN Population Fund, in any case, support the use of coercive family planning techniques?

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: We don't. There is not even one occasion where that has occurred.

•(1635)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You're telling me that never in the history of the UN Population Fund has there ever been support for coercive family planning.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: No.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Maybe I'll come at this in a different way. What is your view of the history of China's one-child policy? Would you regard that as coercive family planning?

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: China's one-child policy is the national policy of China. We were not part of that policy. That's their policy.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Am I incorrect in my belief that the UN Population Fund provided significant funding and support to the one-child policy? It was \$50 million in 1979.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: No. We never provided.... The UN Population Fund worked in districts in China to try to persuade China to relax the one-child policy so that they could allow women to make choices in family planning.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sir, according to the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute and a study they published in 2000, the UN Population Fund provided a \$50-million grant to China in 1979 that was used at the outset of the program to establish the information gathering system.

According to a report prepared by that research institute, the China Population Information and Research Center was established in 1980 with assistance from UNFPA. Is that information incorrect?

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: You are talking of gathering information. That's very different from a policy that actually coerced people. That's a different thing.

We work in China. We have to work in China. China has the largest population in the world, so we are there, but we are not part of the one-child policy.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is it true that in 1983, the UN Population Fund gave an award of over \$12,000 to China's family planning chief? Is that correct or not?

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: China's family planning—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: To the person in charge of family planning in China.... Has the UN Population Fund ever recognized or awarded China with respect to its one-child policy?

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: No, not that I know of.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Not that you know of.

In 1989, a UN Population Fund official in Beijing told a Chinese news agency that U.S. charges of coercion within the Chinese program were "groundless".

Do you think that official was correct to say that charges of coercion within the program were groundless?

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: In areas that we worked we had no coercion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Could you maybe identify the areas within China where coercion didn't occur as part of the one-child policy? My understanding of the program is that it was quite consistent across the country at least initially in its application.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: When countries decide to put national programs in place, it is not our place. We can advise them. They decide to do what they have to do.

There are many countries where we have been able to change policies. As you've seen, China itself has decided to change its policy. This is part of the advocacy that we have put in place.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It seems to me, sir, respectfully, that if after awarding the program and giving a substantial amount of seed money in the early years—

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: We did not give seed money to the one-child policy program.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You gave it to the information gathering program in the context of—

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: Yes. The information gathering program is a different thing. If you don't have information, how do you then take positions?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Respectfully, sir, your association was involved in the setting up of the information—

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: No, we are not an association—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Pardon me. Your organization—

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: We are an intergovernmental organization funded by the United Nations.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you. Your organization was involved in providing funding to an information gathering system that was necessary to facilitate the exercise of the program. You awarded the program, and you have yet to—

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: That was necessary—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sir, I'm sorry, but I control this time. Those are the rules of the committee.

Respectfully, sir, your organization has yet to apologize for what is, I think, very concerning involvement in coercive family planning programs in China. If you simply took a step back and recognized the coercive nature of those programs, and apologized for the activity of your organization in defending the program, I think that would clear the air. There is no doubt that good and important work is being done in this respect, but I have grave concerns about this history and, what seems to me, an unwillingness to face up to it.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: No, no, we have worked in China with great dignity and respect for the Chinese government. We have never been involved in coercive issues of family planning. There have been at least five congressional delegations from the United States that have gone to China, have come back, and they have shown quite clearly that we were no part of it. We have their reports.

• (1640)

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Under-Secretary-General, thank you so much for being here today. We're very lucky to have you here testifying to the committee as a witness.

I want to ask you a question about climate change. The report that your organization has put out—and thank you for providing us with a copy—talks about, obviously, the disproportionate negative impact that disasters and conflict have on women. But what about climate change? What are your thoughts on that and its potential to have a very disproportionate impact on women? Naturally, the question from there would be that if there is, in fact, a disproportionate impact on women, what does that mean for states that are serious about pursuing climate change policies?

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: We have to take the issues of climate change, SDGs, and financial development together because they all go together. Climate change is a major disaster that's ongoing. When you look at it in terms of what it means for women and girls, it is a great disaster.

I come from a part of the world where I've seen desertification of large tracts of land, where women and girls have to go long distances to get firewood or water to have a livelihood. In a sense, what it means is that the girls are taken out of school because that's what they have to do, and women also lose livelihoods because of that.

We cannot separate one from the other. What climate change does to women and girls, in terms of what it does to their livelihoods and poverty, is a major issue. We have to take it together and we have to

work on it in terms of the choices they make in their lives. I believe that the solutions for the planet will also affect their livelihoods to ensure that women can make better choices for their lives.

For example, I look at a region of the world, the Lake Chad region. Lake Chad is now 10% of what it used to be. All of the fish and the agriculture are gone. We have a plan at the United Nations that actually can feed into it to ensure that this lake can come back and bring back livelihoods. Those are the sorts of things we have to do.

In implementing the SDGs and the climate agenda, we have to bring them all together, because it is not one or the other; it's everything together.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I want to ask you about the importance of midwives particularly in the developing world. Yesterday's announcement did focus on that.

Can you tell us, first of all, how they contribute to the health of women? What progress has been made in strengthening midwifery services in the developing world? What else needs to be done on that front? I know it's a very general question.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: Yes, but I think it's important because the three parts of the health system are important: the human resources, the supply chain management system, and the provision of a social protection floor. Those are the three things you require to maintain a health system, and of course, the midwifery part talks to human resources.

We've seen that in countries where you have adequate manpower, you reduce maternal mortality considerably. I'll give you an example. In Ethiopia we have contributed to produce about 38,000 to 40,000 community health workers. These health workers live within the communities in which they work, and in those communities they look after antenatal care. They look after women who are to deliver. They look after HIV tests, immunization, and contraceptive applications. In 10 years of work in Ethiopia we have seen a reduction in maternal mortality of more than 60%, and child mortality by 60%, and we have increased contraceptive acceptance by 400%. So they work, and I think it's the way to go.

In Sudan, which is one of the most difficult countries to work in, there are no midwives on the ground. What we are getting from the Government of Canada is to train these midwives and we are putting together a team to enable that to happen. We're also working with the Canadian Association of Midwives to do this effectively. We believe that if we put the midwives in place and try to get the other pieces in place, the most difficult part might be providing the social protection floor. We will try to do the supply chain management system so that the midwives can work effectively, and if we do that, we save lives.

•(1645)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much. Once again, we're very lucky to have you here today, and the report is very instructive. It's going to give policy-makers a really good idea about what's needed in the future.

The Chair: Mr. Under-Secretary, thank you very much. We'll have to leave it at that for today. I understand you have a flight, and we have another group of witnesses today. I want to thank you very much, and I look forward to your continued work. Working with young women and girls in the countries that need your help is probably one of the most important roles that I can think of, for sure.

Thank you very much.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: May I make a last statement?

The Chair: Yes, you sure can. Go ahead.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin: I recognize the importance of members of Parliament. I used to be a minister, and ministers have no power. Ministers depend on MPs because MPs appropriate resources. MPs are the ones who look at a project and decide what goes where. They also have oversight on resources that are provided, so they have transparency and accountability.

I recognize this is the most important chamber in government and I want to thank you for what you continue to do, not just for Canada, but for girls and women around the world.

I thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Doctor.

Let's take a two-minute break and then we'll have the group of witnesses from the department come forward.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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•(1650)

The Chair: I'd ask all of you to come to order.

I know we're running a little late, but as long as the witnesses bear with us, we'll make sure that we get a chance to hear them. Again, we are meeting pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) for a study on women, peace, and security.

Our witnesses this afternoon are officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development. They are Tamara Guttman, director general, stabilization and reconstruction task force; Julie Shouldice, acting director general, social development; and Anthony Anderson, senior policy adviser, conflict policy and security coherence secretariat, stabilization and reconstruction task force. Mr. Anderson has the longest title.

I understand Ms. Guttman is going to start and will make the presentation on behalf of our officials, and then we'll get right into the questions.

So Tamara, fire away.

Ms. Tamara Guttman (Director General, Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you so much everyone for having us here today.

[*Translation*]

I am truly honoured, especially so on International Women's Day. It is a real pleasure. Thank you.

[*English*]

I welcome the opportunity to address the committee on behalf of Global Affairs Canada on the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. As the chair has mentioned, I'm very pleased to be joined by my colleague Julie Shouldice, the director general of social development at Global Affairs, as well as Tony Anderson, who is our senior adviser on this issue.

The implementation of the WPS agenda by the government is very much a partnership effort among Global Affairs, the Department of National Defence, and the RCMP, as well as, of course, our important civil society partners and those in the international arena. I understand that the committee will hear from representatives of National Defence and the RCMP at a later date on their program activities, which we hope will provide a more comprehensive picture of all the work the government is doing.

I'm going to offer a few initial comments guided by the topics that the committee submitted to us, and then we will be very pleased to respond to questions.

[*Translation*]

The international WPS agenda is defined by United Nations Security resolution 1325, adopted in the year 2000, and seven subsequent resolutions. The WPS agenda recognizes that women and girls face challenges in situations of armed conflict and other emergencies. Women and men often experience conflict and other emergency situations in very different ways. Further, women and girls very often suffer inordinately because of their culturally assigned gender roles.

Sexual violence is often perpetrated on them, including as a tactic of war and terror, as we unfortunately continue to see in the Middle East and Africa. The abuse of the human rights of women and girls is exacerbated in conflict and emergencies, including elevated levels of child, early and forced marriage.

Women may experience discrimination or violence that limits their access to humanitarian assistance. In particular, survivors of sexual violence may have difficulty in accessing necessary medical, socio-economic and psychological services.

In conflict-affected and fragile societies, women frequently do not have opportunities for meaningful roles, in particular on peace and security matters, where they could be active agents to prevent and resolve the conflicts that affect their lives and well-being.

•(1655)

[English]

The solutions proposed by the Security Council resolutions on WPS are compelling and quite simple in concept:

First, ensure that women and men are given equal opportunities, even if this means that different treatment must be used to achieve those ends.

Second, empower women to participate meaningfully in the economic, political, and social lives of their communities and countries, including on issues of peace and security.

Third, fully respect the rights of women and girls.

Fourth, prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence by assisting women and girls with reintegration into their communities, by giving them access to justice, and by holding perpetrators to account.

Finally, apply gender-based analysis to all conflict prevention and resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation activities, to develop solutions that are more likely to lead to sustainable peace and prosperity.

Gender equality, respect for human rights, justice, and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as men and boys, are core Canadian values and ones for which we are globally recognized. Canada is well placed to take a leadership role in international efforts to promote and implement the WPS agenda, and we do. We have a long record of support for this agenda, beginning with drafting Resolution 1325, which was passed in the year 2000, when we were a member of the Security Council.

Let me list a few examples of what we are doing now to take a leadership role in the UN.

Canada initiated and continues to chair in New York the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, where we play a coordinating role among interested member states, civil society, and the Security Council on these matters.

We also chair the working subcommittee of the General Assembly committee 34 on UN peacekeeping, where we coordinate the agenda, including for WPS issues, and take strong national positions, including in support of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers.

Canada leads in the drafting of the annual resolution of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on the elimination of all violence against women, which includes language on violence against women and girls in the context of conflict and emergency situations.

We provide financial assistance for the work of UN women and to the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura. Members may recall that we invited Ms. Bangura to address the anti-ISIL coalition conference that took place in Quebec City last July, where she gave compelling testimony on the results of her recently completed mission to study sexual violence in conflict in the Middle East.

I will also quickly mention that Canada leads efforts to eliminate child, early, and forced marriage, CEFM, which is exacerbated in

conflict, emergency, and displacement situations. Since October 2013, we have committed over \$80 million in programming to end CEFM.

[Translation]

The challenges in implementing this agenda in conflict, post-conflict and other emergency situations are enduring. Some are all too obvious, including the horrendous abuse of women and girls at the hands of war lords and terrorist groups such as ISIL and Boko Haram.

Often, social and cultural norms in weak and fragile states discriminate against women and deny them access to services, resources and justice, and such practices are often embedded in national law. These factors can combine to deny women agency in peace and reconciliation processes.

Discrimination and lack of access are often even worse for women of certain groups, such as indigenous or rural women. In addition, national security forces themselves can be perpetrators of sexual violence and this can create a culture of impunity for such offences.

•(1700)

[English]

Canada does have a range of tools and programs that we use to address these issues in situations of concern. The stabilization and reconstruction task force, or START, in Global Affairs Canada, which I head up, develops Canadian WPS policy and coordinates our diplomatic efforts to promote this agenda. We also run the global peace and security fund and support the work of various organizations focused on addressing the impact of sexual and gender-based violence. For example, in ISIL-affected areas in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, we have funded a range of projects to provide support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and to aid in investigations of related crimes.

We are also, for example, improving camp security for internally displaced persons and refugees, especially women and girls in northern Iraq. We are working to empower women as active participants in peace processes, and we are very pleased to be able to support the recently launched UN-led peace negotiations for Syria by providing expert female advisers to assist the Syrian opposition High Negotiations Committee.

We also facilitate the deployment of Canadian police officers from across Canada to United Nations and other peace operations through the Canadian police arrangement. I am pleased to note that currently, 25% of Canadian police deployed through the CPA are female, which surpasses the UN target of 20%.

Since 2014, Canadian police have helped to deliver training to women police peacekeeping candidates in a range of developing countries in Africa. We also deploy to international peace operations in women, peace, and security related roles. For example, right now there is a Canadian female police officer serving as a gender adviser in Ukraine on their police reform.

In Haiti, Canadian police have been delivering training alongside Norway to improve the Haitian national police's capacity to investigate cases related to sexual and gender-based violence.

[*Translation*]

Let me briefly mention that Canadian humanitarian assistance includes the provision of protection and assistance specific to the needs of women and girls in emergency situations, such as those affected by the crises in Syria and Iraq. Canadian development assistance also addresses gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Canada works with experienced partners in countries such as Haiti, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo to address the impacts of conflict on women and girls, to prevent and respond to sexual violence and to strengthen the capacity of women to participate in political and peace-building processes.

[*English*]

Canada is working with the United Nations to strengthen its response to sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. We encourage greater transparency in the handling of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, and urge all troop and police contributors to uphold their obligations to investigate misconduct. We have warmly welcomed the very recent appointment of Ms. Jane Holl Lute as the UN special coordinator on SEA, sexual exploitation and abuse.

This problem affects the whole of the international community, and that includes Canada, unfortunately. This committee may have noted the UN report released last week on special measures for protection from SEA in which two Canadian cases are listed. We have an obligation to insist that peacekeepers, including our own, are held to account for their actions.

Finally, the principal framework that guides our WPS activities is the Canadian national action plan for women, peace and security. The plan calls for public annual implementation progress reports. Three such reports have been tabled in Parliament, and the fourth is in preparation. These are all publicly available on the Global Affairs website.

We are very pleased today that ministers Dion, Bibeau, and Freeland announced in their joint statement for International Women's Day that the Canadian national action plan is going to be renewed. We will begin work immediately with our full range of partners both inside and outside of government to update the C-NAP to reflect both the world and the Canada of 2016. We will get these consultations under way, including civil society, and of course, Parliament.

There remains much more work to be done, but I will end my statement there and allow time for questions.

Thank you very much for your attention.

●(1705)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Guttman.

I understand we're having a little technical problem, and you'll have to turn your microphone on yourself. For some reason, it's not set right. So if you're going to do some talking, turn your microphone on, and then turn it off.

We'll start with Mr. Allison, from the Conservative Party.

Dean.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Guttman, thank you for being here. It's great to have you back.

You talk in your presentation about the challenge of implementing the agenda in conflict and post-conflict areas. I have only two questions today. This will be the first one, and then we can address the second one, so take your time.

How do you identify programs, given the nature of how difficult it can be through peace negotiations in all these troubled areas? What goes into choosing how it happens, and how do you make it happen in what must be very difficult circumstances?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: That's an excellent question. I wish there were a straightforward answer.

I think it very much depends on the type of intervention that's being considered, whether it's an urgent humanitarian intervention, a long-term capacity-building or developmental project, or a stabilization effort. This last is what my program does, and it's more short-term to mid-term. It varies greatly.

In some cases, we may seek to work with other international partners or with major or local international organizations such as local NGOs to deliver a particular service or form of support. In some cases, we may be guided by recommendations coming from the United Nations. Often we receive or we solicit proposals for projects from partners. I would turn to my development colleague to speak more about how that works. It varies quite greatly.

In the case of Syria, where we have supported the participation of women in the recently launched peace negotiations, we were fortunate to have a project brought to our attention. I believe it was brought to us by our network in the field, and we were able to respond to that quite readily. It varies widely.

If there is a particular instance that you'd like me to try to describe, I would be happy to do so.

Mr. Dean Allison: Afghanistan certainly was a country of focus, an area in which we spent a lot of money over the years.

Would you talk to us a bit about the process there? We've seen increased participation, but how has it really been? One of the focuses was engaging women in education. Could you talk about where we are with that now?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: I will do my best. I have to admit, I don't have a lot of details on our work in Afghanistan.

I can give one example, which is that we fund support to the Afghan national defence and security forces. This is a major commitment by the Government of Canada over a three-year period. Part of that funding goes to capacity building for police and military, but a part of it is dedicated to supporting the integration of women into those forces, along with gender sensitivity training. That's one example.

I might turn to my development colleague to speak more to development-oriented elements, like education.

I will add that gender is a factor in all our programming decisions. Whether it's development or stabilization, whatever type of work we're doing, we look at it through the lens of gender, through the lens of the women's peace and security agenda to make sure that it's [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

• (1710)

Ms. Julie Shouldice (Acting Director General, Social Development, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Just to supplement what my colleague has said, when we look at the case of Afghanistan, promoting and protecting human rights remains one of Canada's key priorities, with a particular focus on advocating for the rights of women and girls. That's reflected as part of our development assistance.

One of the key areas has been improved access to safe, quality, basic education for women and girls and the protection of women's and girls' rights. In 2001 there were effectively no girls enrolled in school in Afghanistan, and now there are 8.5 million children, 39% of whom are girls. We look at improved access to health services for women, which have had significant impacts in areas like the reduction of pregnancy and birth-related deaths or the increase of political participation by women in Afghanistan. We've looked at some of the key areas where we can have an impact and we continue to program along those same lines.

The Chair: Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: I have one quick question.

You mentioned the two CEA cases under investigation. Given the issues that are still under investigation within DND and the RCMP involving gender issues such as harassment, what is the training preparation specifically? Is it offered individually by those agencies and the armed forces, or do you contribute to it through your leadership in the area of sensitization and so forth?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: Thank you very much for the question.

I'll do my best not to speak on behalf of other departments and agencies about the specifics of how they train, but I can confirm that we do provide.... Canada trains its own peacekeepers, both military and police peacekeepers, on the issues surrounding sexual exploitation and abuse.

From the Global Affairs side, we focus more on setting the broader standards, particularly in the United Nations, and how we advocate at the diplomatic level of the overall standards set for the organization and set for peacekeeping missions. No doubt there's much more to be done there. We do as Canada have a zero tolerance policy. It unfortunately doesn't mean that zero cases have occurred, but in every instance, Canadian cases, when reported, are investigated. The individuals, if there's found to be merit in the accusations, are withdrawn. Then the individual agencies pursue whatever disciplinary measures they would have to speak to in the next hearing.

We will be very keen to speak with the new UN special coordinator and to see how she frames her agenda and obviously what kind of support Canada might be placed to provide.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Guttman.

We'll go to Mr. Miller.

Mr. Marc Miller: Thank you.

Ms. Guttman, I want to develop a bit what Mr. Kent said. What role do you play in encouraging women to join armed forces and police forces? As background to that, I taught one of the first infantry sections with women in Canada. It certainly changed the tone of the section, and probably increased performance. It is one of those last barriers internationally to be broken down. What role do you play in encouraging, writ large, the participation of women in armed forces and police forces?

Also, what role do you play in making sure the codes of conduct are enforced? A lot of Canada's role, obviously, is setting the example. What role do you play in making sure that the laws of war are observed and that the internal codes of conduct are enforced and prosecuted aggressively?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: Thank you very much for that question.

Again, in terms of Canadian recruitment, I could speak to it, but internationally.... I gave an example to the honourable member regarding Afghanistan, where Canadian funding supports the capacity building of Afghan armed and police forces, which includes specifically funding for recruitment, training, and support to female recruits.

That's one example. There are different elements to it. In Canada, first and foremost we have to be a role model of both representation of women and also in our conduct. That's what we strive to do. In terms of setting standards, for example, we support through the United Nations the setting of these targets for the recruitment of women. I don't have statistics in front of me, and I apologize, but we have seen a fair amount of improvement in some areas in having female peacekeepers take part in missions. We do need to do a bit more there.

I apologize if I haven't fully answered your question.

• (1715)

Mr. Marc Miller: It's just the part about enforcing codes and laws specifically.

Ms. Tamara Guttman: In terms of enforcing the codes, again speaking more for the international diplomatic arena, this goes very much to the support we offer to the United Nations, to the Secretary-General directly, to his representatives on peacekeeping, to the representative on sexual exploitation and abuse. We support their work.

I think some will know that a Canadian justice led the commission of inquiry into sexual exploitation in the Central African Republic. I'm very proud of the role Canadians are playing in helping to expose what's happening, to deliver findings but to deliver important recommendations. We will do our best to stand behind those and to help the UN and international partners implement them.

The Chair: Mr. Levitt, you have three minutes.

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you for being here this afternoon.

I want to go to some of the solutions proposed by the Security Council resolutions on WPS, because many of them are quite simple and quite compelling. In particular, one talks about empowering women to participate meaningfully in the economic, political, and social lives of their communities and countries, including on issues of peace and security. I'm wondering if you can speak to how this particularly has manifested itself, and if there are specific examples of how this policy has been promoted.

I'd like to highlight this with the example of Rwanda, which post-genocide has seen a huge shift in the inclusion of women, with over 40% being represented in cabinet and almost 50% in the judiciary. Is this the type of example we can look at to replicate in other countries? What are your thoughts on this?

Ms. Julie Shouldice: Through our development assistance, Canada supports women and girls to become agents of change in their own lives as well as for their families, their countries, and their communities. We recognize that when women are empowered with the knowledge and skills to succeed, they tend to marry later, tend to have fewer children, and have better health and economic outcomes.

When we approach some of these issues, we look at addressing the barriers that women face to empowerment, through things like promoting and advancing their human rights, supporting their equal participation and decision-making at all levels of political, economic, and social life, and reducing inequalities and access to and control over resources.

In practical terms, in conflict situations that can mean specifically the human rights element supporting the prevention and response to sexual violence and other harmful practices, and strengthening the capacity of women to participate in peace-building and peace processes.

To give you an example, through Development and Peace, which is a Canadian NGO, Canada is supporting work to protect women's and girl's human rights by advocating for their active and meaningful

participation, so there is that type of engagement through women and local women's groups.

It's also to advocate for peace and security activities, including peace processes to strengthen efforts to prevent violence, including sexual violence, and to work in countries such as Haiti, Afghanistan, Colombia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It's about both addressing barriers and then empowering opportunities, and we take the joint approach of having both.

The Chair: Hélène, you're next.

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

I would like to state first, for the record, with regard to the previous session, that denying services to women and denying women the right to choose are coercive policies.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for your presentation.

I think my question is partly related to what Michael said earlier. I admit that, during the presentation, I was struck by the emphasis on the protection of women, sexual violence and discrimination. We are talking about women as victims who need to be protected.

This study is on women, peace and security, and just as much on the participation of women in peace processes in general. In addition, even the UN report issued after the 15th anniversary shows that, when women participate not only as advisors, but also in the negotiations, peace agreements work better and are more sustainable.

What more can be done along those lines?

• (1720)

Ms. Tamara Guttman: Thank you for your question.

I'm sorry if we gave you the impression that we were stressing protection too much, but the fact remains that it is very important, of course. Participation and the positive features of this program are so important. However, that's not always easy.

We gave Syria as an example before. The participation of women in negotiations was promoted there. We can also talk about Canada's support for informal diplomacy before the peace process in Syria. A woman representing the official opposition in Syria insisted on the inclusion of the text of resolution 1325 in the declarations during the preparations for the peace process and for the political transition in Syria. That passed through as a result of Canada's efforts.

In terms of NATO, I think Canada and Iceland, to mark International Women's Day, organized a meeting yesterday on promoting positive action in order to identify possible ways of including women and of being sensitive to gender in the work that NATO does. Ambassador Kerry Buck, Canada's first female ambassador and permanent representative to NATO, was there.

There are a number of other examples. However, it is true that it is not always easy.

We can also mention the support in recruiting police forces. Ukraine is a very good example. Canada continues to support a large reform project for Ukraine's patrol police, the most corrupt police force in Ukraine. Actually, Canada, with the support of the United States, has been working directly with Ukraine on that matter. Ukraine now has a completely new police force that includes a lot of women. Two policewomen from Montreal have supported the project as advisors on gender equality.

Those are just a few examples.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much.

On a different note, we have learned that Canada is going to review its action plan, which expires at the end of the month. That is very good news.

Do you have any details on the process? How will it work? Do you have a timeline?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: That is a very good question and my colleague Anthony Anderson will answer it.

[English]

Mr. Anthony Anderson (Senior Policy Advisor, Conflict Policy and Security Coherence Secretariat, Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you very much, Madam.

We're in an enviable position because the government has just announced that it will renew, but they only did so a couple of hours ago. It's easy for me to say that we haven't formulated all our plans yet.

That being said, of course we have been giving it some thought. We've been anticipating the sunset of the plan. We did a mid-term review in 2014, which identified some of the areas where perhaps we could improve. We worked on that subsequently and some of that will be reflected in the report that we hope will come out in not too long a time. We've also been having very preliminary discussions with our partners at National Defence and the RCMP as to how we might go forward.

We have had initial discussions as well with civil society organizations, some of which I see represented here today. We're very pleased to see them involved in this particular process. They give us invaluable advice. They've written reports on our reports and we take those into consideration.

I think we're essentially looking at a blank page. In other words, we're not just going to brush up the old action plan. We're going to have a fresh look at it and see whether we can perhaps solve some of the problems that have been revealed over the past five years.

We're looking forward to this process. We haven't got hard timings yet. In discussions with our civil society colleagues I think we've agreed that there's no need to rush to get a new plan in place by March 31, the end of this month. It would be a mistake to try to do so. Perhaps we have a bit of time to give it some thought. The sort of activities you've heard about today will continue. We don't need an action plan to keep on doing these sorts of things.

We're going to go at it deliberately. We're going to go at it consultatively and hopefully, we'll have a better action plan in the not too distant future.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Saini, please.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Ms. Guttman, for your opening remarks. They were very thorough. I have a quick question for you.

You mentioned all the programs that you had, that you were engaged in helping certain states, especially the fragile and the failed states, in some way, but I didn't hear about any programs to help combat human trafficking or sex trafficking specifically. I'm wondering how effective programs have been, if indeed we have them, and whether we should be doing anything more.

Ms. Tamara Guttman: Thank you very much for that important question.

I regret that I don't have that information with me as it's not part of my own mandate, but we do have programs within Global Affairs Canada, and I think we would be pleased to return with some detailed information. Human trafficking, in particular, has been a very important part of the work of the department. I regret that it's not in my own area, but we can certainly return with some information.

The Chair: Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Thank you for your presentation. You're doing a great job, but I'm a believer that there's always room to improve.

Under this report, when it comes to implementing gender equality while working with other partners in disaster areas, what are our Canadian strengths? I know we believe in the Canadian values of gender equality and the power of women, but when we're working together, how do we ensure that those areas are looked after?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: Thank you very much for that question.

It's a really important dimension of not just how we support women and girls, but how we support better outcomes, whether it's coming out of conflict or coming out of a major disaster which is integrating gender considerations right from the get-go, and how we approach a solution rather than trying to put them off to the side as a separate issue. I can give one quite recent example. It's more about conflict than disaster, if that's okay.

Of course, we are part of the coalition addressing ISIL. The team I lead works on stabilization with our international partners. We have just had a team return from a meeting of the coalition group on stabilization, which focuses on how to bring services, how to restore stability, how to restore order, and so forth, immediately in newly liberated areas in Iraq.

Just a week ago, in fact, our team was at this meeting and had a very thorough discussion with the Iraqi Prime Minister's office about gender issues and about how to integrate this into planning directly. It was the first opportunity we had had for such a discussion, and we were very heartened by the receptiveness to continuing that dialogue, to working on how we can integrate that from the get-go, and not as an afterthought. I think that's one example we're just starting to build.

In terms of when we respond to disasters, it's much the same, and I don't know if Julie will want to jump in on that. Again, the way we respond with humanitarian assistance or with immediate disaster response, the gender factors are there. It's how services are delivered, how people are helped, whether they're in IDP camps or temporary evacuation shelters, and so forth. That's part of what we bring.

I'll turn to Julie to see if she wants to add to that.

● (1730)

Ms. Julie Shouldice: Thanks very much.

I think it's important to note that gender equality is a crosscutting theme for all of our development assistance, and we integrate gender quality considerations into all of our policy and programming. As we're doing work in natural disaster situations, it's part of the analysis that we undertake in terms of the work that we do.

That analysis provides insights into how gender equality can be promoted to achieve short-term and longer-term sustainable development results. We have a team of gender equality specialists who support that process and provide technical assistance for the analysis that's done.

As a department, we have a two-pronged approach: one is that of mainstream and broad gender integration; the other is targeted programming when we have specific gender equality gaps. We take both approaches in order to have a broad base.

With our partners it's an ongoing part of our dialogue in terms of the importance of gender equality, the importance of ongoing integration of gender equality considerations, so it's something that we are [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and ongoing discussions about.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That will be the end of that round.

We'll now go to the Liberal side for the second round. I think, Peter, you're going to start.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much for being here today.

This is a question for whoever wishes to take it. There is some overlap.

Point number 4 in the solutions proposed by the Security Council is to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence by assisting women and girls with reintegration into their communities, by giving them access to justice, and by holding perpetrators to account. It's the latter point that I'm particularly interested in, holding perpetrators to account, and giving the victims of violence access to justice.

There are, as you well know, local efforts on the ground in terms of conflict transformation. There are many we could point to.

Rwanda has come up in the discussion today. The Gacaca process is well known and highly regarded. There's South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and many other examples.

What is happening in terms of making sure that as an international community and in Canadian foreign policy we are making it a primary focus that we support these local structures on the ground so that when efforts at justice are being developed, it's local actors taking the initiative on their own, that they actually have ownership over the process, that they don't have the sense that it's being imposed on them?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: Thank you very much for your question and for your comments. It's a hugely important point.

I can comment a bit anecdotally. It's not always easy to achieve. One example is when we began work to deliver on a commitment from 2014, where Canada committed \$10 million to addressing sexual and gender-based violence in the context of the Syrian and Iraq conflicts, to be able to identify local partners in areas where violations are occurring, and where it is safe for those NGOs to act, and where our support for them isn't putting anyone in danger. It's not easy; I will be frank about that.

We often work with a combination of international actors as well as local ones. There is a distinction between the actors who are delivering direct assistance, humanitarian and victim assistance, and those who might be doing other things, such as education, and the justice aspect, and investigation.

Through Canadian funding we are supporting investigation of sexual violence and sexual crimes in conflict. There are a number of projects. One involves a group called Justice Rapid Response, which is headed by a Canadian. That helps to set the conditions to gather evidence and to build capacity of how to do that. It's quite difficult, including the ability to have the will or the ability of the victims to come forward particularly when there are social, ethnic, or religious constraints they feel when identifying themselves. It does prove difficult, but the principle of trying to bring the solutions as locally as possible is important, and we do strive to do that.

● (1735)

Ms. Julie Shouldice: Maybe I could add a supplement.

An example of a program in particular that we're very proud of, which is supported through the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, is their work in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. You're probably aware there has been a significant issue in responding to sexual violence in that conflict. That is a program for which we've provided \$18 million over five years.

The purpose of the project is to contribute to the reduction of sexual violence by helping to fight impunity for perpetrators and promoting measures to prevent crimes. If we look at what we've been able to achieve since 2006, we have been able to help more than 60,000 survivors of sexual violence to access health and psychosocial care. It's an important part of how we address people who have been affected. There have also been 15,000 who have acquired new skills and consistent income generation activities, so it's about looking forward as well.

More than 800 perpetrators have been convicted of those crimes.

Ms. Tamara Guttman: If I may, I apologize for taking the microphone again.

There's a recent example where Canada has been supporting prevention and follow-up to sexual violence in Guatemala for some time. There has been recent publicity around some convictions surrounding that, and we're pleased to have been able to assist even in a small way. To see that come through to that end is unusual, unfortunately, but it is gratifying.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

I asked the question particularly to underline the importance of ownership over the process, in that local populations have that. It's often the case in so many of these conflicts that there's a sense—whether it's a perception or reality, or you know, perception is reality—the solutions are imposed from the outside for dealing with conflict or post-conflict. That's where things can go off the track.

All too often that happens, and I think it's critically important we keep an eye on that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That is the end of that for the Liberals.

We'll go to Mr. Clement.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Thank you, Chair. It's nice to not be at the witness stand for this stage of my political career.

Thank you for being here and for being a part of our discussion.

I guess I still have a Treasury Board hangover because my question is going to relate to—and you did allude to this, and I know you're doing a review of the policy—how we measure success. How do we look at the benchmarks of success and make sure they're modern and make sure they are for the 21st century?

My worst fear is that we, and I'm not saying that you do this; I'm sure you don't and there's evidence that you don't... What we don't want is to say that we're successful because everybody whom we give money to is happy with the money that they get. I know that's not your position, but that would not be helpful to the taxpayer nor to public policy success.

Are you going to consult widely on new benchmarks? Are you going to look at behavioural sciences, and nudging, and some of these new trends and new ideas? How do we modernize our targets? How do we modernize our assessment of whether they're reached?

• (1740)

Ms. Tamara Guttman: I'll see if my colleagues have anything more to add on that.

This will be a critical part of these consultations that we do to update our national action plan, as we seek to constantly improve how we measure results in our assistance, whether it's development, security, or stabilization.

In some cases things are easy to measure: the number of people trained, and so on and so forth; percentages of women in police or peacekeeping forces and things like that; assistance handed out; and the number of victims who have come forward—obviously, these sorts of things.

A lot of this area is very hard to measure because you're building capacity, but you're also building confidence. That's sometimes a very personal thing, how you help women and girls in communities to feel able to participate, to raise their situation of crime or violence. Again, you can measure how many people you get to a training session. It's not as easy to measure the effect of that training, but we do.

I would like to defer to my development colleague to speak a bit more formally to the sorts of metrics that are used there. Your point about a modernized and more innovative way to do this is absolutely critical. We'll want to speak widely to people in consultations about that.

Ms. Julie Shouldice: Perhaps I'd add two things. We are building performance measurement frameworks around all of our priorities, which help us to go beyond the output indicators that Tamara was just talking about and allow us to look more for metrics at the outcomes and results-based levels.

We also are committed, through our terms and conditions, to have regular evaluations. That allows us to look, in a broader sense, at what we're achieving and learn some very valuable lessons from the work we're doing. As we manage for results all the way through, which is something we're incredibly committed to, it allows us to see beyond the output indicators but also what the project has been able to contribute as a whole.

The Chair: Go ahead, Peter, you have a couple of minutes left.

Hon. Peter Kent: After the Haiti earthquake, Canada and the world responded magnificently in the immediate emergency and recovery operation. Things haven't gone very well since. Given many of the failures in the overall reconstruction, governance, and restoring the rule of law, how have the successes been with regard to the issues involving women and girls?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: It's an excellent question. I wish I had a very good answer for you. I don't believe I have a lot of detail on Haiti in front of me. Again, I'll defer to my colleague if we have anything on that.

Certainly, it's an aspect in our training of the national police in Haiti and so forth. I'm not in a position today to give an assessment on behalf of Global Affairs on how that has gone. If you would like, we'll certainly be able to return with some information. I apologize that we're not prepared on that item.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hélène.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: I will be very quick.

Speaking of funding, I am wondering whether the funding for the Guatemala program, which you mentioned, was interrupted at one point. Are you still funding that program?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: We have a number of projects in Guatemala. As for my program, the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, START, there is always a project under way in order to prevent violence and support victims. We have carried out a number of projects over the past few years. START carries out short-term projects. The funding is not ongoing because we go by project. In terms of development, things are different. I'm not sure whether we have the details regarding Guatemala, but I can say that START has been there fairly constantly.

• (1745)

[*English*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: I was also wondering about the GPSF, global peace and security fund. Is there any news regarding the fund?

Ms. Tamara Guttman: It's a different topic than the one before the committee today, but since I'm responsible for the fund, I'm happy to answer to the best of my ability.

The proposal to renew the stabilization and reconstruction task force under the global peace and security fund is a matter of consideration for the government. I would not want to pre-empt whatever decision they may take on that.

The Chair: Thank you. Now we are on to the last three minutes, and that will be the end of our time this morning.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: The 2013 global study on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 recommended an earmarking of 15% of peace and security funding to programs whose principal objective is gender equality and women's needs.

Maybe this question is for Mr. Anderson. With an eye to the future, given the very new commitments made today by the ministers, are there any thoughts on how we might action that in the programs being put forward?

Mr. Anthony Anderson: You forecasted my answer to a certain extent. Yes, we will take all of these things under consideration. We're very aware of this figure of 15%, and our colleagues in civil society remind us of it all the time.

There are several issues, things that critics have suggested we should have done over the last five years in the plan. Again, we're very aware of them, this being one of them, dedicated funding being another, and a couple of others.

We're going to have a look at all of these and see how it comes out.

Ms. Tamara Guttman: If I may, I'll also just add that, for Canada, we support the idea of mainstreaming gender issues into all of our various forms of assistance, not just isolating the issue as gender on its own but ensuring that we're always supporting that to whatever degree through our project work.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the witnesses. We very much appreciate your spending that little extra time. That probably wasn't on your agenda. Also I want to apologize for the workout with your arms because of the malfunction. That wasn't part of the plan, but I guess a little exercise for all of us doesn't hurt.

Thank you again. We very much appreciate the time you spent with us.

We're going to go in camera for a few minutes, so would the committee members stick around for a couple of minutes. We have a budget to look at, and I have a couple of things I want to get your feelings about. It shouldn't take long, and we'll go from there.

Those who shouldn't be here are dismissed, and the rest of you can stay. We'll take a few minutes off and then come back.

Thank you.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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