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Chair

The Honourable Robert Nault

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• (1540)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Robert Nault): Colleagues, I'd like to bring this meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we will have a briefing with the appropriate officials from Global Affairs Canada to provide members with an update on current concerns within their mandate related to foreign affairs and international development.

If I mess up your name when I introduce you, please feel free to correct me. That's a northern prerogative. We tend to slip up on names around here.

Vincent Rigby is the assistant deputy minister of strategic policy.

Alex Bugailiskis is the assistant deputy minister of Europe, Middle East, and Maghreb.

Mark...?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky (Assistant Deputy Minister, International Security and Political Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): It's Gwozdecky.

The Chair: I should know that. A friend of mine has the same name.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I'm a northerner, like you.

The Chair: Mark Gwozdecky is assistant deputy minister of international security and political affairs.

Sarah Fountain Smith is acting assistant deputy minister of global issues and development.

Last but not least, Heather Jeffrey is the director general of international humanitarian assistance.

Welcome to the committee. As I mentioned to you before we started, this isn't a race. We will take our time. This committee will want to have you here many times to brief us.

I'd like to start off by giving you an opportunity to give us a feel for how things work at Global Affairs. Then we'll have a series of questions. I'm sure we'll get a chance to invite you back on numerous occasions.

I think you've probably figured out who will go first.

Vincent, why don't we kick off with you?

Mr. Vincent Rigby (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to appear before you today. We're very much looking forward to talking to you and having a discussion and fielding your questions.

Indeed I am the assistant deputy minister for strategic policy at Global Affairs Canada. Today I'd like to provide a brief overview of the structure and work of Global Affairs Canada. My colleagues will then go into more detail on elements within their respective responsibilities. If there are any questions today that are outside our expertise, you may want to ask other colleagues to appear at future meetings of this committee, but we'd certainly be very keen to come back again ourselves.

I recognize the specific interest of this committee in foreign affairs and international development, but I ask your indulgence in that in speaking for an amalgamated department, in my opening remarks I will take a global approach that considers all of our international policy, including a little bit of international trade.

Global Affairs has three ministers, as I'm sure you know: the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of International Trade, and the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie.

[Translation]

The mandate of the department, as set out in the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, is to conduct the external affairs of Canada, including international trade and commerce and international development.

More specifically, the department conducts all diplomatic and consular relations on behalf of Canada and all official communication with other countries and international organizations, and manages international negotiations. It also coordinates Canada's international economic relations and fosters the expansion of Canada's international trade and commerce. It fosters sustainable international development and poverty reduction in developing countries and provides humanitarian assistance during crises. In addition, the department manages diplomatic and consular missions and coordinates the direction given to them. It administers the foreign service of Canada, and fosters the development of international law and its application in Canada's external relations.

[English]

To accomplish these tasks, each minister is appointed a deputy minister: a deputy minister for foreign affairs, a deputy minister for international trade, and a deputy minister for international development. The deputy ministers are supported by 15 assistant deputy ministers in our amalgamated department, some of whom have a geographic focus, some of whom have a thematic or functional focus, and some of whom deliver corporate services to the department. We'd all be happy to go into more detail about how the department works in the question-and-answer series.

Global Affairs Canada is responsible for managing Canada's network of missions abroad, which provide information, establish international networks, advocate Canadian positions, deliver development assistance, and provide assistance directly to Canadians. We have 174 missions in 107 countries. Of the department's nearly 10,000 employees, 51% work outside of Canada.

Canada's network abroad doesn't just consist of Global Affairs Canada. It also includes representatives from other federal departments and agencies, and in some missions, from provincial governments. In total, our network abroad includes over 7,600 personnel, of whom just a little less than a third are Canada-based staff, the remainder being locally engaged.

I'll move from a broad overview of the department and how it works to some of the main objectives guiding Global Affairs Canada as we work to deliver on our ministers' mandates. As you all know, ministers' mandate letters are public, so you can see exactly what we're working with, and what our responsibilities and objectives are.

First, we will advance Canada's values and interests through leadership and constructive engagement on key global issues, including at the UN and other multilateral institutions. Last week UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Ottawa and met with Prime Minister Trudeau. The PM's strong support for the UN during this visit signals the government's renewed commitment to multilateralism. At the UN and elsewhere, for example, we will work to make Canada a leader of international efforts to combat climate change.

We will also increase support for peace operations, mediation, and conflict prevention. Canada's contributions to international peace and security are diverse, and they are valued by allies and partners. For example, last week Canada announced its new strategy to address the crisis in the Middle East brought on by the so-called Islamic State.

We will also champion the values of inclusive and accountable governance through the UN and other multilateral channels, share our experience of building peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity, and continue our commitment to defend human rights, including the rights of women and refugees.

Second, we will contribute to Canadian-inclusive global prosperity, with an emphasis on expanding and deepening trade and investment relationships with both traditional partners and large, fast-growing markets. The department is developing a trade and export strategy, which, among other things, will help Canadian businesses leverage the opportunities of existing free trade arrangements. This work falls very much in the domain of the

Standing Committee on International Trade, so I'll leave the details to my colleagues when they appear later this week before that committee.

Third, we will leverage Canada's relations with the United States, Mexico, and other key bilateral partners to advance Canada's interests and values. There's a clear government commitment to renew relations with the United States and Mexico as well as to strengthen trilateral North American cooperation. The United States, of course, is our closest ally and most important economic and security partner. We will develop a positive and ambitious agenda to reflect the complexity and breadth of our ties. We are putting new emphasis on how we can collaborate with the United States on continental and global issues of concern. Prime Minister Trudeau's visit to Washington in March, the first official visit by a prime minister in nearly two decades, will be a concrete demonstration of that renewed relationship on both sides.

Last month Minister Dion hosted a North American foreign ministers' meeting in Quebec City to help set the stage for a North American leaders' summit later this year. Cooperation on climate change, environment, and energy was a signature theme for the foreign ministers' meeting, and work is under way towards a North American environment and clean energy agreement. We are also engaging with Mexico on a range of bilateral issues, including the decision to lift the visa requirement for Mexicans visiting Canada.

● (1545)

Beyond these priority partnerships in North America, we will engage constructively with other countries throughout the globe.

[Translation]

Lastly, we will strengthen Canada's contribution to the reduction of poverty and inequality, and respond to humanitarian needs.

Thanks to its development assistance, Canada contributes to the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, and addressing vulnerability. International development assistance is an expression of Canadian values and also supports our broader international policy objectives.

Our international assistance also responds to humanitarian needs during complex emergencies and natural disasters. Canada's humanitarian assistance aims to save lives, alleviate suffering, maintain human dignity, and strengthen disaster preparedness in developing countries.

We have seen Canada's leadership in this area in its recent response to the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East.

[English]

In conclusion, the department is hard at work supporting our ministers in fulfilling their mandates. We are renewing our diplomatic and security ties, particularly with multilateral bodies; we are promoting inclusive Canadian and global prosperity; we are cooperating with key partners to advance Canadian interests; and we are reinforcing our international assistance to meet the challenges faced by the world's poorest people.

I'll stop there, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much. I'll pass the reins to my colleagues.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rigby.

Ms. Bugailiskis.

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis (Assistant Deputy Minister, Europe, Middle East and Maghreb, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair and honourable members of the committee, I'm Alex Bugailiskis, the assistant deputy minister for Europe, the Middle East, and the Maghreb. That means that I'm one of four of what we call geographic ADMs who cover the globe. My other colleagues cover Africa, Asia, and North and South America.

I have the privilege in our branch of covering 74 countries, almost a third of those in which we have representation. We have 53 Canadian embassies, consulates, and delegations in those 74 countries. Our priorities are wide-ranging, from assisting Canadian businesses in their commercial efforts to promoting security and stability and implementing development projects that reduce poverty and assist the most vulnerable.

Today I'm going to focus on four key issues in my region: our relationship with the European Union, the situation in Ukraine, our response to the crises in Syria and Iraq, and our evolving relationship with Iran.

Let me begin with the European Union.

The EU is facing unprecedented challenges, from the migrant crisis to a potential British exit, called "the Brexit". It remains a major global player, the world's largest economy, and a vital, like-minded partner for Canada.

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, is at the top of our agenda. It is Canada's most ambitious trade initiative, broader in scope and deeper in ambition than NAFTA, and a game changer for Canadian businesses. Once in force, CETA will make Canadian products, technologies, and expertise more competitive in a market of 500 million people.

The second key aspect of our relationship is the Canada-EU strategic partnership agreement, or what we call the SPA. Canada is one of only 10 strategic partners with the EU, and the SPA will expand and deepen Canada-EU cooperation on a wide range of issues that include climate change, human rights, and international security. The agreement is currently being translated, and we hope that we'll be signing and implementing it this year.

This year is a very special one for Canada and the EU, as it marks the 40th anniversary of the Canada-EU framework agreement that

was signed in 1976 and of the establishment of the EU's diplomatic mission here in Ottawa.

Let me now turn to the situation in Ukraine.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and ongoing support to the insurgency in eastern Ukraine have unleashed the most significant crisis in Europe since the end of the Cold War.

From the onset of the crisis, Canada has been at the forefront of the international community in supporting the Ukrainian people and calling Russia to account for its actions, including by imposing sanctions against more than 270 Russian and Ukrainian individuals and entities involved in the violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Canada's most recent sanctions were announced in June 2015. They imposed additional economic sanctions on 17 Russian individuals and entities and several prohibitions against illegally occupied Crimea.

Canada's sanctions and those of partners are having a significant effect on the Russian economy. The combination of low oil prices and sanctions has weighed heavily on investor confidence, prompting large capital outflows from Russia.

Russia must fulfill the obligations it agreed to under the Minsk agreements. These include a complete ceasefire, withdrawal of its troops, and the regaining by Ukraine of control of its borders with Russia.

Since January 2014, Canada has announced more than \$700 million in international development assistance and financial, humanitarian, and security support to Ukraine. We are helping, for example, to reform the judicial system and strengthen the management of public finance. Minister Dion reiterated Canada's strong support for Ukraine during his visit to Kiev two weeks ago. He encouraged Ukraine to continue on the path of democratic reform. He also clearly signalled that possible Canadian engagement with Russia would not signify diminishment in any respect of our support to Ukraine.

● (1550)

[Translation]

I will now turn to the other half of my portfolio, advancing our interests in the Middle East and Maghreb.

First, as you know, the Prime Minister presented Canada's new strategy to address the crises in Syria and Iraq last week. As Minister Dion underlined, this strategy provides a comprehensive, integrated, and sustained approach, bringing together military, political and stabilization efforts, and separately, humanitarian and development assistance. Together, these components will address the diverse challenges contributing to and resulting from the conflicts within the region.

Through this new strategy, we will build the capacity of communities and countries hosting significant numbers of refugees, such as Jordan and Lebanon, to withstand crises and maintain stability. This is what we call "building resilience."

Canada will also be increasing its diplomatic presence in the region, which will allow us to enhance our engagement with local and international partners and to participate more actively in achieving political solutions. The new strategy will be discussed more extensively in Parliament tomorrow.

The second hot topic in the Middle East I would like to discuss is Iran. Canada has long opposed to Iran's earlier ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons. We therefore welcomed, along with the international community, the adoption of the Iran nuclear deal last year—known as the joint comprehensive plan of action.

In recognition of progress on the nuclear file and in light of similar actions by most of Canada's like-minded partners, Canada amended its nuclear-related sanctions against Iran on February 5. We removed the broad prohibitions against exports, imports, and financial transactions.

At the same time, a number of sanctions remain in place. Canada continues to fully implement UN-mandated sanctions, as well as robust autonomous sanctions, including tight controls on proliferation-sensitive goods. We also maintain sanctions against a list of individuals and entities of utmost concern in relation to the risk of nuclear proliferation and to Iran's ballistic missile program.

On the diplomatic front, Canada is prepared to engage with Iran in a step-by-step manner, but with our eyes wide open. We are cautiously but expeditiously evaluating our process of re-engagement. In particular, the human rights situation in Iran, as well as the regime's regional policies and its support of terrorism, continue to be sources of deep concern for Canada. We will remain extremely vigilant and call on the Government of Iran to implement its human rights obligations.

This very brief overview of the key issues in my region cannot do justice to the complexity of the files we handle.

I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you.

•(1555)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Please go ahead, Mark.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Thank you.

Good afternoon. My name is Mark Gwozdecky, and I am the assistant deputy minister for international security and political affairs. I'm one of those “thematic” assistant deputy ministers that Mr. Rigby referred to.

We try to take a leadership role in coordinating what we call coherent whole-of-government responses to international peace and security challenges. Depending on where those challenges are, we will typically work in tandem and in partnership with our geographic colleagues, such as Ms. Bugailiskis. Because of the nature of her region, the Middle East, we find ourselves working together a great deal.

In my branch, we also are responsible for the promotion of Canadian values such as democracy, inclusive and accountable

governance, peaceful pluralism, and the respect for diversity and human rights. These are a core part of our engagement with allies and international partners.

In addition, I have a role as a political director, which means I provide direct support to our Minister of Foreign Affairs in coordinating with our partners and allies on issues of security or political crisis and on major deliverables for summits such as the G7.

[Translation]

Now I will turn to the issue of international crises.

A key responsibility of the branch is responding to international crises, both man-made and natural disasters. The crisis in Syria and Iraq is a case in point. Working with our geographic partners, like Ms. Bugailiskis, as well as a range of other government departments such as the departments of National Defence and Public Safety, we have contributed to the whole-of-government strategy that was announced last week.

While Ms. Bugailiskis' team were the lead on that file, we contributed in several important ways—by ensuring that our strategy would complement the overall approach of the global coalition against the so-called Islamic State, by making sure that key issues such as sexual violence and the protection of civilians in conflict areas were adequately addressed as part of our efforts, and by applying several important security and stabilization programs that I manage on behalf of Minister Dion. These programs play critical roles in terms of stabilizing communities post-conflict, helping countries manage threats related to weapons of mass destruction, and building the capacity of countries to counter terrorism and crime.

I am also responsible for the stabilization and reconstruction task force, known as START, which plays a lead role in coordinating Canada's whole-of-government response to international conflicts, complex political crises, natural disasters, and the risks associated with fragile and conflict-affected states. Canada's responses to the Nepal earthquake in 2015, Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, and the Haiti earthquake in 2010 all serve as notable examples of START's role in these efforts. The global peace and security fund is a key instrument in delivering that support.

I will speak more about security and stabilization programs later. At present, pursuant to the government's commitment, we are updating our approach to multilateral peace support operations, which is part of a broader effort to reinforce UN capacities for conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding.

•(1600)

[English]

The issues of international terrorism and transnational organized crime are also major responsibilities of our branch. We coordinate Canada's whole-of-government international engagement on preventing and combatting violent extremism, including the threat posed by foreign fighters. This includes our response to the UN Secretary-General's recently announced plan of action on preventing violent extremism.

One of the security programs referenced earlier is something we call the counter-terrorism capacity-building program. This program allows us to buttress our policy with concrete capacity-building support provided to partner countries. The program focuses on six areas: support to law enforcement, military, and intelligence; legal assistance; border and transportation security; combatting the financing of terrorism; countering improvised explosive devices; and combatting violent extremism and foreign terrorist fighters.

Our anti-crime capacity-building program supports foreign states in their anti-crime efforts. Like the counterterrorism program, it provides this support in the form of training, equipment, and technical advice to address the following problems: migrant smuggling, human trafficking, drug trafficking, corruption, money laundering, security sector reform, crime prevention, and cyber-crime.

Both of these programs are based on the understanding that when our partners are better able to address terrorism and crime, the risk to Canada and Canadians will be reduced.

Disarmament, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and space security are also important areas of engagement. We are the custodian of the full suite of Canada's commitments under a wide array of international conventions in this area. We're responsible for ensuring that Canada fully complies with its international obligations under these treaties and that others do as well.

Through another of our security programs, the so-called global partnership program, we implement projects with partner countries and international organizations to mitigate threats posed by proliferation or by terrorist acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. In doing so, the program addresses the full spectrum of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons and related materials security.

Promoting core Canadian values is fundamental to our efforts in addressing international security. My branch works with our large network of ambassadors to champion the values of inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism, and respect for diversity and human rights. Our goal is to ensure that these values inform our decisions and are supported in our actions and programs.

Yesterday, for example, Minister Dion hosted the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Ottawa and announced new core funding for the important work of that office worldwide. The minister also announced that in two weeks he will be travelling to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva as a demonstration of Canada's engagement on human rights in the multilateral context.

That ends my statement. I'd be happy to answer your questions at a later point.

Thank you.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gwozdecky.

Now I think it's Ms. Smith's turn.

Ms. Sarah Fountain Smith (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Global Issues and Development, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you very much. Good afternoon.

• (1610)

I'm Sarah Fountain Smith, director general, international organizations, and I'm here today on behalf of Diane Jacovella, who is the assistant deputy minister for global issues and development at Global Affairs Canada. She is currently out of the country; otherwise, she would be here today.

I'm accompanied by my colleague Heather Jeffrey, who is director general for international humanitarian assistance.

I'm here to tell you a little bit about the global issues and development branch's mandate, which is focused in three broad areas.

The first is providing policy direction and specialized knowledge on global issues for the department and managing global investments in these areas. The second is to deliver effective, needs-based, humanitarian assistance in response to complex emergencies and natural disasters in developing countries. The third is to lead Canada's engagement with multilateral and global organizations, including the United Nations, international financial institutions, the Commonwealth, and La Francophonie.

As part of our work to provide policy direction and specialized knowledge on global issues within the department, we provide guidance on such areas as health, nutrition, environment, governance, child protection, economic growth, gender equality, education, and food security. We also develop and deliver innovative global programming to advance these global issues with a focus on helping the poorest and most vulnerable.

For example, our branch is supporting Canada's commitment to improve the health and nutrition of women, children, and adolescents. We oversee the coordination and management of Canada's \$3.5-billion contribution for the period 2015-2020. As part of this commitment, we're seeking opportunities to support the full range of sexual and reproductive health services for women. We're also actively engaged in Every Woman Every Child, a high-level movement that mobilizes and intensifies international and national action to address the major health challenges facing women, children, and adolescents.

We also work to advance the rights of women and girls in a number of key areas. These include the elimination of violence and harmful practices against women and girls, including child, early, and forced marriage, as well as supporting women's economic empowerment.

Our branch is also responsible for ensuring that programming on climate change benefits the poorest and most vulnerable, including helping to deliver the \$2.65 billion in climate financing announced by the Prime Minister last November, which will contribute to achieving sustainable economic growth in developing countries.

Additionally, we provide support to our geographic branches within the department in our areas of focus.

[*Translation*]

The second key role we play is to deliver effective, needs-based humanitarian assistance in response to complex emergencies and natural disasters in developing countries. We ensure that our provision of humanitarian assistance is based on needs in response to both immediate and ongoing natural disasters and conflicts in fragile states, for example, our response to the Syrian–Iraqi crisis.

Currently, we are implementing the recently announced multi-year commitment to provide much-needed humanitarian assistance, such as urgent health services, water, shelter, protection, and food, for the most vulnerable people caught in conflicts in the Middle East. We also oversee the Syria emergency relief fund, which matches donations by Canadians.

Canada's new commitment of \$840 million in humanitarian assistance funding over three years will allow Canada to meet the needs of more vulnerable people, more effectively. It will also ensure that we remain among the top humanitarian donors helping to alleviate suffering caused by the crises in the region.

[*English*]

Our branch also leads on Canada's engagement with multilateral and global organizations, including the United Nations, international financial institutions, the Commonwealth, and La Francophonie. This includes advancing Canada's priorities and values within these organizations, including by leading and sponsoring initiatives and resolutions on key priority issues and promoting accountability and transparency in the governance of these organizations.

We're working actively to implement Canada's renewed commitment to multilateralism and leadership at the United Nations. The visit of the UN Secretary-General to Ottawa last week was an important milestone in this regard.

We also manage Canada's role in multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, to address poverty reduction through inclusive, sustainable economic growth and by mobilizing private sector engagement, working together with Finance Canada. Our role is to ensure that these banks focus on their core development mandate and are well governed. We do this by working with them to improve their accountability and transparency.

In conclusion, the global Issues and development branch supports the work of the department by providing policy leadership and specialized knowledge on global issues, as well as by supporting global investments, delivering effective humanitarian assistance, and overseeing engagement with multilateral and global institutions. Our focus is on assisting the poorest and most vulnerable in order to make a tangible difference in the lives of those living in developing countries.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to go to questions. We'll start with Mr. Allison on the Conservative side, for six minutes.

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

To our colleagues from Global Affairs, thank you very much. We always appreciate the great work you do in representing our country. We'll make sure we take up every opportunity we have to thank you guys .

My questions are probably going to be towards Ms. Fountain Smith, given some of the things I'm curious about. They actually came out of your speech, and I think that's great as well.

The three questions I have are not in any particular order. I want to touch on the development finance initiative a little bit; I want to talk a little about the commitment to climate change of \$2.65 billion; and I want to talk a bit about multilateral or global organizations.

My first question, Ms. Fountain Smith, is this: where are you in terms of the development finance initiative? I know it was in budget 2015, but could you tell us where you are with it? Then, would it be helpful for this committee to do any work on its behalf or to offer up any suggestions? I realize it's probably going to fall under Export Development Canada in some respects, but where are you with it, or what could you tell us?

The question is going to Mr. Rigby? That's perfect. Thank you.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Vincent Rigby: We're here to confuse you.

I probably should have told you what my responsibilities were as ADM strategic policy, but one of them is to work on the private sector in international development. I also worked quite extensively with my team on the development finance initiative under the previous government.

You're right that it was unveiled in the last budget. The Budget Implementation Act made amendments to the act for the Export Development Corporation, so it is basically on the books, but we still need to make a decision on whether we go forward with it and, at the end of the day, it is also a question of whether this government is completely comfortable with its being within EDC.

Those deliberations are taking place right now. We're having broader discussions with ministers—Minister Bibeau in particular, Minister Dion to a certain extent as well, and Minister Freeland—about the role of the private sector in development. Certainly they understand the important role of the private sector. Official development assistance really is not the only player in town any more, as I think you know. The approximately \$135 billion a year is dwarfed by private flows—by remittances and things like that.

I think the importance of the DFI in getting private sector money into developing countries, into those frontier markets where they may not otherwise want to go because of the risk, etc., is something very much on the new government's radar. As I say, we're in deliberations with them now, and I hope they'll make a decision soon.

Mr. Dean Allison: I saw that it was also part of the mandate letter, and I think that's great as well. I'm wondering whether the committee might have a role by offering some support through testimony over time. We can have those conversations later.

My next question, then, is about the \$2.65 billion as it relates to development, climate change, etc. Is this new money, to your knowledge, or is it going to be repurposed money? Is it going to be something separate? There has been some talk about increasing the spending under development from where it is at present.

To your knowledge, is this new money, or is it just money that...? How do you see this being rolled out? I realize it has just been announced, so they're still in discussions and you may not have any information for me, but anything you have would be helpful.

• (1615)

Ms. Sarah Fountain Smith: Sure. I'm happy to share the information I have.

As you note, the \$2.65-billion commitment was made in November of 2015; it was announced by the Prime Minister. It was specifically indicated that it would contribute to our efforts to help flow climate finance, particularly with a focus on supporting developing countries. At COP21 in Paris—the Conference of the Parties in Paris at the end of the November—Canada made a few specific announcements on the ways the \$2.65 billion would be used.

These included providing \$150 million over five years to support the G7 commitment on renewable energy in Africa; another \$50 million over five years to support the G7 commitment on climate risk insurance; \$30 million over two years to support the Least Developed Countries Fund; another \$35 million over five years to support the Climate and Clean Air Coalition; and finally, \$10 million over five years to support the World Meteorological Organization's work on climate risk early warning systems. As for the remainder of the funds, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is working closely with the Minister of International Development and also the Minister of Finance to develop an approach for programming the remainder of those resources.

That work is ongoing. As you mentioned, it's early days, but the principal announcements were made in November.

Mr. Dean Allison: To your understanding, is this new money, or is it additional money? I don't want to put you on the spot, but if you know the answer to that...

Mr. Vincent Rigby: One of my other hats is that I help manage the international assistance envelope, so perhaps I can pitch in on this one as well.

I think the short answer is that the way it plays out is being developed right now, in terms of new money versus reallocated resources within the international assistance envelope and how we play that.

As you know as well, Minister Bibeau has been instructed in her mandate letter to look at creating a new policy and funding framework for international assistance and for international development. I suspect that those kinds of conversations will take place as part of those discussions as well.

Mr. Dean Allison: Okay. I don't have much time left, so here is just a very quick question.

It's a funding year for the Global Fund. I'm assuming that Canada is still supportive of it. You probably don't have any information on that either, since it's new in the mandate, but is it your understanding that we'll continue to support it in the ways we have in the past?

That's it for me.

Ms. Sarah Fountain Smith: That's the Global Fund on... is it AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria?

Mr. Dean Allison: Yes.

Ms. Sarah Fountain Smith: Yes, I believe that's under consideration as well. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

We'll now go to the Liberal side and Raj Saini.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): This question is for Ms. Bugailiskis.

You mentioned Brexit in your opening comments. If that did occur, how do you think it would affect the relationship with Canada?

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: We've had to be discreet in commenting publicly on Brexit. I think privately we feel very strongly that we would like to see the U.K. continue as a member of the European Union, if only because it is such a strong ally and partner, and the EU is such an important global actor that it increases our influence and understanding within that organization.

I think the relationship with the U.K. will continue as it has in the past, prior to the European Union. There will be some challenges, I suppose, with agreements that we may have with the EU, such as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, but these could be resolved by other means. Right now, we'd like to focus on the referendum and hope that it will be positive.

Mr. Raj Saini: Then you don't see, going forward, that there would be a difference in the approach or that there would have to be some nuance?

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: We have relations with many countries that do not belong to a union and we had them before the European Union, so no, I don't see how it would affect them. It will have an effect insofar as we have agreements with the European Union that won't include the United Kingdom, should they decide to remove themselves from that union.

• (1620)

Mr. Raj Saini: Okay.

I was going to ask Mr. Gwozdecky my second question.

You mentioned also in your opening comments problems with migrant smuggling. Could you expand on what, internationally and domestically, the government's thinking on that question is and what they may do to limit it?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Thank you.

Well, migrant smuggling is a phenomenon that happens in many different regions and requires different responses depending on the region. One example I can refer to happens to be the one that's most newsworthy these days. This is with regard to Syrian refugees taking boats into Europe.

One response, which Canada has been a part of in the last week, was a NATO decision to redeploy a naval group—five ships, including one Canadian warship, HMCS *Fredericton*—to the waters of the Aegean to provide surveillance and monitoring and information collection to our European partners so that they can better understand and manage those illegal flows.

In years past we've had issues with regard to illegal migrants washing up on our shores in British Columbia, and the response has to be—and you hear this word a lot from us—whole-of-government. We need to harness all the resources of our federal institutions and of other Canadian institutions to tackle it.

One of the ways we do that is through capacity-building. We have an envelope of money with which we can go to transit countries or source countries for these illegal flows and provide them support to build up their capacity to manage these phenomena and mitigate and interdict them as necessary, so that we address the problem at the source and don't have to deal with the problem so late—only when they wash up on our shores.

Mr. Raj Saini: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll now go to H el ene Laverdi ere, and it's the end of the first round after H el ene.

[*Translation*]

Ms. H el ene Laverdi ere (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us today. From a personal standpoint, I'm very glad to see you, if I may say so, and some may know why.

My first few questions are for Mark Gwozdecky and have to do with terrorist financing, specifically.

It's a fact that the UN has set out a very clear mandate to stop the terrorist financing of ISIS. Could you give us concrete examples of Canada's current efforts to that end?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: We're doing a lot and we're doing it in various fora.

We participate in a more globalized coalition of countries called the global coalition against terrorism, and inside that global coalition there is a working group dedicated to terrorist financing.

We also participate in something called the anti-ISIS coalition, another coalition of countries. One of its lines of effort has to do with

terrorist financing. There we also work with allies in sharing information and sharing best practices in determining how best to cut back these flows.

The best example I can give you has to do with the question of where ISIL gets its money and how we can cut it off. We're working with our partners, for example, to deny them access to the international financial institutions, and I think we've had a good deal of success in that regard, but our adversary finds different ways to move money and is not always using international banks. That's a bigger challenge for us, but we're working, with our allies in the region in particular, on that challenge.

One of the other major ways in which ISIL raises money for itself is through the smuggling of oil and through illegal taxation of residents of the area. That's much more difficult, because it is happening on the ground. I should say that the coalition is taking direct action against these illegal oil wells and is actually bombing some of those facilities and taking action against oil tankers that are syphoning the oil out, and I think we're having some impact there.

We're also taking action at the global level under things such as the Financial Action Task Force, whereby we're looking at the use of international financial institutions. We're working at the regional and local level, taking direct action against terrorist groups like ISIL.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Ms. H el ene Laverdi ere: Thank you very much.

I have another question about the region.

Amnesty International is reporting that populations are being displaced in the areas recaptured by the Kurdish peshmerga.

I see Alex is nodding. Perhaps she'd like to comment on that.

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: Thank you very much.

We are very aware of Amnesty International's latest report and we are very concerned. The embassy has already issued statements to the Government of Iraq as well as Kurdistan's two regional governments indicating that they have a great responsibility to protect civilian populations and respect human rights. We were given assurance that they looked into Amnesty International's allegations and we will continue to work with them to ensure the protection of civilians.

[*English*]

Ms. H el ene Laverdi ere: Do I still have time for a few questions?

I have one quick one about the global peace and security fund. I would like to have confirmation on whether the fund will be replenished, augmented, or whatever. Thank you.

I see a big smile.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Thank you for that question.

That is one of those many issues that are currently under deliberation. I suspect that by the time of the budget, or pretty soon thereafter, we'll have answers to all of those questions. I'm sorry, but I can't give you a definitive one right now.

[Translation]

Ms. H  l  ne Laverdi  re: Thank you.

I have another quick question.

I'm not sure who would like to respond, but do we have an idea of the timetable for Canada's accession to the Arms Trade Treaty, or ATT?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: That's another one that is still in the works. It is a complex matter.

I can tell you that it's certainly a commitment of the government to accede to that convention, but it requires a review of our legislation and our regulations to determine where we may need to make changes or not. That, the lawyers tell me—and I trust them—is a very lengthy process. It's going to be many months, not weeks, before we can determine that. Some of those changes may require some fairly significant new frameworks and new mechanisms to be put into place. You'll have to be patient on that. It will happen, but probably in months rather than weeks.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Rigby.

Mr. Vincent Rigby: I wanted to go back to your question about terrorist financing. I'm the G20 sherpa to the Prime Minister, and I can tell you that at the last G20 summit in Antalya, Turkey, if you read the communiqué, you see some very, very strong language with respect to terrorism financing.

Mark referred to the financial action task force and the very strong endorsement from the G20, including Canada, which strongly supported the language on strengthening it and promoting greater standards. There was a great discussion on terrorism among leaders at the summit. The G20 is very much on top of this and is doing a lot of work, and we'd be happy to talk to you about it offline.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll now go to Mr. Levitt.

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Good afternoon. First of all, I want to thank you for your very comprehensive and enlightening presentation. I think we all learned a lot.

I want to go to your second hot topic, which was Iran. I think it's first on many lists and is second just by number today. I think you've certainly laid out the situation as it relates to sanctions and our following the lead of like-minded countries that have amended their sanctions as a result of Iran's upholding of the agreement as it relates to their nuclear ambitions.

I want to focus for a second on the other end of the spectrum with Iran, and that is how we can use this new engagement to continue to hold Iran accountable for its actions apart from its nuclear ambitions, in particular its domestic human rights abuses, its support of terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah, and its aggressiveness and incitement against the State of Israel. How can we use this new phase of our relationship to make sure that Canada is holding the Iranian

regime to account for the way it behaves in the international community?

• (1630)

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: Thank you very much for that question.

As I said in my opening statement, we continue to be extremely concerned by the human rights situation—or the lack of it, I should say—in Iran and the abuse with regard to freedom of organization, freedom of speech, and women's rights. We firmly believe that the ability to engage somewhat more in the diplomatic forum will allow us the opportunity to reinforce the actions we've already been taking for some time.

As you know, for 13 years now, Canada has led and co-sponsored the UN resolution on human rights on Iran. We once again managed to pass it this last December in the UN General Assembly. I think it's been a very important instrument, but it's not sufficient. We need to work with our other partners and allies in continuing to exert pressure and to try to ensure that Iran does follow normal international precepts with regard to respect for international human rights.

Again, I think it will afford us many more opportunities to convey those messages. We need to engage, as the minister has said, not only with those with whom we are like-minded but with those with whom we have major differences.

Mr. Michael Levitt: As a follow-up to that question, I think there has been great concern over some of the groups that previously maintained and still maintain a listing as terrorist organizations, such as the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Quds Force. There's no plan to remove them from the list of terrorist organizations, is there?

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: That is correct. Iran is still listed as a state sponsor of terrorism and the Quds, or the Revolutionary Guard, is still considered a terrorist organization under our Criminal Code. Any dealings with that organization would be culpable.

Mr. Michael Levitt: Thank you very much.

The Chair: There is still time on the Liberal side.

Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): I'll go to Mr. Rigby. He made a comment about 10,000 employees in 107 countries.

Since the unemployment rate is pretty high in our own country, my question is, are those 10,000 employees all Canadian?

Mr. Vincent Rigby: The 10,000 employees are all Canadians, I do believe. I don't think they include the locally engaged staff.

I'll defer to my colleagues here, who are ex-DFAIT. I'm an ex-CIDA wonk. Maybe they have the exact breakdown of the numbers.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: In very rough terms, it's about fifty-fifty Canadians versus locally engaged staff. I think the reason for this is that we employ local employees where possible. It's much more economical to do so when we can find qualified people who understand the country and who can provide continuity over years and years, compared to diplomats who rotate in and out. We're constantly looking at that balance of Canadian diplomats versus locally engaged diplomats from the standpoint of what's more operationally effective and what's more economical.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: I think that in our country we have Canadians from all walks of life and from everywhere in the world. We should be focusing actively on employing more Canadians. I do understand your issue and that it's more economical to hire local people, but as I said, there's unemployment in our own country. For youth, it's 14%, and the regular unemployment rate is 7%. We need to keep that in mind when we employ people.

Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there anything further on the Liberal side?

Mr. Housefather.

•(1635)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Again, thank you for your presentation.

On a follow-up, I'd like to move to your comments about the UN Human Rights Council. I understand that Minister Dion is going to be going to the UN Human Rights Council, that we're going to be speaking to that body, and that we're illustrating again our desire to engage in that multilateral level and at the UN.

Of course, the UN human rights commission has been a body that has singled out Israel in a disproportionate way and has adopted resolutions passed by countries whose human rights records themselves are despicable. In the process of re-engagement, what is Canada's intention for holding that commission to account for its disproportionate singling out of Israel?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: If I may, I'll try to respond to your good question.

I think Minister Dion said yesterday pretty clearly that we don't see the United Nations through rose-coloured glasses. It's an imperfect institution, but it is the only institution we have, and we have to work within it.

You can be sure that our representatives to the various human rights bodies, including the human rights council, are constantly advocating to make changes where necessary, because we do see, as you've pointed out, the imbalance that from time to time unfortunately appears on the agenda of the human rights council. We do advocate, and we speak openly and firmly about that when we see it.

The Chair: Are there further questions?

We're now into the new round, so it's still the Liberals, and then the Conservatives.

Mr. Miller.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for their presentations. I have a question that can be either simple or complex, depending on the answer.

Almost all of you are deputy ministers. You gave us a good overview of the situation and described your mandate letters clearly. I'd like you each to take turns and tell me how this committee and the government can have an impact on your work. We won't necessarily follow, but what direction would you like this committee to take in its dealings with you?

We have made a commitment to unmuzzle you—perhaps that isn't the best word. As deputy ministers, you have an opportunity to introduce policies. Since we have a limited amount of time, I'd like you to discuss two or three points as they relate to international development.

Any of you can answer that.

Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Vincent Rigby: As you say, it's an easy question, depending on how you answer it and whether it's going to be career-enhancing or not.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Marc Miller: I'm sure you'll do a good job.

Mr. Vincent Rigby: First of all, I'll clarify. We're assistant deputy ministers, two directors general, and one acting assistant deputy minister. I'm not quite at the deputy minister level; you have ministers, deputy ministers, and assistant deputy ministers.

However, that doesn't change the fact that at the end of the day we, as public officials, provide the best policy advice we can to ministers. That's what we do. We don't make policy. We provide advice. We provide policy options. At the end of the day, the government decides what to do based on those options, and then we are loyal implementers. We like to say “fearless advice and faithful execution”. That's what we do.

In terms of what the government may want to have this committee look at, that would be a decision that ministers would make at the end of the day in consultation with you and with the chair. That would be my answer.

I don't know if my colleagues want to add anything.

Mr. Marc Miller: I'd encourage them to be more fearless.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dean Allison: It's easy from your position, that's for sure.

The Chair: Are there any further questions from the Liberal side?

Mr. Levitt, you can pass the questions on to your parliamentary secretary. It's perfectly legitimate.

Mr. Michael Levitt: Yes, absolutely.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Gould.

Ms. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Levitt, for letting me ask a question.

Thank you to all the officials for being here today.

My question is for Ms. Fountain Smith, or perhaps you, Ms. Jeffrey. Perhaps you could talk a bit about the demands on Canada for humanitarian assistance, and where we are right now.

Thank you.

Ms. Heather Jeffrey (Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Yes, I can respond to that.

We're in what is really an unprecedented situation in terms of the demands that we're seeing globally for humanitarian assistance. The figures have tripled since 2005. The UN consolidated appeals that were just launched for 2016 are requesting \$30.5 billion Canadian for this year to respond globally.

The challenges are great, but the international community is responding. Canada as well, of course, has increased its humanitarian assistance in order to respond to the increased need. This need has been driven primarily by the rise in protracted conflicts, which are not being resolved, in places like Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and South Sudan. This year we responded to over 64 country situations, ranging from natural disasters to conflict-based humanitarian demands, with over \$900 million of assistance. Canada is in fact a key donor to humanitarian assistance internationally, and we are the sixth-largest country donor in humanitarian response.

We are working hard, along with our international partners and non-governmental organizations, in the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit, which is coming up in May in Istanbul. There, the international humanitarian system as a whole, along with all of the UN member states, will be looking at how we can work together better and more effectively to make the most of every dollar we spend in order to respond to these unprecedented challenges.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gould.

Go ahead, Mr. Levitt. You have a lot of time.

Mr. Michael Levitt: Thank you.

Just this past weekend, I was back in my riding of York Centre. I have a very large Latin American population, and I happened to be at several events for that population and that community. Time and time again I heard, "When are we going to start engaging again with Latin America?" No offence to the CPC guys on the other side, but this comes up a lot, so I wanted to ask a question.

I know that media coverage, both international and domestic, doesn't always focus on the important relationships that Canada has with other countries in the Americas, particularly Latin America. What are Canada's interests and priorities in that region? Can you give us an idea about how addressing democracy, trade, security, and violence kind of go hand in hand when we look at that area and our policies moving forward?

Mr. Vincent Rigby: I think that question is a little bit out of our remit, because none of us at this table is actually directly responsible for Latin America and the Caribbean. Colleague David Morrison is

the assistant deputy minister for the Americas. I was talking before, as was Alex, about the four geographic ADMs. David is responsible for the Americas, including the United States and Mexico.

Having said that, maybe I can throw out a few ideas. Hopefully David won't rap my knuckles when I get back to the office.

I think we've engaged quite heavily in Latin America and the Caribbean over the last number of years. The areas you've identified—in terms of prosperity, in terms of security, in terms of projecting values, in terms of democracy promotion—have also been pursued in that region by Canada. If you look at our presence in the region, you can see it's not just in terms of government but that there is also private sector engagement, in particular in the financial sector and in extractives. I think outside of Canada, our largest presence in the world from an extractives perspective is in Latin America, in Peru and countries like that.

We have very strong relationships with key countries in the region. There's Colombia and its free trade agreement; it's a country of focus for our development. There's Peru, and there's an emerging relationship with Brazil. On the development side, we have a memorandum of understanding with Brazil on development assistance.

There's a lot happening right across the board. I think it's for the government to decide how they want to build on that and how they want to engage regionally through the OAS, as well as bilaterally through various countries and what have you.

Falling back on the mantra we've had, we'll see where the government wants to go at the end of the day. The mandate letters are very ambitious. I think we'll be playing in a lot of different places, so we'll have to see.

Mr. Michael Levitt: There are lots of opportunities, clearly.

Mr. Vincent Rigby: Absolutely.

Mr. Michael Levitt: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Mr. Kent.

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

Thanks to all of you for appearing before the committee today, and thanks to Canada's foreign service professionals who serve the country around the world in challenging and often dangerous circumstances, very often without the recognition they truly deserve.

Among the government's various Iran initiatives, of which we in the official opposition are very skeptical, is the plan to reopen an embassy in Tehran. Of course, our government closed the embassy in 2012 out of concern for the very safety of the foreign service professionals who were serving there.

I wonder if you could give an update, given the Iranian regime's selective application of the Geneva convention on diplomacy in terms of standing back and occasionally inciting attacks and assaults and damages on diplomatic missions. We've just seen the Saudi mission ransacked, and before that the British embassy, and of course we can go back to the occupation and destruction of the U.S. embassy after the Islamic revolution.

In this update, perhaps you could tell us the considerations with regard to acquiring a new embassy or a new mission. Tell us about its physical characteristics, and since it is among the most dangerous and hazardous postings in the world today, tell us the security precautions that would be essential to putting our at-risk Canadian staff in place.

Second, what is the counterbalancing provision for reopening the Iranian mission here in Ottawa, which was found by our government previously to have been deeply engaged in working to provide prohibited goods, particularly on the nuclear side but also in terms of ballistic missile development, through the mission here in Ottawa?

• (1645)

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: Thank you very much.

Yes, we have a rather long and rocky history of relations with Iran. We've experienced some of the difficulties you've mentioned, Mr. Kent. We're quite aware of the recent sacking of the Saudi Arabian embassy. A statement has been made in that regard.

I think we're getting far ahead of ourselves. The public pronouncement by the minister is that we are interested in opening some channels of diplomatic engagement. There are no plans at present for opening an embassy. This will have to take a good deal of time, and it will depend on the response we get from the Iranians, not only with regard to interest but also in terms of assurances on security in particular.

For the coming months, I don't anticipate any change in that status. We'll just be seeking to perhaps increase our diplomatic engagement in some modest way.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I'd like to add something to your point about proliferation-related activities.

Many will have followed the announcement by the government a week ago, when we lifted many of the sanctions that were in place against Iran. I should tell you that we did not lift the controls that we have on exports to Iran that are of concern for proliferation, particularly with respect to nuclear and ballistic missile goods and technologies.

When we reviewed our package of sanctions, we employed a lot of rigour to ensure that we wouldn't open the door to trade and proliferation of sensitive goods and services. In fact, we also added six individuals and one entity to our autonomous sanctions under the Special Economic Measures (Iran) Regulations for their role in supporting Iran's ballistic missile program.

We're constantly watching for this kind of risk and mitigating against it when we can.

Hon. Peter Kent: With regard to the prohibited entities, I understand that Canada has lifted the prohibition on Bank Melli, which is an Iranian state bank, whereas the United States has not.

Some concern has been expressed in certain circles in the United States that the reopening of a Canadian operation of Bank Melli may see the movement of funds for various reasons that might be suspect.

I wonder whether FINTRAC would be the government's tool to prevent unauthorized dealings.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: FINTRAC would certainly be one of the partners that we work with regularly on this issue.

The fact is that overall we have a relatively consistent approach with regard to the United States and our European allies when it comes to sanctions, but our lists are slightly different. That depends on a number of different factors, including the information we have available to us that would suggest whether or not something poses a risk. The only identical lists that we have are the UN lists, which all states are obliged to implement.

There are slight deviations. I could look for more information about that specific case. Not all of it is something we can talk about openly.

• (1650)

Hon. Peter Kent: Sure, I understand.

I will ask about the Palestinian Authority now.

In recent years our previous government invested substantially in supporting justice initiatives and security initiatives, particularly in the West Bank. It supported building courthouses and training judges in the rule of law, and training security forces in Jordan so that they could take over security duties to allow the removal of the Israeli security presence in the West Bank.

I wonder if you could give us an update on where exactly those initiatives stand.

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: Mr. Kent, those initiatives are ongoing. They are exactly the sectors in which we continue to do justice and economic growth programming in the West Bank and Gaza. I think we've expended around \$15 million in the past year, and upward of \$27 million with regard to the efforts to implement development programming that will—exactly as you said—strengthen their ability to be secure and provide assurances of security to Israel and others. Equally importantly, it will enable their economic development and their ability to provide employment.

The Chair: Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I didn't realize it was our time, but thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am going to ask a follow-up to Ms. Gould's question related to humanitarian aid.

I think everybody recognizes the importance of providing humanitarian aid within the constraints that the government has. My question is, how do you vet the international agencies to which we give this aid? For example, if the previous government made a decision to remove funding from an agency as a result of the rationale at the time, what proper vetting are we doing before considering re-engaging with that agency?

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: From a development perspective, the area that I'm responsible for is a rather complex area. There are many actors. We take this very seriously and do a lot of due diligence.

There are many different levels of control and evaluation. One, of course, would be the partnerships we have with non-governmental organizations and UN agencies. Obviously these are vetted very carefully. We have an understanding that they must disclose all of their partnerships. They must tell us if they are going to delegate some of our funding to another organization, and therefore we would have the right, and indeed the obligation, to be able to do due diligence and understand what those organizations are and if we have any concerns.

In the particular case of the West Bank in Gaza, we will take special measures—that is, we will look at any contracts with organizations against Canada's terrorist list and ensure that we are not providing funding for those organizations.

Ms. Heather Jeffrey: From the perspective of our humanitarian assistance, first of all, especially when we're working in complex crises, such as the situations we see in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and elsewhere, we work only with experienced and interested partners who have a track record of experience on the ground in conflict settings. They typically have very developed systems of registration of beneficiaries to ensure that the aid is going to the right people. They have logistics plans and distribution plans that enable us to ensure that it is in fact the most vulnerable who are receiving the assistance. We participate by virtue of our relationships with these international organizations on their governance boards, so we have a say in the decisions they make about how they work in conflict zones.

In addition, our standard procedure is to look at the financial status of the organizations. We do fiduciary risk assessments for each organization we work with. Once the projects are ongoing, they are tracked, reported on, and monitored in the field to the extent possible, either by ourselves and our missions directly or through other partners.

Finally, we have a detailed program of program- and project-based monitoring and evaluation, which looks at the results that were achieved in the field and then reports back on that.

Thank you.

• (1655)

Mr. Vincent Rigby: Perhaps I could jump in, Mr. Chairman, on the evaluations side.

We have a very robust evaluation function inside the department on the development side. On a five-year rolling plan, we evaluate all of our programming right across the board, 100%. That includes, as Heather said, the agencies and organizations we work with, including on the humanitarian side. These evaluation reports are posted publicly on the website. You can actually go and see what the reports said and see the departmental responses to the recommendations in those evaluation reports.

The Chair: Mr. Sidhu, go ahead.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Thank you.

Employment is still stuck in my mind. Thank you for all the hard work you guys are doing, but being a businessman, I know there's always room to improve. What can we do as a committee to change the policy in order to employ Canadians?

I know we're concerned about the economics of it, but as I said, we're suffering right here in our own country. We have people from all over the world here. If language is the issue in the country we're serving, then we need to come up with some sort of plan. I mean, 5,000 people is 5,000 people out of 10,000, so guide us here: what do you need from this committee to change the policy on that a little bit?

Mr. Vincent Rigby: I will defer to my former ambassadorial colleagues. I screwed up the number the last time, so....

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: That's a fundamental policy question that I think we'd be happy to take back to our minister for consideration. It's not something we'll be able to pronounce on today, but we'll very happily bring that clear message back.

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: I would only reassure the member that a major part of our work at the department is creating jobs for Canadians. Through our trade and investment programs, there are multiples of the 5,000 you're speaking to, sir. Through our work and through our embassies abroad, we are promoting Canadian goods and services. We are trying to attract investment here in Canada that is producing thousands of jobs for Canadians.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: I'm glad to hear that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Saini is next.

Mr. Raj Saini: I have just a quick question. With regard to the trade agreement with Europe, one of the irritants has been investor rights between Canada and the CETA. I'm just wondering whether you can enlighten us about whether that has changed or what progress has been made with regard to that negotiation.

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: I believe that our Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement trade negotiator, Mr. Steve Verheul, addressed the international trade committee this morning. I think he would have brought your colleagues up to date on negotiations.

The investor state dispute is, we hope, a final sticking point in ongoing discussions between him and his EU counterpart. We're fairly confident that we're going to find a solution very soon and move on that. I would again underline the importance of this agreement in being able to create jobs. As a very modest estimate, we are hoping for a 20% increase in trade in services and goods.

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to jump in and ask one question before I go to you, Garnett. I guess the chair is allowed to do that.

I am curious about when we might see your newly developed trade and export strategy. Do you have any sense of when that might be available, so that we could get into some detail? I would be very interested in that.

I'm assuming there was one in the past, so you're obviously developing a new one. It would be useful for the committee to have some sense of the timeline.

Mr. Vincent Rigby: All I can say at this point, Mr. Chair, is that my colleagues on the trade side are working very hard at implementing that mandate letter commitment in terms of the trade and export strategy. I can't give you a specific deadline right now, but I know they're working very hard on it. It's one of the top priorities for the Minister of International Trade.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis is next.

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

Thank you to the officials for coming in and presenting to us today.

I'd like to ask a question about your communications protocols within the department, just for my clarification.

If a member of the diplomatic service or a departmental employee is asked to speak to the media or given an opportunity to give a public address about an issue, are they required to seek approval first, and if so, from whom?

• (1700)

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: That very much is a question that has to be answered with “it depends.” It depends on who you are, what you're working on, and the circumstances.

For example, all of our ambassadors are empowered to speak. In fact, all of our officials are empowered to speak. One has to take into consideration whether someone is in a position to say something meaningful about that issue, because in many cases policy has yet to be decided, so speaking out wouldn't be helpful to anybody in that regard.

Normally there's no approval process, as far as I'm aware, but there is certainly a consultative process. Anybody who's considering speaking to the media wants to be sure they're apprised of all the information that would be useful in that regard. That requires consultation with a number of parts of the department, including our communications branch, which has very often the best overview of an issue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sorry to jump in here. I'm just thinking about it from a time perspective.

There is a consultative process that involves going to the communications department. You're telling me that an ambassador or a departmental official or anyone can still tell a communications department, “Sorry, I wish to speak publicly on this issue”, and there are no negative consequences for their career. Is that what you're telling me?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I can speak for those ambassadors with whom I work most closely, including our ambassador to NATO,

who, without any consultation or approvals, was speaking to the media a number of times last week on some NATO decisions.

Again, it depends on the nature of the person and their confidence in their files, but to my knowledge, there's no absolute requirement for approval.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Can I ask specifically about the ambassador for religious freedom? Is he able to speak publicly without seeking approval?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Yes, he is able to speak publicly. He has been encouraged to continue to do his excellent work, because we recognize the important work he's doing. We're working to ensure there's continuity in that regard.

We are also looking at the question of human rights within a broader rubric. We consider human rights to be indivisible and inseparable.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I certainly think that's a discussion we're going to continue to have.

I want to move in a different direction, if that's okay, just in the interest of time.

Do you have a working definition of what constitutes genocide? At a technical level, what does genocide mean in your perspective? If so, would someone be open to telling me what that definition is?

Ms. Sarah Fountain Smith: I think we have to get back to you on that, and consult our legal colleagues as well, because it's not something we can answer.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Specifically—and you may want to defer on this as well—I wonder if, in your opinion, events in Syria and Iraq at present constitute genocide.

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: It's not a term that I have seen used at this time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Then it's not a term that the government has used to describe those events. Is that correct?

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: The government?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes.

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: I was thinking—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sorry, that's a separate question.

Certainly many people have used the word “genocide” to describe it—Hillary Clinton, for example, and various human rights groups.

There are two parts. First, has the government used that term? Second, at a technical level, do you have thoughts on whether that term applies?

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: I think Ms. Fountain Smith is very correct; I think we should come back to you with regard to that question.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

In the remaining time, can you tell me about Canada's formal position on Tibet and if the government has any intention of endorsing the Middle Way proposal coming from the Tibetan government?

Mr. Vincent Rigby: Again, we don't have that expertise at this table. We'd be happy to go back and consult our Asia-Pacific branch and get back to you on that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. Thank you.

I'll come back to the Middle East, then.

We've had some discussion recently in the media about UNRWA. I'm wondering if you think there are other effective ways that are above reproach, besides UNRWA, of delivering aid to the Palestinian people.

• (1705)

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: You don't ask easy questions.

The West Bank and Gaza, and the Middle East generally, are very difficult places to work, as we've said before. There are several channels by which we provide and have provided assistance to Palestinians, including UNRWA, and in the past the World Food Programme and other channels.

We constantly review the organizations that are available to deliver both humanitarian and development assistance. We work very closely with other partners and are able to learn from their experience and their assessments and then make the best choice possible.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

The Chair: Madame Laverdière.

[Translation]

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

I'd also like to ask about the possible reopening of our embassy in Tehran.

Obviously, I approach the matter from a different viewpoint, being one of those who believe in the importance of engaging in dialogue with parties even when we have a dispute with them. We will keep our eyes and ears open to see how things develop in the months ahead.

Seeing as I'm already making a few comments, I will take this opportunity to echo what my colleague said about the Global Fund. It's essential that we support the Global Fund given all the incredible work it does.

I'd also like to say a few words about the local employees in our embassies abroad. My understanding is that their expertise, in-depth understanding of the country, and network of contacts make it possible for Canadian representatives to do their jobs properly. They are, in my view, essential to the process. And that's it for my comments.

Now I'd like to come back to the topic of sanctions. Mr. Chemezov, Mr. Yakunin, and Mr. Sechin are on the list of individuals against whom the Americans have imposed sanctions. These Russian oligarchs have business dealings with Canada, and yet their names have never been added to the list of those subject to sanctions by Canada.

Will that situation be corrected soon?

Ms. Alex Bugailiskis: My apologies, but I'm going to answer in English seeing as it's a bit complicated for me.

[English]

The sanctions with regard to Russia, particularly in accordance with our position on Ukraine, are continually reviewed and updated as we move forward. The last update, I guess, was back in June 2015. We added a number of Russian individuals and entities.

The sanctions by other partners, whether the United States or the European Union, are harmonized, but they're not identical. They depend on the information we have, and they also depend on developments and timing. That's the best response I can give at this point.

With regard to ongoing review, the Prime Minister has made it very clear that we will continue to be very strong on Ukraine and that the sanctions will not be lifted until such time as they meet their obligations under the Minsk agreement.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you.

I'm not sure whether you'll be able to give me an answer to my question today.

I'd like to know whether Canada is going to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. It applies to the treatment of people in prison. Canada has yet to sign the protocol. Are there any plans to do so?

Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: It's a very good question, Madame Laverdière, and it is an issue that is currently under discussion with our new minister with regard to an agenda related to human rights, which he may or may not wish to pursue.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: When it comes to corporate social responsibility, we know Canada's current system simply doesn't work.

Are any efforts being made to strengthen the system? I assume that would involve a number of different departments. What efforts are being made to improve the system?

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Vincent Rigby: On corporate social responsibility, Mr. Chairman, yes, there have been a number of discussions over the last few years in terms of how we want to move forward. In terms of the new government, I've certainly not been privy to discussions directly with ministers at this point in time with regard to how we want to move forward to strengthen standards or strengthen the provisions, etc. As you say, it's a matter not just for Global Affairs Canada but also for other departments.

As I mentioned before, we have a lot of extractive industries in Latin America. We're going to continue to work with the private sector, I think in the context of development in particular, but also more broadly in terms of promoting our prosperity. This is something that I think will remain on the radar screens, something we'll continue to look at.

In terms of specific measures right now, I can't say where government will want to go.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Now I'm going to turn to Ms. Fountain Smith and Ms. Jeffrey.

There is a major crisis going on in the Central African Republic. Are we, at the very least, going to maintain our humanitarian assistance to the Central African Republic? In addition, are we actively involved in the refugee camps in the neighbouring countries of the Central African Republic?

[*English*]

Ms. Heather Jeffrey: Yes. In fact, the situation in the Central African Republic is one of great concern to us, and we're following it very closely. It's a very volatile situation. We are active there and are looking at our assistance for the coming year in the context of the UN consolidated appeals, which have increased. We'll be looking at our response this year, given the increasing needs on the ground.

The sectors we've been working in relate mainly to safe water, health, emergency medical assistance, education, and seeds and tools to try to improve the very dire food security situation in the country that has been caused by displacement as a result of conflict within the borders and also by refugee flows into neighbouring states.

In 2015 Canada gave almost \$28 million in assistance to respond to humanitarian needs in the Central African Republic. There are still 2.7 million people in need of assistance there, and we'll be looking at accommodating those needs going forward. We're currently the fourth-largest humanitarian donor to the Central African Republic.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to close it there for today. We have a number of items we'd like to discuss in the short time we still have left.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming.

One thing I want to signal is that we will be asking you to come back. It's my intention as the chair, if the committee will allow it, to invite the officials for updates on a fairly regular basis. I think this is very helpful, and as the government moves on, it will give us a chance to look at it as a quarterly visit, if you will.

I think this is a very good start, and as we work our way through the new government's mandate letters and the new agenda, we'll have lots to ask, for sure.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you very much for coming here today. We look forward to seeing you again.

Thank you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I have a quick point of order.

The Chair: Colleagues, we'll suspend for five minutes and then we'll come back.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Could I just ask very quickly?

I asked a number of questions, and there was some discussion of follow-up. Is the normal protocol that the witnesses would provide written responses to the committee that we could review at a later date?

The Chair: Yes, that's the normal process. They will respond to us in writing, and it will be distributed to all committee members.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

The Chair: We'll take five minutes and then we'll be right back.

● (1710)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (1715)

● (1720)

The Chair: May I ask everyone to come back to the table?

We have a couple of pieces of business. Hélène is not here, so we'll have to wait for a second. We're going to be talking about her motions. It wouldn't be fair to have a discussion without her, so I think we'll wait a couple of seconds for that.

Give us two seconds, colleagues. We're just waiting for the NDP member.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Pardon, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It's not a problem, Hélène. We wouldn't start without you.

I appreciate the opportunity to spend a couple of minutes on what I was thinking about. I'll run this by the committee.

There are two notices of motion. I've asked Hélène to consider tabling them and sending them to the steering committee, because if the steering committee is going to be effective, I'd like to have the steering committee have a look at our work and develop our strategy as a group around the work we want to do, unless there is some political urgency to notices of motion or motions.

It's early days, and one of the things that I've been communicating to the staff here is that I'd like to do things a little differently from what we do in the House in many committees. For example, we invite some of the most outstanding witnesses the country has to offer, and then we give them 20 minutes to talk. I find that to be somewhat disheartening, frankly, and maybe disrespectful, and I'd like to see the committee try to develop a strategy around this situation. If we're going to get into some really substantive issues, we're going to ask people to spend a little time with us and make sure that we do ask the right questions and do get the right information.

I'm asking our colleague in the NDP to refer these to the steering committee. They will come back for a vote. They have to come back; we all know how the rules work.

I'm looking for the steering committee to meet on Thursday, when we'll have a discussion of what we think the issues are that we would like to focus our attention on. We'll then come back to the full committee on the following Tuesday with some advice. Then we'll have a full debate on the issues that we're bringing to your attention and maybe of others that we didn't.

That's the approach I'd like to take with the committee. As well, at some point the committee should be made aware that for fairly small studies of \$40,000 or less, I understand, we are our own creature and we have our own abilities to manoeuvre around reports like that, but if we're going to get into substantive work that has a fairly large budget and may have a component of travel, we have to go to the Liaison Committee to have that discussion.

Before we get anywhere near that, we need to have a good discussion among all parties in this committee. If I go to the Liaison Committee, I want to make sure that my colleagues in the NDP and CPC are supportive. If we're going to talk about going outside this country and having these kinds of discussions, we'll need support in the House, as you know, to travel, and obviously we'll need the Liaison Committee to advance a fairly significant budget if we do that kind of work.

All that is to say that I'd like to start with the simple way of dealing with this, and that is to go to the committee—the steering committee, as we used to call it—and then have this discussion. At this stage, I don't want to put the committee to the test of either approving or not approving these motions, because I think they have merit and I don't want to see the committee having to react too quickly without having some discussion. I don't think that's fair to the mover and/or fair to the subject matter and the people out there who think very strongly about some of these matters. As you know, you've been lobbied already on some of them.

Those are my thoughts today. I want to move this over to Héléne to give me her thoughts, because it's her motion.

• (1725)

Ms. Héléne Lavergère: Indeed, if we come back to committee to have a full discussion and a vote in committee, I think it's a good way to go to start discussion. Having these motions—in particular, the one on women, peace, and security—within the steering committee would clear up some of the hurdles. I welcome the opportunity to work together in a convivial fashion.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I don't think I need a motion. All we're doing is tabling it to a meeting down the road.

Our steering committee will meet on Thursday. Dean, you're on the steering committee, right? Are you too, Peter? No.

The two Liberal members on the committee will be Peter and Marc, I think. That will work out. We'll get the clerk to inform you of where that meeting will be, and then we'll get into a very broad discussion.

Is there any further business of the committee?

Now, if you're following my train of thought, there's a lot of discussion by the present government of doing things differently, if I can put that way, but what exactly does that mean? I think we have an opportunity as a committee, independently of government, to have a look at these matters, to find out for ourselves, and to develop an understanding of what that means. I think it's important.

There's another thing I wanted to throw out there for you to keep in mind. There has not been a comprehensive review of our role in the world since I think 2005 or somewhere in that area. It's been a long time since we sat down and went through a complete and full review.

That may sound like a lot, but it can be broken up into pieces. I just throw that out there for something to think about as we work our way through this.

Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Chair, are you canvassing members to provide to the members of the subcommittee some additional ideas of possible areas of study, or will we look at Héléne's two motions, and perhaps that—

The Chair: No, that's exactly what I'm doing. I'm canvassing all the committee members, including the Liberals, on what they think this committee's work should entail.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you.

The Chair: If you want to keep it really tight and specific to motions and that sort of thing, then that's your prerogative as a committee. I can't, as the chair, move you anywhere other than where you want to go. The idea is to think about what this committee can do to be helpful as it relates to government policy and in terms of informing the public.

Mr. Levitt.

Mr. Michael Levitt: With regard to the discussion around the scope of the committee and decisions to keep it narrower or to look at projects that might involve travel, is that a discussion you want to have here, or is that a discussion for the subcommittee because of its all-party representation?

The Chair: It will be two-phased. We will have a discussion at the subcommittee. The subcommittee may come up with some ideas and come back with recommendations, but those will be agreed to here at the full committee. When we decide on doing something, there will be a motion on the work to be done, as is always the case.

Mr. Michael Levitt: Thank you.

The Chair: That wraps it up for today.

I noticed that a number of deputy ministers or assistant deputy ministers were not available today. We will make them available as soon as possible. For example, on the discussion about Latin America, the proper official wasn't here. We will extend invitations to officials.

Just so the committee is aware, I will be asking the ministers to come as soon as they are able and comfortable to come to the committee, because I think it's important to do that.

Finally, I very much believe that this committee's number one function is to look at the estimates. It is our most important role as members of Parliament. For those who are not very familiar with estimates, you should get to know what they mean, and why we look at them. There have been a lot of decisions made over the previous government. Now there will be estimates, and then this new government will be making decisions. It's our role to make sure we look at the nuts and bolts of what is going on at Global Affairs. That's our major function as a committee.

I hope you will agree with me that we won't spend a political afternoon with the minister and an afternoon on the estimates with the officials and think we're done. It should be a lot more in depth than that. I don't see it as a negative; I see it as a very positive thing

for everyone, because we get to know exactly what the budgets are in each area and we have discussions about our effectiveness. I think it would be a positive thing for all of us.

I want you to think about that as well, because I'm at the disposal of the committee. If the committee says no to that longer process for estimates, it will be up to the committee to decide. I just wanted to give you that sense of how I'd like to proceed.

Having said all that, I'll see the steering committee on Thursday and my colleagues in full committee on Tuesday, a week from today. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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