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# Standing Committee on National Defence

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Chair: Mrs. Karen McCrimmon





## Standing Committee on National Defence

Monday, October 26, 2020

• (1110)

[English]

**The Chair (Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.)):** I'm calling this meeting to order.

[Translation]

Good morning. Welcome, everyone.

[English]

Welcome to meeting number 2 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Wednesday, October 14, 2020, the committee is meeting for a briefing on the work of Canada's ambassador for women, peace and security.

With the committee's concurrence, I will reserve 15 minutes at the end of the session for committee business.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of September 23, 2020. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. As you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for the meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either "Floor", "English" or "French".

For the members participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room. Keep in mind the directives from the Board of Internal Economy regarding masking and health protocols.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer.

This is a reminder that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do our very best to maintain the order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses.

[Translation]

Thank you very much for your time. I'm very happy to have you with us today.

[English]

I welcome, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Jacqueline O'Neill, ambassador for women, peace and security; and from the Department of National Defence, Brigadier-General Lise Bourgon, defence champion, women, peace and security.

You can go ahead.

[Translation]

I invite you to make your presentations.

[English]

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill (Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Thank you. *Merci*, Madam Chair and members of the committee for focusing on this issue.

I care deeply about this topic, and perhaps as a reflection of that, I submitted a somewhat lengthy written statement, but do not worry, *ne vous inquiétez pas*, I will keep my opening remarks here to well under the allotted time so you can hear directly from Brigadier-General Bourgon and we can proceed quickly to questions and discussion.

I want to highlight only a few things.

[Translation]

It is especially significant that we meet today. This week marks the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the foundation of the women, peace and security agenda.

We have made a great deal of progress. There are now 10 related Security Council resolutions. Eighty-five countries have national action plans, and most multilateral organizations have dedicated policies or plans, including NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or OSCE, and the African Union.

[English]

However, progress on implementation has been inconsistent. For example, the representation of UN military women peacekeepers is only about 6%, and some within that remarkable group still experience unacceptable working conditions.

Women around the world—for example, in Afghanistan—are still fighting for direct representation in peace talks. What's more, much of the progress we have achieved is in peril. There are increasing attacks against defenders of the human rights of women and LGBTQ2S persons, and the pandemic and particularly authoritarian responses to COVID-19 represent existential threats for many women peacebuilders and local organizations working at the community level.

[Translation]

Canada has demonstrated sustained commitment, spanning multiple governments and leaders, toward achieving gender equality and advancing women, peace and security.

We have an engaged Parliament and civil society. We are midway through our second national action plan, which now counts eight departments and the RCMP as implementing partners.

There is always much Canada can improve. The Brigadier General and I are happy to talk about the way we have progressed and about areas for improvement.

Just over a year ago, I was appointed ambassador for a three-year term.

- (1115)

[English]

I've been fortunate to work directly with many DND and CAF personnel in a range of ways. They are noted in my written submission. They include contributing to Canadian leadership initiatives, including the Elsie initiative for women in peace operations; the women, peace and security chief of defence staff's network, and more; strengthening implementation of Canada's own national action plan; supporting and engaging directly with CAF troops and operations on the ground; and connecting the wide variety of specialists working across our government on the gendered dimensions of issues such as child soldiers, cybersecurity, veterans' health, and more.

To be sure, there is both excellent work under way and always a need to listen, to reflect humbly and to improve.

I'll end by noting that it is particularly helpful to those of us working inside government when parliamentarians engage in sustaining the focus on women, peace and security. It is helpful when you ask that data be disaggregated by gender as well as by other intersecting identities, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and more. It's helpful when you review and interrogate the annual progress report submitted to Parliament. It's helpful when you invite testimony from civil society representatives and academics. It is particularly helpful when you ask every person who appears before committee about the results of the gender-based analysis-plus assessment they undertook related to the issue being discussed. Especially on issues related to women and gender, I'll

emphasize that it's meaningful to have not only women asking or being asked.

I'm extremely proud to work with colleagues across DND, the CAF and Global Affairs and beyond. Canada truly is setting a global standard on this work. I thank you again for the opportunity to discuss it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you very much, Madam O'Neill.

Now we go to General Bourgon.

**Brigadier-General Lise Bourgon (Defence Champion, Women, Peace and Security, Department of National Defence):** Madam Chair, committee members, thank you for the opportunity to appear alongside Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill, Canadian ambassador for women, peace and security. Thank you for your interest in UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda.

[Translation]

Over 33 years have passed since I began my career as an officer cadet at the Royal Military College Saint-Jean. Since then, as an officer and as a helicopter pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force, I have witnessed many changes that have facilitated the integration of women into the Canadian Armed Forces. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda have been key drivers of progress for the Government of Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces.

[English]

In my current role as defence champion for WPS, my interest is focused first and foremost on making the Canadian Armed Forces stronger and more effective in military operations. My role as champion is wide: to provide leadership and advice, to support the Canadian Armed Forces' efforts in institutionalizing diversity as an operational capability and to promote diversity and inclusion as core institutional values.

From a CAF and DND perspective, the WPS agenda is all-encompassing, complex and interrelated in everything we do. It includes diversity and inclusion, recruitment and retention, training and professional military education, the integration of a gender perspective in domestic and expeditionary operations, research and co-operation among various departments and organizations, allies, civil society and NGOs.

As mandated by the government, the foundation of our institutional and operational progress is through the use of a gender-based analysis-plus, or GBA+, in everything the CAF does, such as policies, procurement and operations.

[Translation]

We have made significant progress, but there is still some way to go, particularly with respect to the recruitment and retention of women in the Canadian Forces.

• (1120)

[English]

With 16.1% of women in the CAF today, it will be a challenge to reach our employment equity goal of 25.1% by 2026, especially as we continue to compete against traditional cultural identity and gender roles in Canadian society.

To this effect, our chief of the defence staff, General Jonathan Vance, launched Operation Generation last year in an effort to recruit women and minority groups to the Canadian Armed Forces. This effort has already had noticeable impacts on the number of women and minority groups recruited.

At the same time, Military Personnel Command is working on many retention initiatives, from pay and benefits to terms of service to geographical stability and support to our families, to name only a few.

As a reflection of Canadian society and values, we understand the strength and benefits that diversity and inclusion bring, both being essential to mission success, institutionally and on operations.

[Translation]

In closing, thank you again for the invitation to be here today. I look forward to this afternoon's discussion and will be happy to answer any questions regarding the importance of the women, peace and security agenda as it relates to the Canadian Armed Forces operations.

Merci.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Madame O'Neill and General Bourgon.

I believe it is Madame Gallant who has the first question.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Ms. O'Neill, in your position's mandate, you're allowed to provide advice to the Minister of National Defence.

Were you consulted or did you provide any advice to the minister on the deployment of the Canadian Armed Forces personnel who went to the long-term care facilities in Ontario and Quebec during the COVID pandemic?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** No, I did not.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Okay.

The health care profession in Canada is disproportionately staffed with female workers. While this trend does not continue in the Canadian Armed Forces, there are certain professions in the military where female participation is significant.

Are you aware whether women in the Canadian Armed Forces were disproportionately exposed to COVID-19 in the deployment to the long-term care facilities in Ontario and Quebec?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I don't have that data, sorry. I can't speak to it.

General Bourgon is raising her hand, so perhaps she can answer.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** As you mentioned, 50% of the women in the military right now are in six occupations, very support-intensive, and also in medical occupations, as you pointed out.

I don't have the actual numbers, but I have the percentages. When we're looking at deployed on operation, normally on expeditionary forces, statistically we're about 12% women who are deployed. Normally in domestic operations, such as hurricane relief in Canada, the statistics are about 9% women. However, during Operation Laser, which was the support to Quebec and Ontario, we had about 15% women. Because of the nature of the role we were asked to do on the ground, which was again mostly medical, there was a slightly higher proportion of women on Operation Laser.

• (1125)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Okay, so there were only 15% women.

In the last Parliament, this committee extensively studied the topic of women in the Canadian Armed Forces as well as Operation Honour. As we heard before committee, and it's been widely reported, Operation Honour has made little progress towards its goal.

Ms. O'Neill, what is your opinion of the reasons behind the lack of progress in Operation Honour?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I'm not best placed to speak to the specifics of what exactly is working with respect to Operation Honour and where the challenges still lie. What I will say is that clearly, to me, the strongest signal has come from senior leadership.

I've worked with armed forces and militaries around the world that have been trying to address this issue, usually not with the same level of coherence or stated determination, and the signals and the message about the lack of tolerance and the desire for a coordinated approach have been quite significant from General Vance, Minister Sajjan and others.

While I won't be able to speak to the specifics of the implementation of the policy, and again, what specifically is working best and what is not, there are some key elements in place through Operation Honour that I think are contributing to significant change over time.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Would the general please answer that question?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** I would reflect what Ms. O'Neill just said. There's a lot of attention on Operation Honour. We are working extremely hard at trying to have a solid policy, changing the culture in the CAF, supporting the victims. There's a lot of progress that has been made.

What we're saying, in my opinion, is actually a good sign, because it means that people are feeling comfortable coming forward and saying what they're living. Although it might look negative, in a way it's a positive, because people are coming forward. That is more than half the battle. We are working extremely hard, and every small step forward is a huge victory. We are getting there.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Canada's national action plan on women, peace and security calls for the full implementation of Justice Deschamps' 10 recommendations on sexual assault in the military.

We had Justice Deschamps herself appear before the committee last year. She stated that there is a disconnect between what she proposed and exactly what is being implemented, specifically in regard to the organizations that handle the reporting of assaults to be outside the military and free from the chain of command.

Do the Canadian Armed Forces need a fully independent centre of accountability for sexual assault and harassment to help make progress towards improving the environment for women in our military? That's for the ambassador, please.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** An enormous number of components go into this. We've heard General Vance talk about this on several occasions. There isn't one single step that will solve the problem.

Whether or not that is implemented or required is a decision that needs to be made, but I will say that one of the most impressive things I've seen is that there has been an effort on a range of fronts. As we talked about in this committee, there has been an effort on changing culture, on impacting not just the highest level of leadership but also on reaching mid-level commanders, for example, and talking about the chain of command authority. It's not just through formal processes, which is one extremely important way of addressing this and dealing with accountability; it's also talking about the responsibility of everyone in the forces.

I'll end before I turn to General Bourgon by saying that having Operation Honour and being able to talk as openly as we do in this committee and elsewhere about its flaws or ways it isn't delivering at the speed we all want it is something that is inherently important for Canada to be able to do because, as I mentioned, we work with militaries around the world that do not recognize the issue and adamantly deny that it's a problem. Being able to say that we have a series of issues that we continue to struggle with implementing to the most effective extent is very important.

• (1130)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** My next question is for the general.

Women in the Canadian Armed Forces who are victims of sexual assault and harassment are told to report these crimes, while the male offenders are rarely punished, and in many cases they are allowed to freely continue serving right alongside their victims as if nothing happened. Meanwhile, the female accusers are denied advancement, transferred from posts or are discharged from the military altogether. It's no wonder that female recruitment has barely budged despite the efforts to increase the numbers.

How can we boost female recruitment when the hostile work environment is clearly reinforced by the chain of command?

**The Chair:** I'm afraid I'm going to have to decline the opportunity for the witness to answer. We're up over eight minutes now, so I'll have to pass the baton for questions to Mr. Spengemann.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ambassador O'Neill and Brigadier-General Bourgon, thank you both for being with us.

Thank you for your service in your important roles and thank you for your testimony today.

Ambassador O'Neill, you mentioned in the beginning that we are days away from the anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. It's the 20-year anniversary of an incredibly significant instrument that's changed the landscape in many ways.

Could you expand a bit on your introductory remarks and tell Canadians why this resolution is important? Also, could you speak about your personal objectives, your aspirations and your vision for what's ahead under this resolution and everything that's connected to it?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Thanks so much for the question.

I know that resolution 1325 is well known to the committee, but as you mentioned, not all Canadians know it that well. It's the first time that the highest security-focused body in the world—the UN Security Council—has said that women are not only victims of conflict but also powerful agents of change. It says that they have to be included in all formal processes to prevent and end violent conflict, and then rebuild afterward. I often share that it's the Security Council resolution that is most translated into other languages, more than any other one, which I think speaks to its relevance. I've seen, over 20 years, that women in communities around the world use it as a tool to hold their own governments accountable, saying, "Even though you've said you will do this, we're not seeing action."

You mentioned some milestones and the things that are going well. Right now, as I mentioned, we have 85 countries that have national action plans. Some of them admittedly are very weak, but they are all a tool around which people living with war around the world have been able to organize and to say that this is something that the international community has said is their right.

We're seeing an increasing number of policies. We're also seeing a lot of data and research emerge. We first saw the resolution emerge 20 years ago, the last time Canada was on the Security Council. We didn't even know the state of the numbers, and I think you would all have been terrified by the methodology used to document it. Researchers were looking at signed peace agreements and the number of women in photos to figure out that in fact the proportion of women who were mediators was two per cent. Four per cent of people who signed peace agreements were women, yet they were dealing with issues and agreements as they relate to security that affect the entire population. We've seen a lot of progress in that way.

You've asked about next steps and our vision. We're still looking to close some of the big gaps in this space. There's a strong ambition that was set out by the agreement, and there are still significant areas where we don't see it consistently applied. A lot of that relates to the work of women in communities and being recognized, getting funding, getting access to decision-making, being protected. We're increasingly looking to close some of those gaps.

My hope is that over time, we'll see a complete shift in burden from having to start many events and meetings, as we often do now, by justifying the value of inclusion and talking about the contributions women make, to people having to justify and defend exclusion. We'll get to a much more nuanced consideration of gender and we'll get a lot more integration into education and training, as Brigadier-General Bourgon mentioned earlier, so that we will have more and more people coming up through the system who are familiarized with these ideas much earlier on.

• (1135)

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** Thank you so much.

Ambassador O'Neill, let me take you to a slightly more specific question.

Last Friday, I had a chance to join a webinar by the Challenges Forum, an organization that's focused on peacekeeping practices, and the title was "Improving Peacekeeping Effectiveness by Increasing Diversity of Mission Composition". It was very specifically focused on the UN work of Canadians in the field. We've had some key examples, such as Carolyn McAskie, who led the Burundi mission in 2004, ONUB, and was involved in ceasefire negotiations. There's also Deborah Lyons, who is a former ambassador for Canada and the special representative of the Secretary-General at UNAMA.

Why is it so important at the level of peace operations and UN-integrated and complex missions to have this diversity and to have a much greater number of women not only in the missions but at the leadership level?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Thanks. That's a great question.

You mentioned security forces as being a key part of the mission as well. When this question comes up about why it's important, I think we've seen data from the private sector, from industry and from elsewhere to show that diversity leads to better decision-making, and there's no difference as it relates to peace and security. We also see that people in communities need to increase their trust of institutions, and they're more likely to do that when they see that the institutions are reflective of the broader community.

With regard to women and security forces in particular, why do we have this focus on women peacekeepers? It's for a range of reasons, the primary one being that they can do the job. We need the most talented people. Women are half the population, so why would we limit ourselves from choosing them? There's no evidence that women are any less capable of doing that.

There's evidence and increasing data about women in security forces increasing the operational effectiveness of those forces by having a broader perspective on the community, being able to gath-

er broader situational awareness and making sure populations have access to women as well as men.

I just want to end by saying that perhaps you can discern from my tone in response here that I am both committed to being thoughtful in answering that question and a bit reflective of the frustration that many women in the forces in particular have shared with me about the challenge or the continuous burden of having to justify their existence.

Many have asked, "When was the last time we started an event where the theme was 'Why do we need men in security forces?' or 'What particular added value does the different population bring?'"

I'm just recognizing that it can be easy to be reductive and say that women will be more likely to work with women and children in a community, to have sexual violence reported to them and to get access to different groups. The bottom line is that they can do the job and they increase the capabilities in additional ranges that are recognized.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** Thank you so much.

I think that's my time, Madam Chair. Thank you.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, go ahead.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. O'Neill and Brigadier General Bourgon, thank you for joining us today. We are very happy to have you.

My question is for both of you, but Ms. Bourgon will probably be in a better position to answer it.

In Canada's action plan for women, peace and security, the government is committing to recruit more women into the Armed Forces. In February 2020, the proportion of women in the Canadian Armed Forces was 15.9%, and the objective is 25% for 2026.

The pandemic has affected a number of sectors in Canada and in Quebec. Has the pandemic made any difference in that percentage? Has recruitment continued? Will momentum be lost in terms of achieving the 25% objective by 2026 because of the pandemic?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** I will begin.

I have good news. According to the latest numbers, women now make up 16.1% of the forces. COVID-19 has certainly impacted recruitment in all sectors, but we continue to work very hard to recruit women. In their inclusion and diversity strategy, the Canadian Forces recognize the importance of women and minority groups.

Our recruitment strategy is working. We have implemented many things over the past two years. You may have heard about the women in force program. That's a three-day or 10-day program that provides women with an introduction, as there are many unknowns when it comes to being part of the Canadian Forces. The program gives women an opportunity to become familiar with military life and talk to other women from the Canadian Forces to see whether the environment is right for them.

The results have been very positive. According to the latest information, 25% of women who participated in the program have joined the Canadian Forces. That is an excellent program, and we want to restart it as soon as possible, once the COVID-19 pandemic has calmed down a bit, if I may put it that way.

As for other initiatives, we are tackling them in order of priority. First, we are overhauling our recruitment system. Our recruitment website was restructured to reach the new generation—young people aged 20 to 30. Traffic on our website has increased by 12%, which is exceptional.

We prioritize female sectors. If we are serious about our efforts to recruit 25% of women, we have to look at the female sectors put forward to achieve our objectives. We have had a number of discussion groups to determine what elements attract Canadians to pursue a career in the forces and those that dissuade them from doing so....

• (1140)

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** That's just what I was getting to. You are developing expertise in the recruitment of women, which is the goal of the action plan, and you are telling me about discussion groups.

What obstacles prevent women from being interested in a career in the Canadian Forces? Have you identified any?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** Yes. The discussion groups have helped us determine what the difference is between women and men in terms of that interest. Women are more attracted by a humanitarian and security role than by a combat role. That is one of the main factors. The discussion group on the Afghanistan mission did not help us a great deal. Canadian Forces played a slightly more aggressive role there. We are also looking at...

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Engineering, among others....

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** They are more interested in the medical or logistical aspect....

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** However, we have to work hard to increase the recruitment of women in the area of STEM—sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics—as we really need women as combat engineers.

In addition, it is said that women struggle more with the perception of the work-life balance. That is an aspect we are also working on, so that a married woman with two children can have a family while enjoying an exceptional career. Of course, stability is also an issue. There are many deployments, and women are more concerned about moves than men.

The last factor is the work culture and environment. We are still working on that. Media reports, such as the one on Operation Hon-

our, do not help us. As I said, in a way, it is positive, as people trust the chain of command, but it is honestly not a good look. So we have to work on transforming the message in the Operation Honour report to make it positive.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I'd like to ask a question quickly, as we don't have much time left. This discussion is amazing.

Can you give us concrete figures or at least an overview of your efforts in the recruitment of francophone women, especially ones from Quebec? Do you have any data on that?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** No, sorry. I don't have any data on francophone women, but I do have some on all women. This year, we recruited 20% of women. So 2,049 women joined the Canadian Armed Forces—an increase of 19% over the previous year. That's pretty good. At the Royal Military College Saint-Jean and the Royal Military College of Canada, in Kingston, 23.4% of officer cadets are women.

• (1145)

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I would quickly like to ask another question.

[English]

**The Chair:** No, do it next time, when you come back.

Madame MacPherson, go ahead.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Thank you.

I hope you can hear me.

Thank you very much, Brigadier-General Bourgon and Ms. O'Neill, for joining us today. This is great. I'm absolutely delighted that I get to participate in the committee today.

I have some questions to start with. I'm going to ask a few questions of Ms. O'Neill.

I know that you are mandated to provide advice to a number of ministries, such as Crown-Indigenous Relations and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. The ones I'm particularly interested in are under the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development. Could you talk a little bit about how the WPS agenda is being integrated into these departments, and how you're being consulted and are able to provide feedback?

As a sub-question, perhaps you could talk a little bit about how you would see a feminist foreign policy going forward, and what that might look like in terms of incorporating a GBA+ analysis across the ministries you are mandated to provide advice to.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Thank you for those questions.

Your first one relates to how it's integrated across the department, the now consolidated department of Global Affairs Canada.

Really, the North Star essentially is our national action plan on women, peace and security. When I started the role, I spent several months speaking with people across that department as well as various others at all lengths, from locally engaged staff to ambassadors, deputy ministers, etc., and asked first of all what they knew about it and what they needed to implement more, and there was overwhelming consensus that we have the policy framework that we need. We need implementation of it and we need the implementation to be more consistent so that we are implementing it when crises emerge and it's a little more reflexive than it might be now.

In terms of the way that I'm integrated, my office itself is based at Global Affairs. There are four staff, including me. I'm very fortunate, as I mentioned, to have two secondees from DND and from the CAF, as well as a range of people I work with across different offices. While it's both an advantage and a challenge to be, as I sometimes describe myself, a kind of floating box in an organization chart, it also presents a lot of opportunities to engage in different areas. I work with regional bureaus as well as thematic bureaus to talk about the extent of our implementation and gaps that still need to be filled.

Your question related to feminist foreign policy. The government has spoken to date of our feminist foreign policy as being composed of various components, with women, peace and security and our action plan being one of them. Our feminist international assistance policy is another. "Strong, Secure, Engaged" is a third, and then our trade policy is a fourth. Those are kind of pillars of the feminist foreign policy.

In talking about it around the world and at home, I recognized that "feminist" is often a very loaded word, especially when you associate it with security and defence issues, but I find that when you unpack the concept, almost without exception, it's something that the vast majority of Canadians agree with. The way that I think about it and the way that I think the government articulates it and implements it is by recognizing that every single person has equal rights and should have an equal opportunity to access those rights, and that we are all better off when that happens, so it is looking at power structures—not just equality, but power.

You mentioned how GBA+ fits into that. Gender-based analysis-plus is a tool of analysis. It's a process through which we can identify how an issue might differently affect men or women or boys or girls or people who are in urban settings or rural settings or people with disabilities. It's only a tool for understanding. An approach of women, peace and security and our feminist foreign policy is a positive determination to create more equality and reduce the inequality that is identified through that analysis. Part of the issue, I think, is making sure that we do strong gender-based analysis-plus and then do something with that information.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Of course, that's the big issue, isn't it? It's making sure that you do something with that information.

I guess maybe that will lead me to my next question for you as well. Knowing that you have articulated some of those areas where we have had gains and where we have been able to do some good work in terms of our WPS agenda, if you had your druthers, what

are the areas where you would like us to put our primary efforts right now?

• (1150)

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I'd say a few things. I have a lot of druthers.

One would be to just get people aware of what the principle is. I think there are still a lot of misconceptions that women, peace and security is about saying women are inherently more peaceful than men or better than men at some things, or that women are going to be disadvantaging men in some way. It's exactly the idea we're talking about. It's reducing barriers to having equal opportunity, the idea that women in particular in areas of peace and security face a disproportionate number of barriers, so number one is just recognition of what the issue itself is and shedding some of the stereotypes associated with it.

The other thing I'd say is to have a much more customized tool. The vast majority of people across the departments that I work in really want to contribute to gender equality, and yet we're asking them to do more and more specific and technical tasks. How do you fully integrate gender-based analysis-plus into procurement processes for the Department of National Defence? What does a military gender adviser need to do? How do you advise your embassy about successful models of inclusion in a national dialogue process? How do you protect women human rights defenders? What's the data and research out there?

We were just talking about what's actually working. If I had a tool, I'd give people a lot more customized guidance for their day-to-day jobs. We talk a little bit about GBA+ and people are introduced to Security Council resolution 1325, and they're big concepts—

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We have excellent questions and excellent answers.

Mr. Dowdall is next.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Good morning, Madam Chair. First, it's fantastic to be back. We haven't had too many committee meetings since I celebrated my first anniversary just a few days ago. I'm extremely excited to be here today, and I want to thank Ambassador O'Neill and Brigadier-General Bourgon for being here and shedding light on this important subject today.

My honourable colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke had a fantastic question in an earlier round, and I would like to bring it forward as well and hear the responses from both presenters today.

Basically, the women in the armed forces who are victims of sexual assault and harassment are told to report these crimes, while the male offenders are rarely punished and, in many cases, are allowed to continue serving freely alongside their victims as if nothing has happened. The female accusers are denied advancement, transferred from posts or discharged from the military altogether. It's no wonder that female recruitment has barely budged despite the efforts to increase their numbers.

How can we boost female recruitment when the hostile work environment is clearly reinforced by the chain of command?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I don't think it's clearly reinforced by the chain of command. I think there are some instances that are exceptionally disturbing and troubling, and I am as concerned as you are about the fact that this still exists. I think about that from a range of perspectives, including the fact that we are constantly working on how to increase the number of women in the Canadian Forces and what it means to be encouraging young Canadian women to join the armed forces who are not confident in the process.

Whenever faced with that question, I think the most important thing we can do is paint the whole picture and, as Brigadier-General Bourgon talked about, not sweep under the rug the fact that this happens, because it does. We know it does, as we are increasingly recording and documenting that it does, but we are talking about the processes that are in place, how we're dealing with this systemically, identifying areas where we're still struggling in dealing with it systemically, and being exceptionally clear about the position of leadership on this issue. I think, again, that's an area where we have had a lot of clarity. I think it would be irresponsible, reckless and disrespectful to young Canadian women to not be dealing with it seriously and not be taking it as the crisis that I think it is or as it has been dealt with. I also think we have seen a lot of positive signals and we have to continue to focus on them.

• (1155)

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** I will add that the well-being of our members is the most important thing in the CAF. Since Operation Honour was established, 134 people have been released from the military. That is 134 who have been dealt with because of what they did. Every time women or men come forward, it is investigated. It is looked at from A to Z. The victims are separated from the perpetrator because we don't want them to be in the same environment. There is an investigation, and justice is served. I mean, 134 people have been released. A lot of administrative measures have also been put in place. We are dealing with the situation.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Thank you. I think all of us here at the table are proud of the fact that we're looking at ways to improve the situation to get more women involved in our peacekeeping initiatives. The question I have maybe relates to where we're headed.

The Georgetown Institute of Women, Peace and Security ranked Canada 11th among 167 countries on its 2019 Women Peace and Security Index, which was a decrease from seventh the year before, in 2018. I have a couple of questions relating to that.

What areas can Canada focus on to strengthen? Also, I know that as a key supporter of the agenda, we've invested the largest portion of money, over \$17 million, to the fund. I'm just wondering what kind of dollars other countries have invested and whether or not

you see future difficulties, because of COVID, in getting people to invest into this really important agenda that we're working on here today?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Thank you very much for the question.

To your first question about what else Canada can do to continue to strengthen its work, there are two things that have been put in place recently and that we're still experiencing the benefits from, or getting increasing benefits from, related to our national action plan. Then I'll speak to the Elsie initiative fund, which I think is the one you're referring to.

We now have nine implementing partners of the national action plan. When our first one was released in 2011, we had three. When the second one was released in 2017, we had seven, and now we have added Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs. That is something I talk about, and that our department and our diplomats talk about around the world, because it's a reflection of the fact that we are not saying, "We are perfect at home and you abroad need to do the following things to be as good as we are." The fact that we have so many departments...and several departments that are domestically focused says we view this as an issue that affects us both domestically and internationally.

The second big thing I'd say we are doing well on, and we can always continue to strengthen—

**The Chair:** We're going to have to cut it off there, unfortunately; otherwise not everyone will get their turn to ask you a question, and that would not be good.

Mr. Baker, go ahead.

**Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador O'Neill and Brigadier-General Bourgon for being with us today. I think this is a very important discussion and I'm grateful to both of you for spending the time to be with us here today.

My question is a little bit more high-level, and I'd like to direct it to both of you, if I may.

How do you measure success in your mandate? We've talked about a lot of things in this conversation, and I suppose there's more that we could talk about, but if I had to convey to my constituents in my community in Etobicoke what it is that you do and what success looks like for both of your roles, how would you describe success? How do you measure success, and how would you say you're progressing toward that success?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I'll try to be quicker this time.

At the highest level, I'd say we're trying to progress to a point where half of the population doesn't have to explain why it belongs in certain conversations. We're trying to get to a point where everybody has at least the option to participate in making decisions about their own future. That includes women, girls, indigenous women, LGBTQ2S people. Everybody has the option to have decisions about their own lives not made for them by people who don't necessarily understand their priority. That's the biggest picture, I would say.

When it comes to peace and security, we know that it's a traditionally male-dominated space, and many people don't think that women belong in the military and police forces, around the table for negotiations. But if we're looking at ending a conflict by bringing together only the people who started that conflict or who fought in that conflict in the first place, how are we setting a condition for the longer term?

I'll stop there for once and go to the brigadier-general.

• (1200)

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** For me, success is having more women deployed on operations. The more we can increase the quantity of women we have on deployed ops, that means we have a pool at home that is available, trained and qualified. That is success.

On the leadership, we've had General Carignan, the commander for the NATO mission in Iraq, as a two-star general leading a NATO coalition. That is success. She is making a difference out there. She is representing Canada's values, our diversity and inclusion. So that's a big one.

Another one is that, when we're doing the planning and the execution of operations, we have a tool now that's integrating a gender perspective to operations. We're looking at everything we do: plans, intelligence, execution, the environment and the needs on the ground.

I want the men out there to think differently and to put on that diversity lens, that GBA lens, or those glasses, so that they can see the world more in terms of human security and less as black and white. When I say lens, those lenses are not pink. Those glasses represent all the "plus" of the GBA; they're multicoloured.

That, for me, is success, because we need more men out there to be our allies. It's super important. Women, peace and security is not a women's issue; it's an "all of us" issue.

**Mr. Yvan Baker:** Thank you both for that.

I think I have about a minute and a half left, so maybe I'll turn to Ambassador O'Neill.

Perhaps I could ask you this question. What are the greatest obstacles to achieving those measures of success that we've just talked about, or at least the measures of success that you're concerned about? What can we do to overcome them?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** It's a very short question there.

Culture is a big one: traditional expectations and traditional roles. That said, times of conflict tend to be highly disruptive. We see that a lot of progression and leaps forward can be made in times of con-

flict. There's a lot of reordering going on and rethinking of different people's roles.

Another thing is people trying to cling to power. A lot of people use the excuse, I think, of culture. It's not culturally appropriate in some places for women to be involved in something or other. Usually that's just a cover by people who want to hold on to their own power, who are afraid of their own constituents actually holding them accountable.

Those are two big ones. I'll leave it here, in case General Bourgon wants to intervene on her portfolio specifically.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** I think, as you said, Jackie, it is the culture. Still in Canada today, women have those gender roles and those cultural identities, and quite often they think that they can't join the CAF, and it's so wrong.

I'm 125 pounds, five foot three, and I was a helicopter pilot. If I could do it, anybody can do it. What we need to change is that culture.

**Mr. Yvan Baker:** Thank you both very much.

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

Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to finish the short conversation I had earlier with Ms. Bourgon, as I did not have time to put my last question to her.

I don't know if you remember this, Ms. Bourgon, but we were talking about objectives for 2026. What we have understood is that the pandemic has affected all recruitment and not only the recruitment of women. You have after all provided us with good figures.

Despite everything, are you optimistic about achieving your objective of 25% in 2026? You can obviously say more about this.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** It will be difficult. As I said, we have challenges to overcome. The barriers are still cultural in nature. We have to convince women and minorities in Canada to join the Canadian Armed Forces. This is a superb organization.

There is still work to be done, I admit, but we are working hard on this. Society must change for women not to be limited to traditional career settings and be interested in other areas, such as mathematics and sciences. The road will be a difficult one.

• (1205)

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay.

My next question is primarily for Ms. O'Neill, but you could also answer it, Ms. Bourgon.

In 2017, the Prime Minister promised a 200-soldier quick reaction force reserved for peacekeeping missions. In reality, we know that the government is lagging a bit behind in terms of registering that force with the UN.

Regarding that engagement in peacekeeping and the women, peace and security agenda, has the government included you in its process for implementing a quick reaction force?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I was included in the discussions on the structure of the women, peace and security agenda, the role of those who are in charge of it and the way to train counsellors on gender equality.

I now turn to the Brigadier General, who could give you more information.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** We are currently working with the United Nations on the concept of a mixed team. In 2021, the United Nations will require that women account for 50% of their mixed engagement teams. We are working on that concept with the United Nations to establish what those forces will be asked to do, and to determine what training and equipment they will need. It is important to have men and women on the ground with the training, skills and equipment necessary to respond to any situation. The Canadian Armed Forces are working with the United Nations on analyzing the necessary training and skills going forward.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** In the discussions you had, was there....

[English]

**The Chair:** It's time for Madame McPherson.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Poor Alexis, I keep cutting him off.

Thank you very much again for all these answers. This is fascinating. I would love to go for coffee and have lots of time to ask you all sorts of questions. I'll try to be brief.

I thought I would start by giving Ambassador O'Neill an opportunity to share her last piece. We cut her off on her answer last time. After she shares her last piece, I have a few questions for the brigadier-general, if that's possible.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Thank you. I appreciate that. I'll be quick.

The member had asked about our contributions and our work around the Elsie initiative for women in peace operations, which has numerous parts. One of the parts is an international fund called the Elsie initiative fund. It was set up last year.

To the member's question, it has now raised in total about \$21 million so far. We have contributions from Australia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, the U.K. The member correctly mentioned that Canada has contributed in total about \$17.5 million Canadian. The idea of it is to encourage countries in particular to address the barriers, which we were talking about earlier, that women face in

being recruited, being retained, moving up the ranks, getting deployed to UN peace operations, having reasonable and positive experiences on those operations, and coming back for more deployment—the whole spectrum. It covers a range of things through that fund. We've been growing and adding partners to the fund as well as the work overall, which includes various other components.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** The \$17.5 million seems like an incredibly small amount to be contributing to that, but I won't ask you to comment on that, at this point.

Brigadier-General, I'd like to ask you a few questions about recruitment and how we're managing that. I really appreciated your comment about this not being a women's issue but something that needs to incorporate men in this conversation. I also wonder about some of our recruitment in terms of indigenous recruitment. Can you talk a little bit about any initiatives that have been undertaken to recruit indigenous women to the CAF?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** I'm sorry, this one is a little outside my field, but I'm sure we can take this question on notice. I know there are some initiatives targeted towards our indigenous community, and they're working, but I cannot give you any specifics. I apologize.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I would love to get any further information you have on that for the future.

I want to follow up a little on one of the questions—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Is my time up?

● (1210)

**The Chair:** I know; it's going very quickly.

Mr. Benzen.

**Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador O'Neill and Brigadier-General Bourgon.

Ms. O'Neill, Canada has failed to act on its pledge to provide 600 peacekeepers for UN missions. In fact, since February 2020, the number of Canadian troops has fallen to zero. Does it make it more difficult for Canada to advocate for women to participate in peacekeeping globally when we're not leading by example?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** The number is not zero. I know that Brigadier-General Bourgon can elaborate on that. There are a lot of different ways to assess our contribution. We're the ninth-largest financial contributor to the peacekeeping budget, based on assessed contribution.

What I can speak to most directly is our reputation as it relates to the idea of inclusion and promoting women within forces. We have a very strong reputation at the UN for that, in part through the Elsie initiative, where we're saying to countries not only "Send more women", but also what the need is of the entire system to do so. We're also really focusing on targeting and talking to women. There's a lot of conversation in the UN about women peacekeepers and very little conversation to women peacekeepers. Canada has been very clearly identified, especially in the last few years, as really leading that and not just talking about this as an object of UN policy but engaging people in developing it. I do see that we have quite a positive reputation in many, many ways at the UN.

Brigadier-General Bourgon can—

**Mr. Bob Benzen:** Having boots on the ground in the countries, developing your relationships with the people on the ground, creating those relationships, especially the female-to-female relationships, talking to the children—isn't that important? Shouldn't we be striving to make sure we're there on the ground?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** We have a lot of relationships with countries that are doing that work. As part of the Elsie initiative, for example, we're working very closely with Zambia and Ghana, which are among the biggest troop- and police-contributing countries that contribute to the UN. We're talking with them about their system and about what we've learned, what they've learned, and how we can all do better. We're certainly not detached from those conversations at all.

I understand there's no substitute for being on the ground. We're also accessing that in different ways. It's not something that we are not having as an input at all.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** Yes, I just want to add that we do have 29 Canadian Armed Forces personnel deployed on UN missions right now: in South Sudan, in Mali. We also have an episodic Hercules aircraft that goes down to Africa every six months, for about a month, and provides airlift to the United Nations as part of our Vancouver principle and pledge. We do have Canadian soldiers, and there are also RCMP who are deployed, today, on UN operations.

**Mr. Bob Benzen:** Okay.

Earlier we heard that in the Georgetown WPS index Canada had slipped from seventh or ninth down to 11th. I'm just curious about your thoughts on why we slipped down in the rankings. I'm sure we don't want to be slipping any further. What are your thoughts on how we can go back up the rankings and get back to seventh or ninth or wherever we were, and maybe go above that? Do you have some ideas on how we can move back up the line?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I used to work at Georgetown and with that institute very directly, and contributed to help create it.

I haven't read the latest one in enough detail to tell you why we decreased those few spots. What I can tell you is that it is a limited ranking, as most rankings are. The last time I checked, it didn't include things related to women in the security forces. I'll have to go through and identify exactly why that was. With any ranking of that nature, I take it as an indication but not something of concern if we're still talking about the movement of a few spots in the top range.

**Mr. Bob Benzen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds, Mr. Benzen.

**Mr. Bob Benzen:** Maybe you can just give us some thoughts, then, on some of the other countries that are at the top of that list, countries like Norway and Iceland. Can you give us any thoughts on something they're doing that Canada could learn from and maybe duplicate?

• (1215)

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Something that is being practised by leaders around the world—we are doing it in many different ways, and I mentioned we can do more of it—is systematic engagement of civil society organizations in policy-making. For the first time, our national action plan, for example, now has civil society co-chairs at the advisory committee. That was something we did for the first time, having learned from other places about that role. This way civil society has regular meetings and a consistent way of engaging and holding us accountable.

**Mr. Bob Benzen:** Thank you.

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

Monsieur Robillard.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is for Ambassador Jacqueline O'Neill. I will ask it in French. Is that okay with you?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I may answer in English, but it's okay for the time being.

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Okay.

Good afternoon, Ms. O'Neill. Thank you for joining us today.

My question is about the inclusion of women in our armed forces. According to your experience of including women in matters of international security, what states are doing the best in that area?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Thank you for your question. I will answer in English to be more specific.

[English]

Let me speak broadly. I'll start with the United Nations. There are about 82,000 uniformed personnel right now across 22 peace operations. Within the military forces, women comprise about 5% to 6%; within police, about 15%. We noted earlier that the UN has a target as well, just as we do. The target for women serving in military contingents by 2028 is 15%, and 25% for military observers and staff officers. Brigadier-General Bourgon can speak to Canada's meeting those commitments.

In terms of your question about other militaries, just to give you a perspective, in NATO women comprise about 11% of the military ranks of NATO countries. Keep in mind that Canada is 15%, as the brigadier-general just said, but they represent only about 7% of forces active in NATO operations and missions. They're very significantly under-represented in decision-making positions.

I'll end by very briefly saying that all of these figures are very hard to come by. I have a dream that we will someday have a place-mat, like the International Parliamentary Union has, that shows the proportion and rank levels of women in security forces around the world. But there are many countries—China, for example—that don't disclose that. It speaks to national security issues. There are a lot of countries that aren't regularly reporting, even through NATO, what their force levels are and the proportion of women within them.

We can speak to some of it—Canada's is exceeding some, not exceeding others—but we still have a lack of information. Part of what resolution 1325 and other focus on this issue has enabled us to do is actually ask the question and find out where we stand currently.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** What do you think explains that success? What steps should Canada take to advance in this area?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I will talk about measures that explain other countries' success, and the Brigadier General could talk about Canada.

Other countries have adapted their recruitment process.

[English]

They targeted women specifically by asking women what they wanted to do as interests.

Working previously, for example, with the U.S. military with women deployed on international operations, we looked at recruiting processes. They showed pictures of people with AK-47s jumping out of helicopters to go serve as UN police officers. UN police officers, first of all, aren't armed. They're not typically jumping out of helicopters.

When we did focus groups, we learned that women were interested in having a career-enhancing experience. They were interested in working with community. They were interested in experiencing governance in other countries. The most successful ones are the ones who customized recruitment processes in a targeted way. Some of them also have mandatory service as well, of course.

[Translation]

The Brigadier General may want to add something.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** Yes, thank you.

In the beginning, the Canadian Forces were in favour of integrating women, but they are now working on including women. There is a difference between integration and inclusion. Inclusion means listening to women's needs and taking into account their strengths and weaknesses. We listen to them, and they participate in daily decisions. I would say that there are no longer any differences between women and men in the Canadian Forces.

• (1220)

[English]

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Can I add to that really quickly?

The majority of countries also don't allow women to serve in combat roles. The fact that we enable it puts us on a different path that I think will ultimately lead us to be more successful.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

We go to Mr. Bezan, please.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the ambassador and the general for joining us today and sharing with us the issues that we're dealing with to make sure that women are able to enjoy a fulsome career within the Canadian Armed Forces.

Brigadier-General Bourgon, you mentioned that there have already been 134 members of the Canadian Armed Forces who have been released because of sexual misconduct and the role of Operation Honour.

Can you tell me whether they were discharged honourably or dishonourably?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** I do not have the answer to that question, sorry.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Would you be able to get it to us?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** Of course.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Thank you, General.

Also, I've been somewhat concerned for some time now that the military justice system is somewhat backlogged and at a stalemate because military judges are not hearing any cases. Of course, the Jordan principle comes into play in that justice delayed is justice denied.

I'm wondering how many cases revolve around sexual misconduct. We have members of the armed forces who have their charges dropped because they haven't been processed through the military justice system in an expedient amount of time. I'm curious as to what those numbers are.

Ultimately, how is that impacting the morale of female members of the Canadian Armed Forces?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** As I said, I don't have the statistics. Again, justice is not my field, but I'm sure we can get that information for you.

At the end of the day, we take measures from the get-go. We listen to the victims. We ensure that there is separation between the perpetrators and the victims. The victim is the most important person. The chain of command, the support network, is there around him or her in those difficult times. The sexual misconduct response centre is available 24-7 for the victims, but more than that, for the chain of command to also support CAF members.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I appreciate that, General, although I think at the same time we still have problems. The Jordan principle is allowing people who have been charged with sexual assault to be released. How is that justice for the victim? Even with the supports, they're not seeing justice at the end of the day. The statistics are, I think, going to be interesting.

Ambassador O'Neill, you and I have talked about this in the past. The participation of women in the Canadian Armed Forces is key. Advancement in the armed forces is something we all want to see happen for women in uniform.

What best practices from other countries and other armed forces around the world can we employ in CAF to ensure that we have opportunities and fulsome careers for women in uniform?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Thank you for the question, and thanks for championing this and keeping it on all of our radars.

There's something that I think is a really positive thing. I mentioned the Elsie initiative for women in peace operations. Through that, we're trying to work with countries around the world. We developed what's called a "barrier assessment methodology". We talked to peacekeepers, people in policing and military forces around the world, and got a whole range of ideas of what types of barriers they face. These are things from their family not wanting them to join the forces, the stigma of joining the forces—often people are called "loose", or that they can't do something else—to equipment challenges once they're in the forces. Are there helmets? Is there gear that fits them? Are they missing out on deployment opportunities because they often happen at a point in their career where women in particular who have young children at home don't want to go on deployment. They end up getting an added cycle of not experiencing opportunities that set them up for deployment.

There are 14 barriers that are identified. They're basically universal—they're broad enough to be universal—and, of course, one of the barriers is sexual assault or sexual harassment within the forces.

We have made that barrier methodology public. Various countries are undergoing it. The Canadian Armed Forces is going to undergo it as well, and perhaps Brigadier-General Bourgon can speak to that. I think it's an important thing. We're saying we have a systematized way of addressing everything from external cultural issues to internal ways that job descriptions are written or that selection processes are done to figure out what those barriers are, and then we'll have some ways of comparing and contrasting and figuring out some solutions.

I'm sorry to go on for so long.

● (1225)

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

Mr. Bagnell, go ahead, please.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Thank you both for being here for this very, very important topic.

Ms. O'Neill, you made the important point right at the beginning: We all know that success increases with diversity.

I want to follow up on a question that Mr. Spengemann asked.

In peacekeeping, negotiating, moderating, etc., although the numbers are lower than they should be, can you give me some successes of any women from around the world, not just Canada, a success story of how they've been successful in making peace, and, if possible, the value added in some cases, if there was any, that made it possible or made it better?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Thank you for the question.

The data you referred to is the fact that we now know that peace agreements are at least 35% more likely to endure at least 15 years if women are meaningfully involved in their creation. Why is that? We have a lot of evidence that women tend to both change the process and influence the topic.

To give some examples, women in Northern Ireland, in negotiations, broadened the discussion so it included things like whether or not there would be segregated education going forward. Were they going to replicate the conditions that led to the division of their society that got them to that place? Women in Darfur raised issues of food security. Women in Colombia raised issues of land ownership and an ability to inherit property and land, and for women to own land and run for public office. These are things that ultimately add to addressing the root causes that bring a country to conflict in the first place. These are just a few examples.

I was at an event this morning with several women from Afghanistan, including women who are in Doha right now. The government has 21 negotiators on the government side; the Taliban have none. Four of the 21 negotiators are women. One of them was on today and was talking about the fact that women have to be spreading themselves across every single committee at these negotiations. They tend to be thought of as needing to be put in health or education or something related to a basic social service. They're saying, no, we have to be involved in discussing anti-corruption, the reform of our bloated security sector, a whole range of issues. It's primarily about broadening the agenda, not just issues related to so-called women's issues.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Thank you.

I have only one other question, so you could go on at length. It's a follow-up from Mr. Benzen, and Mr. Bezan touched on this. In anything that comes under your mandate, are there success stories from other countries around the world that the committee may not be aware of?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** In my previous job and now in the government, I have been able to work with women in Sudan, who lived for almost 40 years under a very oppressive and severe military dictatorship. They were flogged for wearing pants, for example. They couldn't have meetings. They couldn't organize.

A year and a half ago, women were 70% of the people who took to the streets to demonstrate. Finally, they brought down a dictator. That revolution was.... I was there in December. People talk about it as a women's revolution, a youth revolution: 70% of the people on the streets. You see media coverage about women joining these revolutions. They were leading those revolutions.

They brought down a dictator, and they did not stop there. This is something that does not get nearly enough coverage. I'll try not to go on for too long.

When the transition government was named, with 11 members, there were two positions. Women had to fight for those positions, and they used arguments like "We have Resolution 1325. There are 80-some countries in the world that have national action plans. We need that too."

They successfully negotiated for a 40% quota for either gender, for women or for men. That's a minimum of 40% representation in the legislative council going forward. For legislative elections, Sudan's national parliament going forward has a 40% quota in its constitution, which I think is the biggest one in the world. These are amazing stories.

• (1230)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Do I have any time left?

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds, Mr. Bagnell.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Do you have any other examples?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Absolutely.

Colombia was the first place that had what they called the "gender subcommission". They had a model with various committees. They also had a gender subcommission that was half women representing the FARC and half women representing the government, and they went through every single item on the negotiating table.

One of the things they did, for example, was remove the idea that men with guns essentially could forgive other men with guns for crimes committed against women. They introduced the fact that sexual violence needed to be included in a ceasefire and could not be negotiated away in a peace agreement. It's an issue of justice along the types of things we're talking about.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Thank you.

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

Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Bourgon, when I first took the floor, I asked you what proportion of recruitment francophone women account for. You told me that you did not have that figure. Would it be possible to send it to the committee at some point?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** I will ask about it, but I don't know whether the number of francophone recruits is counted separately. I don't think we are there yet.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay. I would like you to look into that.

We did not finish our discussion earlier about the quick reaction force, the QRF. You said that the Americans had a 50/50 concept on the ground. That's what I understood.

Is that also the Canadian objective for that kind of reaction force or would you rather have 25% in 2026, a carbon copy of the forces loaned to the UN?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** That is a United Nations concept, which stems from the new women in uniform parity strategy. The mixed reaction team concept requires every mission to have a mixed reaction battalion whose ratio must be 50/50.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay. If that concept is adopted, there will be no choice to achieve that objective.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** If we decide to design a battalion as such, it must have a 50/50 ratio.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** That's great.

I was looking earlier at the figures provided by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. In 2019, it ranked Canada 11th out of 167 countries in terms of the women, peace and security index. That is a drop compared with 2018, when Canada was ranked 7th out of 153 countries.

What areas do you think Canada should focus on to strengthen its engagement to the women, peace and security agenda?

[English]

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** As I mentioned, I'll have to check the specific reasons we shifted down a couple of notches on the Georgetown scale, but in terms of areas that we can strengthen, as I mentioned, I think a key thing will be developing more tools. Gender-based analysis-plus is a very useful tool. We have it for a range of levels at a basic capacity level. We need to step that up. That's something that colleagues at the Georgetown University and in military and police forces and the UN are also really interested and engaged in.

We spoke earlier about it being just a tool of analysis, so it's often a way in the door, a way of saying, "Let's just find out what impact this policy might have. We're not telling you to do one thing or another; you retain complete autonomy. Here is a way of finding better analysis, some more customized and specialized tools."

I do think we have, in our national action plan, a very strong policy framework. We just have to keep going on the process of implementing it and getting more people to implement it more consistently.

• (1235)

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

Ms. McPherson, go ahead.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to follow up a bit on what you were just talking about, Ambassador, in terms of implementation and how we have that good policy piece in place.

How do we, as parliamentarians, assist you in your role? What are the things we can do to make sure that this remains a whole-of-government endeavour and is not left on your shoulders alone?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** You continue to have sessions like this one where you ask us about progress and you force us to name gaps and areas we need to improve. You ask people who don't have this in the job title, who aren't designated women, peace and security or gender specialists or advisers. It's very helpful when questions go to commanders, when they go to deputy ministers and when they go to people overseeing all aspects of policy about how this work is integrated in the broader work.

We talk about it being sometimes considered as a separate or an add-on issue. I often talk about how we have adversaries around the world who don't see this as an add-on issue. In Boko Haram, two-thirds of their suicide bombers are women. In ISIS, one out of five foreign fighters who left from North America or Europe to fight was a woman—one out of five. They are targeting women, so we have to be viewing this as part of our strategic national capacity to engage in our broader goal. So keep asking them.

As well, bring experts from other countries. It's an area where we're learning from each other, so have representatives of forces and governments around the world that are achieving some success in some ways so that we can continue to learn from them.

Also, reading, interviewing and interrogating the very extensive progress reports that are submitted every year... There are people across government who spend a lot of time providing a great

amount of detail that is tabled every year, so to look that up, to go through that and to ask questions about it is very powerful.

Thank you.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I think I'll repeat that exact same question, as I have this privileged role of being one of the last questioners, of course.

Can I also ask you, Brigadier-General, what parliamentarians can do to help you in terms of CAF recruitment, in terms of the work you're doing around this work?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** If you can represent an interest, that would be awesome.

Also, look at the leadership that Jackie O'Neill mentioned. Now, with everything you're doing, you realize there is a GBA or a gender perspective to it. When something comes across your desk, ask the question, "What is that human security dimension? What is the question I am supposed to be asking? What makes a difference here?"

All of you on the screens I now consider allies on this subject because you're in leadership, in the position of making a huge difference by your interest, by your questions and by redirecting some of the projects that are coming towards you and asking, "Where is that GBA piece, where is that human security? This homework is not done; take it back."

Leadership is super important.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I am honoured to be considered an ally.

Madam Chair, how much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** It's time for Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate getting a second round.

Ambassador O'Neill, you and I have talked in the past about recruitment and the recruitment efforts that are being made by the Canadian Armed Forces. You see the challenges that are out there and how we go about the technique of recruiting. Does it need more advertising, or does it need more women out in the recruitment offices? Is it going out and targeting women in communities so that we get more of that gender balance without having to disadvantage others who are interested in joining the Canadian Armed Forces?

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Thank you. That's a great question.

I'm going to turn to Brigadier-General Bourgon, because I don't specifically know the latest, as I said, in terms of what is working and what's not. We're trying a wide range of things right now, and that's what you have to do, to some degree. You have to go broad and see which things are working.

There are two things that I know we can always continue to emphasize. The first is visibility of women leaders who are respected and performing at high levels. It's really important to continue emphasizing amazing leaders like Brigadier-General Bourgon and others who have fulfilling careers at senior levels and who are respected, not because they are women, but because they are doing a tremendous job and are women.

The second thing is the way that male leaders in the military talk about this issue. People are extremely attentive to the way male parliamentarians, generals and ministers talk about the issue of women, and I think we have seen so much commitment in a very serious way, talking about the fact that we need women not only to be employment equity targets...or because they have to, but because it's great for our forces. I think a narrative about this being a force capability [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

• (1240)

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, interpretation isn't working right now. The problem seems to be with Ms. O'Neill.

Brigadier-General Bourgon, can you take that question?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** Yes, I can take that question.

Mr. Bezan, we are trying everything you said. We are having specific events for women and are looking at women's colleges, women's events and changing our publicity. We are doing everything we can.

Also, once they're in the military, we have to keep them in the military. We're looking at initiatives on retention and how we can keep our people much longer. The leadership.... It's nice to be in the military, but you have to go through promotion board. The same chances as our male counterparts....

I'm happy to report that our performance measurement reports, PR reports, have changed. They will be changing next year. We are going to go through a new form, and this new form has been reviewed through a GBA, so the characteristics that are now being evaluated on our people are more balanced. Female characteristics like inclusivity, empathy and listening skills are being looked at in the same way we see the more masculine characteristics such as decisiveness and leadership. It's a lot more balanced going forward, so that women will have more chances. It's really adapted, and I think women will do much better from that side, too, which is a really positive thing.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Okay, thank you.

I think I have about a minute left. I'm not sure whether Ambassador O'Neill's microphone is working yet, but I would just ask both of you about Operation Honour. As we've seen Operation Honour evolve over time, what changes are we recommending to ensure that it is effective and that female cadets and female members of the armed forces feel safe?

I would be especially interested in Ambassador O'Neill's take on this as someone from the outside looking in.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Can you hear me okay?

**Mr. James Bezan:** No, it's still crackling.

**The Chair:** It's still garbled. Could you unplug your headset and then plug it back in? Sometimes that fixes it.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Is it working?

**The Chair:** I think so.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I'm very sorry about that.

The extent to which I advise on it relates to leadership. General Vance has said that right now he is notified about sexual assault within the military at the same speed at which he is notified of a missile strike. That's the level of attention that needs to continue. From an outside view, that clarity of leadership is not going to be enough, but if we don't have that, we're not going to get anywhere else.

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

Ms. Vandenberg, go ahead.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I would like to thank you, Ambassador O'Neill and General Bourgon, for your incredible work on this. Absolutely, you can see all of us as allies in that.

I want to direct my question to Ambassador O'Neill. We all know, of course, that the 20th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 is coming up this weekend. I recall that 20 years ago at this time I was actually in Sarajevo working with OSCE, and there was a tremendous amount of celebration. As you'll recall, the war in the Balkans was the first where rape was considered a war crime, and the women there were very important as part of the peace process, although not part of the formal Dayton accord.

There was such celebration at that time. Could you talk a bit about the progress since then? I know it's been spotty. Internationally, it's been sporadic, with some progress made, but in other areas not as much. I would note that you, at the level of ambassador, an actual ambassador for peace and security, are one of the few in the world, I think. On the work you're doing with your counterparts internationally, you mentioned learning from other countries.

Could you elaborate a bit on the progress globally over 20 years, how much we still need to do and how we're learning from one another?

• (1245)

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Thank you.

Very briefly, because we have limited time, I'll say that the progress has been primarily in terms of normative frameworks: policy-making and stating what our policies are. We have 10 UN Security Council resolutions. We have language about women, peace and security in various mission mandates issued by the Security Council. NATO, the OSCE, the African Union...many now have official policies. This year, with Canada's support, for the first time NATO has a policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, stating what the values are that need to be respected and what the standard is.

In terms of gaps or where we have left to go, it's still largely aspirational: "We want you to implement Resolution 1325. Here is why it is better: Your security force will be improved. Your peace process will be strengthened." There is almost no consequence financially or even reputationally if they don't do it, so we still have gaps in accountability. We haven't had as much focus on prevention as I think the drafters and some of the early advocates would have wanted. That's a big one.

I'm sorry, but I'm blanking on what the last part of your question was.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** It was about working internationally and how we are learning from one another and your counterparts internationally.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** Yes. Thank you.

There are only a handful of special envoys or representatives on women, peace and security, but now there are roughly 20 or so ambassadors for women and girls or for themes related to gender, peace and security. We've now created a working group. We meet once a quarter to figure out what the biggest issues are, what the biggest threats are and how to mitigate those threats, who is trying to undermine what progress, either at the UN or NATO, and anything else, most specifically what's working within our governments and departments that we can learn from and replicate.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Thank you.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** I'd like to add something on this one, if I may.

Leadership and engagement are a big piece too. The UN women, peace and security CHOD—CHOD being all the chiefs of defence of all the countries—was launched a couple of years ago, and now our chief of defence is the chair of that committee. That committee is actually committed to a collaborative platform, to working together and sharing experiences, lessons learned and best practices, so that everyone can work together towards success. It grew from 14 countries to 54. A whole bunch of invitations have been sent, so hopefully there will be more. This is a platform of super-important men and women in charge of every country who are working together on WPS with great initiatives.

**Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill:** I will just note that there is one female chief of defence staff in the world, in Slovenia. There is one. General Vance has brought together 54 men to talk about the importance of women, peace and security. It's really tremendous.

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

Thank you very much to our witnesses today.

[*Translation*]

It has been very educational, and we appreciate it very much. We may continue this discussion at our next meeting.

[*English*]

We have saved some time for committee business, to approve our steering committee report. I hope everyone has had a chance to look at it. We could do it with a show of hands, because I think it was developed with consensus and collaboratively. What do we think? Can we move ahead with the steering committee report?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** That one was easy.

That's all we have—

• (1250)

**Mr. James Bezan:** No, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Madam Chair, I gave notice of motion on Friday. I would like to deal with that motion right now when we're dealing with committee business.

I will read it into the record:

That the Committee take note that the Government misled Parliament by tabling a document at this Committee in February of 2019 that erroneously stated that Canada's Quick Reaction Force has been registered with the United Nations, and that the Government has publicly apologized, therefore the Committee is of the opinion that the Minister should issue a written apology to this Committee, that the chair table this motion as a report in the House of Commons, that a copy of the relevant testimony be appended to the report, and that the testimony in question be stricken from the record of this Committee.

Just to go on with that... I do appreciate the fact that the deputy minister has already sent an apology to the committee. To go to the rules and procedures that govern us as Parliament, I refer to Bosc and Gagnon, 2017. Chapter 1, under "Responsible Government and Ministerial Responsibility", reads:

The principle of individual ministerial responsibility holds that Ministers are accountable not only for their own actions as department heads, but also for the actions of their subordinates; individual ministerial responsibility provides the basis for accountability throughout the system. Virtually all departmental activity is carried out in the name of a Minister who, in turn, is responsible to Parliament for those acts. Ministers exercise power and are constitutionally responsible for the provision and conduct of government; Parliament holds them personally responsible for it.

On that basis, I still expect an apology directly from the minister to this committee or to Parliament, and, in keeping with actions we have taken in the past, Madam Chair... We have had to deal with false testimony in the past; we've had to remove it from reports and strike it from the records. Because we're in a different session, I think the best we can do is amend the actual report that has been tabled in the House on UN peacekeeping.

I ask that the committee quickly accept this motion so we can get on with getting the apology directly from Minister Champagne, and ultimately ensuring that the report and our record have been corrected.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bezan.

I see Madame Vandenberg. Is there anyone else?

Madame Vandenberg, go ahead.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Mr. Bezan, as the parliamentary secretary, on behalf of the government, I would like to say that we are very sorry that the erroneous information was provided to the committee.

As you have seen, there was a letter from the deputy minister to this committee, and it explains and apologizes for the erroneous information. As I mentioned in question period last week, it was an honest mistake. It was human error. If there is a need for the minister to speak on this, I'm sure he would be happy to do that without the need of a motion. Perhaps our chair could communicate that to the minister.

It was an unfortunate error, and we believe we have corrected the record. I would suggest that we wouldn't need to have a motion for the government to recognize and acknowledge that an error was made, as we have done. If we need to do more, we could have a communication go to the minister, but I don't think this motion is necessary.

**The Chair:** I can put this to the committee.

Mr. Bezan, go ahead.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I think it is necessary. This is about the integrity of our own committee. We did reference this in our report, and it was presented as evidence, so we do need to have it stricken from the record.

It does call upon the minister, and I think this is important. Part of ministerial accountability is that they are the department head, not the deputy minister. They are the ones who need to apologize, so I do expect a written apology from the minister to this committee so we can move forward and ensure that the reports we are putting out there are statistically accurate, factually accurate, and people can trust the information we are putting out from this committee.

• (1255)

**The Chair:** I see Mr. Baker.

**Mr. Yvan Baker:** Thank you, Chair.

In this case, an honest mistake was made. I am of the view that when people make a mistake, it is important they take responsibility and do as much as possible to remedy the mistake. I think that's what has been done in this case. That's what MP Vandenbeld has suggested and indicated.

Mr. Bezan, I have to be frank. I am a little bit surprised you are putting forward this motion. When you were in government, there were many instances when people at the most senior levels would mislead Parliament, in some cases deliberately. I'll cite a couple of examples—

**Mr. James Bezan:** Let's not go down that path, Yvan.

**Mr. Yvan Baker:** I have the floor.

When the Tories misled Parliament on G8 spending; when the Harper government erroneously used a quote by the Auditor General that was actually about a different government on a different issue to defend their approach on G8 spending; when a minister, only under a tremendous amount of pressure, eventually had to admit she had altered a CIDA document, a recommendation from the civil service; when Parliament was misled about the cost of the F-35 fighter jets.... I could go on.

In most of those cases, not only did the senior leadership of the government at the time mislead Parliament and the public, but they did not take responsibility or apologize, and in most cases they did not take measures to remedy the problem.

I'm asking you, Mr. Bezan, why are you proposing this motion in the case of an inadvertent mistake, when you and your colleagues did not call for this action when Parliament was actually intentionally misled?

**The Chair:** Is there anyone else who wants to speak?

Madame Gallant, go ahead.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** The comments from the member opposite have nothing to do with what is prescient at this time.

It is important for the record to show that we dealt with the information that we had at the time. Because of things we've had happen in this committee in the past, where incorrect information was provided, we have now established a precedent of making sure that errors that have been made, either intentionally or unintentionally, are corrected and noted.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Does anyone else want to speak?

It's quite clear that there is no agreement in the entire committee, so I will ask the clerk to take a recorded division.

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** The motion is denied.

Is there any further committee business?

I hereby adjourn the meeting.







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