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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi



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• (1710)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): I'd like to call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 99 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are therefore attending in person in the room and remotely through the Zoom application.

I'd like to make a few comments.

First of all, please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking.

This room, as you are all aware, is equipped with a powerful audio system. Feedback events can occur, and these can be extremely harmful to the interpreters. I'd like to highlight that the most common cause of sound feedback is an earpiece worn too close to a microphone.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk, as always, has graciously made one. We will endeavour to maintain a consolidated list to provide everyone an opportunity to ask questions.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee will proceed to a briefing on the war in Ukraine. I'd now like to welcome—

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, can I bring up a point of order, please?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

I apologize. I talked to the ambassador beforehand.

I want to raise a point of order very quickly before we get started, because I think this is very urgent. I raised this with committee members last week and again on Monday, and I want to make sure that a decision is taken in public today.

Global Affairs sent us a letter and an annex about our motion to compel documents on arms exports to Israel. Given the urgency of this issue, I ask for the committee's consent to instruct the clerk today to put this letter and annex up on the public FAAE website.

I would further ask that we, as a committee, take five minutes today in public to instruct Global Affairs to do the following: "That we understand that providing all documents between 2006 and 2024—"

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): I have a point of order on the point of order.

You're asking the committee to do something. That does not sound like a point of order. It sounds like a motion, and a motion may not be moved on a point of order.

Ms. Heather McPherson: This is a point of order. I am asking us to instruct the clerk and providing details on that. I think it is very important that we are able to do this—

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chair, that is not a point of order. We can't ask anybody to do anything.

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, as you know, we have set some time aside for committee business later in the evening. Given that we have the ambassador here, would you be okay with us dealing with that then?

Ms. Heather McPherson: My issue is that we have tried to bring this forward, and the committee has not dealt with the motion already approved by this committee. This committee already approved the motion demanding and compelling documents from Global Affairs Canada—

The Chair: Yes, but this is now a new demand, if I may—

Ms. Heather McPherson: Global Affairs Canada has not provided those documents, so I would like to make sure that what has been provided is made public and that we instruct the clerk to do that so the information is public.

The Chair: Would you do it in committee business? That's all I'm asking you, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Is committee business going to be public? We are getting so many questions from people who are very interested in the answers the government is providing to this, so I would like to make sure it's going to be in public, not in camera.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent to do committee business in public?

An hon. member: No.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I would like to go forward with my point of order then.

The Chair: Committee business is private, but you're saying you're going to take up the ambassador's time and you're not willing to wait until the end of—

Ms. Heather McPherson: I think this is very urgent, particularly considering what I see as backsliding by the government with regard to sending arms to Israel. I think people are very interested in having an answer to this, and I think it's fair for us to make sure that those documents are—

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I think it's been made very clear that this is not a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, members have pointed that out several times.

Hon. Hedy Fry: The order of the day is to listen to the ambassador. This is not a point of order.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Can I please just ask that we instruct the clerk—

The Chair: Would you concede that this is not a point of order?

Ms. Heather McPherson: No. It is a point of order. I'm asking the clerk to put documents that have been compelled by this committee up on the website.

The Chair: It's not a point of order. Would you concede that, Ms. McPherson?

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'd like unanimous consent to put the documents we have received up on the website, and I would like that to be—

The Chair: Could we deal with one issue first? Would you agree that it's not a point of order?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, I would like for the documents that were given to this committee to be made public.

The Chair: I would appreciate it if you responded. That is not a point of order, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I would like the unanimous consent of this committee to put the documents on the website.

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, several members have pointed out that it's not a point of order. I have informed you that it's not a point of order.

Ms. Heather McPherson: It feels very much to me, Mr. Chair, that the Liberals would rather not share that information. The information has been shared—

The Chair: That has nothing to do with it, Ms. McPherson. We have rules.

Ms. Heather McPherson: -multiple times in other examples, and the fact that you are choosing not to—

• (1715)

The Chair: We have rules of procedure here.

Ms. Heather McPherson: All right. Well, I guess I could challenge the chair. I could ask if that is considered a point of order.

The Chair: Absolutely. If you would like to do so, that is certainly an option you have.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I think you need to understand that Canadians have every right to this information.

The Chair: We're talking about rules, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: It's very important that we put those documents up and make them public.

The Chair: Next we have Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: This is on the point of order.

We have not had an opportunity to discuss whether or not they should go up. There's an assumption by Ms. McPherson that we disagree with them going up. That is not my point. She may actually be surprised by our position on that. My point is about due process, good order and respect for the ambassador, who is here.

If she would wait, she may be surprised by the government response to publishing those things. However, as a matter of principle, we have a guest who is our witness and who has come here. We should deal with that. We should deal with this in committee business.

That is the way our committee should function, or we will become dysfunctional again.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm sorry, but I asked for unanimous consent to put these documents up and make them public. Without that, I will challenge the chair.

The Chair: That's not a point of order, Ms. McPherson, I'm afraid.

Is everyone okay with us resuming the study?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): I challenge your decision, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Sure. Let's have a vote on this.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 9; nays 2)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we can proceed with our study of Ukraine.

It's a great pleasure, once again, to have you before committee, Ambassador Kovaliv. Thank you very much for being with us. You have indicated that you can remain with this committee until 6 p.m. and we want to take advantage of that.

For your opening comments, you have five minutes before we go to the members for questions.

The floor is yours, Madam Ambassador.

Her Excellency Yuliya Kovaliv (Ambassador of Ukraine to Canada): Thank you.

Dear Chair and honourable members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to brief you today.

First of all, I would like to thank you, Chair, for your recent visit to Ukraine on February 24 with the U4U group of members of parliaments from many countries that support Ukraine. I would also like to thank Canada for signing the security co-operation agreement with Ukraine during the visit of the Prime Minister of Canada to Kyiv on the second anniversary of the full-scale invasion.

This was the first agreement with a non-European country and the first in North America. It lays the ground for deep and comprehensive co-operation between our countries in the defence and security fields. Based on the G7 declaration, which was adopted during NATO's Vilnius summit, seven countries have already signed such agreements with Ukraine, and 27 countries endorsed the G7 declaration. More negotiations are happening now in Kyiv with the countries that are committed to having long-lasting relations and security agreements with Ukraine.

Let me brief you on the situation in Ukraine. In order for you to compare where it is, the distance between Halifax and Lviv is almost the same as the driving distance from Halifax to Victoria, so it's not so far away.

Russia has demonstrated its commitment to its war of attrition. Russian armed forces on Ukrainian territory now amount to 470,000 personnel, plus 33,000 Rosgvardia soldiers in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine. This year Russia is spending 40% of its budget on military and law enforcement and is continuing to build its military presence in the Arctic. Russia has already taken all the ammunition from Belarus. North Korea has already supplied around 1.5 million artillery rounds, and at least 24 North Korean ballistic missiles have been used by Russia in its attacks on Ukrainian cities and territory. Iranian drones continue to hit critical infrastructure.

The enemy uses six or seven times more artillery shells a day than the Ukrainian armed forces. Russian offensive operations, which started in October, have had no strategic success. Over five months, Russia's losses in manpower have exceeded 40,000 troops and, since the start of the full-scale invasion, over 426,000 Russian soldiers.

Russia's weapons, which continue to be produced, are immediately supplied to the battlefield. At the same time, western spare parts and western technology, including from Canada, are still being supplied to Russia and its defence sector.

Despite all of these efforts, Russia has achieved no strategic goals and no strategic gains. At the same time, even with the lack of ammunition and the delay in the delivery of committed military support, Ukrainian forces are holding the line.

Since February of this year alone, Ukrainian armed forces have shot down 15 Russian fighter jets. Ukraine has destroyed nearly 33% of Russia's Black Sea fleet and is now able to export grain and other goods through the seaport. In January of this year, the volume of these exports reached pre-war levels.

Ukraine's geographic position does not provide us with an advantage for our security. Our own military spending now exceeds 21.6% of GDP. We invest in the domestic production of weapons, including partnerships with the leading western defence companies. We count on the military support of our allies.

At the same time, over \$300 billion in Russian assets remain frozen in western capitals. It's both morally right and legally possible to seize these assets and transfer them to Ukraine. We are counting here on Canada's support.

Russia has demonstrated further its commitment to continuing its terrorism. Just today, five people were killed in Kharkiv by another Russian missile attack. In Odesa, on March 12, 20 people were killed by a missile strike on a residential building, and on March 2, 20 civilians, including five children, were killed. Among them were four-month old Tymofiy and his mother Anna. The mother was holding her son in her arms, trying to cover his body and save his life.

• (1720)

This is what happens every day in Ukraine. This is why an air defence system and missiles for them are crucially needed to protect the civilian population.

We need to hold Russia accountable. I thank members of the House of Commons for their unanimously adopted resolution on February 15 of this year, which supports Ukraine's NATO membership, the returning of Ukrainian children, strengthening sanctions, confiscation of Russian assets and bringing Putin and his criminal regime to responsibility for the crime of aggression.

We are also grateful to Canada for its leadership in co-chairing the coalition to bring back Ukrainian children. This coalition was launched in early February of this year, and in a bit more than a month, 33 countries have joined the coalition. Today, over 19,000 Ukrainian children have been forcibly removed and many of them illegally adopted by Russians. We need to continue to work with Canada and other allies to bring the children back home.

There is more to say, but I thank you for this opportunity. I tried to stay within my five minutes. I'm ready to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Ambassador.

We will start the questions. The first member up is MP Chong.

You have five minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador, for appearing in front of us today and for giving us an update on the situation in your country.

I'd like to congratulate you and your government for concluding an agreement with the Government of Canada: the Canada-Ukraine strategic security partnership. Conservatives support that agreement, and we believe it will strengthen co-operation between our two countries in the area of security and defence. Congratulations on that accomplishment.

Ambassador, you mentioned in your opening remarks that Russia is firing six to seven times the number of shells at Ukraine compared to Ukraine's ability to fire back. An ongoing theme in recent months is a lack of ammunition. What's your view on the 83,000 surplus CRV7 rockets held by the Canadian Armed Forces? Do you believe that Ukraine's military could use those rockets? How urgent is that need?

• (1725)

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: Indeed, ammunition is now one of the pressing things. Among all the NATO members and all members of the Ramstein group, which held its 20th meeting just yesterday, the question of coordinating efforts to supply ammunition to Ukraine is of high importance. We value the recent announcement by Minister Blair about further funding to supply the artillery shells to Ukraine.

It's not only artillery shells, but missiles for air defence, the missiles you mentioned. The Ukrainian armed forces need them, and they can use them.

The other thing we are discussing with all of our partners is trying to use even the equipment that is in the process of being decommissioned. We don't have much choice, but I think we've already demonstrated over these last two years that we can use the technology and we can use the dedication of our engineers to make it work for the good cause.

Hon. Michael Chong: You mentioned 155-millimetre shells. Canada produces those shells, but production is essentially flat since before the war began. I believe some 3,000 shells a day are being produced. How many shells a day is Ukraine firing to defend its territory from Russia?

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: It would be good if we had at least 7,000 to 8,000 per day. That would make a huge difference.

Hon. Michael Chong: The chief of the defence staff in Canada testified in front of the committee a number of months ago that shell production has remained flat and that the Government of Canada has not yet increased shell production in order not only to resupply our armed forces but to provide ammunition for Ukraine's armed forces.

If Ukraine is firing roughly 6,000 to 7,000 shells a day, by extrapolation from your opening remarks, I take that to mean Russia is firing somewhere in the range of 36,000 to 50,000 shells in the opposite direction every day, so the need is great, and the need to increase 155-millimetre shell production is urgent. Would you agree with that statement?

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: Indeed. Ammunition production and the ramping up of that production are being discussed among all the allies. We are also putting in the effort to build up production, including of ammunition, in Ukraine. As you may be aware, the Czech Republic is taking on the leadership role to try to find whatever is possible and coordinate the efforts to supply ammunition. The European Union itself made a decision to supply ammunition to Ukraine and committed the money.

Now it's up to the defence industry to speed up investment and rapidly increase production. It's also, I believe, up to governments and our partners to make this happen and to support the industries in this rapid increase of production of ammunition.

Hon. Michael Chong: I have one very quick question.

The Canadian Armed Forces have surplus light armoured vehicles. Do you want those surplus light armoured vehicles?

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: It depends on what type of vehicle. There are different types. This is more of a discussion on the precise model.

We value the armoured vehicles supplied to Ukraine that have all been produced here in Canada. I recently visited the facilities where they are produced. We are really grateful to the Canadians who work in this facility and help get those vehicles to Ukraine.

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll next go to Dr. Fry.

Dr. Fry, you have five minutes.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you very much, Chair.

Welcome, Ambassador.

I head the Canadian delegation to the OSCE PA. At every single meeting and quite often in emails, I hear Ukrainian Rada parliamentarians updating us on what is going on in Ukraine. Because of this, I have a concern that we are going to allow this war to go on and on. It will soon become like the Vietnam War—a background noise that nobody is paying attention to. We all know how important Ukraine's victory is to the rest of the world and to democracy.

I hate to call it a war. It's an act of violent aggression by Russia, not a war. Ukraine didn't want to participate in it. I think we need to support Ukraine.

Under that, I echo what my colleague Mr. Chong was asking. Is Ukraine being given every opportunity it can to defend itself properly? I know the European Union gave 50 billion euros recently to Ukraine. However, everyone is still waiting for the \$60 billion from the United States to come forward. Is that hampering Ukraine and its ability to defend itself?

That's my first question. I'm going to give you a second question. Then you can answer them all together.

My second question is about the fact that so many Ukrainian men have left Ukraine. I know there is a debate in the Rada right now on whether or not they should stop refugees and change the age of eligibility to fight in the war. Does Ukraine—men and women included—have enough armed forces of their own being trained by Canadians and others? Is that hampering their efforts?

The third thing I want to ask is about what the Rada is saying: Should they stop refugees from leaving Ukraine? I don't know. That's a decision being discussed at the Rada. What's your opinion on that?

Finally, I know sanctions are not necessarily working. I know there's a trade route that goes through Kazakhstan into Russia. That negates some of the sanctions the rest of the countries are doing. How does it impact Ukrainians' ability to win this war if sanctions are not working and Russia continues to do this with impunity?

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: Thank you for all of those questions.

The Chair: Ambassador, you have two and a half minutes to answer those questions.

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: Just to start with, I think we all understand that the strategy of helping Ukraine one drop at a time no longer works.

You saw the news when the Ukrainian forces made a decision to withdraw from Avdiivka, which does not give Russia any gains except for PR for the so-called—I don't know what to call it—elections there. In reality, that was because of a lack of ammunition. That's also one of the pressing needs if we are talking about new recruits to the Ukrainian army. There are a lot of men who have already been fighting for 24 months, and in order to prepare, equip and train new people, there need to be resources and capacity.

Today, the speed of not only decision-making but the implementation of those decisions to specifically supply Ukraine military support is so needed. How the world continues with military support will define the months ahead.

If you look at what's happening with the Russian navy fleet, particularly those situated in occupied Crimea, 33% has already been destroyed. Also, it's not only the war on the ground. As I mentioned about the fighter jets, there's also a lot of worry about technology. Ukrainians are also developing their own technology.

The agreement that Ukraine and Canada signed is about co-operation in the defence industries and in defence technologies, which make both of our countries stronger, because we can be stronger when we share our know-how and when we share our components—but not share them with Russia.

We always and very quickly inform our partners when we find spare parts produced in western countries in Russian weapons. There are also Canadian companies that produce spare parts that we have found in Russian weapons. Unfortunately, it's happening. We've seen it for two years. During the first year, there was some argument that this was a big stock. Over 24 months, Russia has continued to produce, and the spare parts continue to be there.

We believe that the circumvention of sanctions and the ease of dealing with the circumvention of sanctions are in our common interest. It's not only what Russia is fighting in Ukraine. For Canada, it's also that everybody is watching as Russia is building its military presence in the Arctic. Russia can't produce all of this defence equipment it is putting there without the best in spare parts.

We see them as we are finding them in debris. There needs to be some responsibility by companies that are making them. There needs to be a proper investigation of how they turned up in Russia and of what measures, both from the governments and from the companies themselves, need to be taken to avoid them.

• (1735)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you.

The Chair: There were a lot of questions. Thank you, Madam Ambassador.

We next go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have five minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here today, Your Excellency.

Yesterday afternoon, in Ottawa, the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group received Mr. Pierre Heilbronn, President Macron's Special Envoy for Ukraine's Relief and Reconstruction. Of course, there was discussion of the efforts currently being made to rebuild much of Ukraine's infrastructure, particularly in the areas that are not being as intensively bombed by Russia.

In your opening remarks, you stressed the importance of seizing Russian assets in order to help with reconstruction. Canada has moved quickly to enact legislation that enables us to seize Russian assets. In December 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs explained that she was considering making “a court application to forfeit the asset permanently to the Crown” with a view to eventually handing them over to Ukraine.

It's now been over a year.

What has the Canadian government told you about its intention to confiscate Russian assets, including those of oligarch Roman Abramovich, to help rebuild Ukraine?

[*English*]

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: Indeed, the rebuilding has already started.

When we were with Minister Joly visiting Chernihiv—which is an hour-and-a-half drive from Kyiv—and the communities that were occupied, we crossed a big, four-lane bridge that didn't exist 15 months ago. It was blown up and then quickly rebuilt to provide the ability for people to come and go and for goods to flow between the cities. The government is putting a lot of effort into trying to provide basic needs, especially for those communities that have been liberated.

One of the important things in the rebuilding effort is demining, and I would like to thank you, Canada, for your robust support for our demining efforts. Ukraine is, today, one of the top countries in terms of land that has been contaminated by land mines.

In terms of the seizure of Russian assets, Russian sovereign assets—which is frozen investment capital—are worth more than \$300 billion. That's an important instrument for signalling to Russia the seriousness of the western allies' support for Ukraine's victory. It's also morally right to do and legally right to do. We're stressing the importance of this decision. The same goes for Russian oligarchs.

That's probably about the only update I can give because that's a legal process. I think Global Affairs Canada would probably be better placed to give the details.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I've said from day one that our first mistake was signalling to Vladimir Putin early on that the west would not get involved on the ground. As far as I am concerned, that was tantamount to giving President Putin *carte blanche* to do pretty much what he wanted.

However, on February 26, in the wake of a conference that brought together representatives from 25 countries to take stock of the situation in Ukraine, French President Emmanuel Macron declared that he was not ruling out sending troops to Ukraine. Initially, it was thought that this was the result of the discussions that had taken place during the day, but we soon realized that many countries had dissociated themselves from this.

Do you think President Macron was trying to create some ambiguity in order to curb Vladimir Putin's ambitions?

[*English*]

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: I'll emphasize that Ukraine has the will and the courage of its people and of those who are now on the front line to fight. The thing we are missing is enough military support to equip them and enough air defence to protect civilians and the cities from not only Russian but also now North Korean ballistic missiles, hypersonic missiles and drones.

We can do our work, as we demonstrated both within the first months of the full-scale invasion and with what we did in the Black Sea with the Russian fleet and so on. However, the crucial thing is the steady support for and supply of weapons to Ukraine. It's also in the interests of all of the NATO alliance, because Ukraine is in the middle. Russia is ambitious far beyond the Ukrainian borders and the NATO alliance.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Michael Chong: I have a point of order.

Mr. Chair, the bells are going, and normally the rules bind the chair to suspend the meeting for us to vote. I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the committee to continue to meet and hear from the ambassador; for the chair to suspend the meeting when the 30-minute bells are finished, at approximately 10 minutes after 6 p.m.; for the committee to come out of suspension once members have voted on their electronic apps; and for the committee to continue the meeting at that point.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Excellent.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We now go to Madam McPherson.

You have five minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Thank you very much for being here, Ambassador. I apologize for bringing that point of order up at the beginning of today's meeting, but as you've mentioned, the risk we see with some of the gaps in our arms control mechanisms within this country, is something

we need to be aware of and need to be looking at. I'm going to ask you some questions about that, because like you, I have a lot of concerns when we see Canadian goods being used by Russia.

I visited Irpin and Kyiv in March last year. With your assistance, I met with the Soloma Cats, a group of young people. I met 16-year-olds who are literally using antennas to demine areas so that Ukrainians can go back to their communities. We all know that the organization The HALO Trust is doing really remarkable work there trying to demine so that Ukrainians can go back into their communities.

We also know that there are loopholes in our arms system that allow goods like detonators to go through Kyrgyzstan to end up in the mines that 16-year-olds are using antennas to demine in Ukraine. I'm appalled that these loopholes haven't been closed.

I'm wondering if you can talk a bit more about the impacts of Russia having access to over 100,000 detonators that were made in Canada and using them in Ukraine against the Ukrainian people.

• (1745)

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: First, we all need to realize that Russia cannot sustain its military production without western spare parts. The second thing is that, because that's their crucial need, they will try to find intermediaries in other countries in trying to circumvent the sanctions.

We also need to be quite realistic. They are becoming very creative. It's not only about the export ban and the decision to not issue the export permit. We also need to be quicker and smarter and have the co-operation of the industry to work in making pre-emptive measures. It's good that we can investigate the thing that happened, but it's already happened. That equipment is already in Russia, and it's not only about specifically using it in weapons production. As we saw with the Iranian drones, Russia copied the technology and now is able to produce its own. There is a long-lasting impact with this.

The second point is that it's not only about the physical export control as it is. There could be some technologies that are formally not under the sanctions and are not formally banned with the export control, but that are widely used in the Russian military machine. That's why the decision to extend this ban, not only for the military stuff but for a lot of technology that could be potentially used, is of great importance.

This should be the constant day-to-day work, and it should have enough resources, efforts and leadership for us to continue this fight. There isn't an easy, one-time solution to this. As soon as we figure out one thing, they will try to find another way. It is of strategic interest to all of us to deprive Russia of this ability and to protect technology from ending up in Russian hands.

Ms. Heather McPherson: One thing you mentioned earlier is that this is not a new thing. This loophole has been allowing this to happen now for two years in Ukraine. This committee studied it in previous Parliaments. These loopholes exist and need to be closed, and the government has not done the work to close them. In fact, it continuously says that we have a rigorous arms regime when obviously we don't. We have a lot of loopholes that are not working, and we are not doing the work that needs to be done to make sure that's not happening.

From my perspective, it's very similar to our sanctions regime, where we add people to the sanctions regime as if there's no work that needs to be done after that. The actual execution and enforcement of those sanctions are where Canada often falls down.

I wonder if you could speak to how you feel right now about the fact that, while so many people have been sanctioned and there have been so many announcements on the seizure of goods, very little has been seized and nothing has been repurposed for Ukraine at this point.

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: I will add two different things. First is the sanctions themselves and their impact. The second thing is about the seizing of assets when it comes to the sovereign assets that are now being discussed among, first of all, the G7 countries and those countries holding the major portion of Russian sovereign assets. Canada is not among them. Russia withdrew their assets from Canada long before they started the full-scale invasion. That's an important dialogue. We value that Canada is supportive towards the seizing of Russian assets around the table with the other partners.

In terms of sanctions themselves, sanctions are working. Russia, through a lot of disinformation campaigns, is trying to spread the narrative that sanctions are not working. That's exactly the argument showing that they are hurting the Russian economy, whether they're for the military or aviation. One of the first sanctions done was the sanction towards Russian aviation. You see how the Russian fleets have been depleted. Many of the sanctions that are linked to technological access have influence as time passes. As the equipment gets older, there is nothing to replace it.

The Russian economy is degrading at a high speed, but they are trying to send a message in the media that the sanctions are not working, so the discussion about their efficiency will be raised. I think we need to be—

• (1750)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Do you feel Canadian sanctions are working, though?

The Chair: I'm afraid that we are considerably over time, almost two minutes over time.

Thank you, Madam McPherson.

We'll go to the next round. For this round, it's three minutes each.

We start off with MP Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: I want to correct the record. I misspoke earlier when I said that Canada had been producing 3,000 155-millimetre shells a day. What I meant to say was that Canada has been producing 3,000 155-millimetre shells a month. I wanted to correct the record on that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

We now go to Mr. Epp.

You have two minutes and 20 seconds.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): I'll take it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Your Excellency, for being here.

I'm also going to thank the clerks, the analysts and the Library of Parliament for the briefing notes. I was able to check the map that was provided, and the farms where my grandparents were born—of which I have small bits of evidence in my office at home—still lie behind Russian lines, so this is a deeply personal issue for me.

The Prime Minister was in Ukraine on the second anniversary and announced another \$3.02 billion in support for the upcoming year. A press release also went out that it will bring the aid totals to \$13 billion since 2022.

Can you confirm if the \$3.02 billion announced is part of the \$13 billion, or is that in addition to it?

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: The biggest part of this is the loan to the Ukrainian budget, and we highly appreciate this loan.

I think Canada started to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian budget back in 2015. After Russia occupied Crimea, Canada provided the first loan to Ukraine to support the Ukrainian budget, and Ukraine paid back this loan, including the interest, even ahead of schedule in 2022. Now the biggest portion of support is the loans to the Ukrainian budget to help the country and help the millions of people who are suffering from the war, including the IDPs. The other part is the military support.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

In your opening comments, you talked about the delay in fulfilling some of the total support, and you also talked about the western approach as being drop by drop.

I'm going to explore a bit Canada's obligation. I have several questions, and I'll let you use the remaining time.

Are there any penalties for non-fulfilment on our part, from the agreements?

Second, we announced agreements for 50 Canadian-made armoured vehicles in September 2023, for NASAMS—surface-to-air missiles—in January and for assault rifles in November 2022. Also, winter clothes were announced last year. My understanding is that they have still not arrived.

Can you comment on that? To what extent are these delays in fulfilling our commitments hurting the efforts?

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: This is probably the situation we face with many of the partners. If you ask at what time we need many of those packages of support, the first answer you will hear in Ukraine is “yesterday” or even “the day before yesterday”. The time is pressing, but sometimes the restraints are coming from the producers and their ability to produce the equipment. Most of that is newly produced equipment here in Canada that's creating new jobs, but still, it takes time.

Specifically, as of now, I don't have the information for you on what specific equipment that was committed to has been delivered or not. Of course, my team is in constant dialogue with DND, because timing is of great importance.

• (1755)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go next to Mr. Oliphant.

You have three minutes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Your Excellency. It's good to see you again.

The first thing I want to say, as just a reminder and reiteration, is that Canada believes this war will end, but it will end on Ukraine's terms. I think all G7 leaders have said that. I think Canadians of Ukrainian background and Canadians not of Ukrainian background stand united on that, and I hope that this will not be a divisive issue ever in this Parliament.

The second thing I want to know is, how are you?

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: I think that's the most complicated question I'm getting personally. Usually, it's a question from people who are being polite.

You can't say that you're okay when over two years, every day... I think the most scary thing for me personally is to wake up in the morning and read the news. Each time, somebody very close to you can be there. In my family, people have died on the front lines.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: We will stand with you and with your family as well.

I also want to thank you for your part in the Canada-Ukraine strategic security partnership. This is significant. This is for 10 years. You had a role in it. Personally, the embassy had a role in it. Our two governments had a role in it. I don't think we take credit for it. I share credit with you, because I think this is incredibly important. That slightly more than \$3 billion for 2024 is real, and it is a continuation of our commitment since 2015.

I have a question for you. Canada's commitment is unwavering. I believe that Canadians' commitment is unwavering and, despite the political games we play, I believe the opposition's commitment is unwavering. I may get in trouble for saying that, but I really believe it. We only get ahead if we do that and don't play games with this.

Can you tell us if there's a role for Canada with other players in the world, other allies of ours, with near friends, far friends, the global south and others? Is there anything Canada can do to shore up Ukraine's war efforts?

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: First of all, let me also thank you for the agreement and the negotiations we had in such a short time with the amazing team at Global Affairs, which was led by Heidi Hulan and had participants from other departments. That was incredibly amazing work the team did here, but also in Kyiv, by the way. One part of the negotiations was in Kyiv.

Not only was it very symbolic to have this agreement signed in Kyiv, but it was on the same day that Russia started the invasion. It was signed on February 24. Together, Canada and Italy did that. Canada was the first, and the country that now leads the G7 and the country that will lead the G7 next year were standing together with President Ursula von der Leyen. It was an important message to Putin that we're all united.

In terms of the support with other partners, indeed, our teams are working, whether it's with the UN, the UAC or the other international platforms. I think the important part of the world where we need to enhance the explanation—it's probably a different argument for each specific country—is the global south. That's where we can join the efforts further, whether it's about the coalition for bringing home Ukrainian children, ensuring food security or ecocides and the crimes against the environment that Russia is committing, including blowing up the Kakhovka water dam last year.

There are many angles and arguments we can bring to countries, including those from the global south. That's where I think we can further work together.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have a minute and a half, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you very much.

I thank you, Your Excellency.

Le Devoir, a newspaper, estimated that Canada has yet to deliver on nearly 60% of its promises. I know that you are infinitely grateful to Canada for everything that has been done so far, and I don't want to put you in a position that gives the impression that you want to criticize the Canadian government. However, in reality, your troops need weapons.

What is the status of the deliveries? What information are you getting from the Canadian government about upcoming deliveries? I'm thinking, for one, about the announcement by the Minister of National Defence regarding a donation of 800 drones from Tele-dyne FLIR, a company based in Waterloo, Ontario.

What's the status of these arms deliveries?

• (1800)

[*English*]

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: I think it's quite transparent in all democracies, and the list of equipment that was committed to be supplied to Ukraine and what was delivered are on the website of DND.

I'm not in a position now to comment in percentage terms but on each specific case. You probably mean the 800 drones. As we understand it, they will be delivered later in the spring, but even if it's in three months, that would be a good time. If it's another 12 or 18 months, that would be a challenging time. We are pretty confident that they will come sooner.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

We now go to Madam McPherson.

You have a minute and a half.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Your Excellency, that was a question about the speed at which goods are getting to Ukraine from the Canadian government.

I have two questions for you.

First of all, do you feel that they are coming in a timely manner, and what are the costs when they aren't being delivered in a timely manner? We know that the air defence system has been promised, but there's no timeline on that.

The other question I have for you is about this committee. We would very much like to come to Ukraine. We would like to show our solidarity and our support for you. Can you talk a bit about what it would mean to Ukrainians if the Canadian foreign affairs committee were to visit Ukraine?

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: Of course, this is the biggest war that's happened on the European continent since the Second World War. This war has so many dimensions on the military side and with the impact on civilians, on the global energy sector, on global food security and on the environment.

There is no better way to learn and feel all the consequences of the war coming to Ukraine than visiting not only Kyiv but other places, just to understand what is in the minds of people. An example is putting 150 people in a basement and keeping them there for over a month with no food and no water. That's what Russian soldiers did just an hour's drive from Kyiv in the village of Yahidne, which was visited by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I think it's important, and we welcome it. We have a lot of delegations from many parliaments from all of the continents, and of course we would welcome the delegation of Canadian members of Parliament to Ukraine.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Ambassador.

That concludes our questions. We're grateful for your generous commitment of time. Thank you for your fulsome responses.

I'd be remiss if I didn't ask you if there were any concluding remarks you would like to make before we adjourn this meeting.

H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv: First of all, thank you. Thank you for being with Ukraine for 10 years, because the war started 10 years ago. If we look back at what happened during those 10 years, Russia

strategically lost global security. Russia is no longer a G8 member—it's now G7—and that was done with the significant role that Canada played in that.

While preparing for the full-scale invasion, it was easier because over 30,000 Ukrainian troops at that time were trained. Canada stepped in and is supporting us.

The agreement that was signed in Kyiv, our strategic security co-operation agreement, is today laying the groundwork in different spheres. Many of those we haven't covered today, but one is cyber-security. It is the issue of the security of countries that do not have borders and do not have distance. We are a country that has suffered a lot. We withstand a lot of Russian cyber-attacks, and there are a lot of other things in this agreement that we will share as well.

We believe that it's a mutually beneficial co-operation that will enhance the security of both of our countries.

Thank you.

• (1805)

The Chair: Thank you.

I know I speak on behalf of every member of this committee when I thank you for all the information you have provided us.

The meeting stands suspended for two or three minutes so we can allow for the other officials to join us.

• (1805)

(Pause)

• (1815)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee will now proceed to a briefing on the current situation in Haiti.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses. We're grateful to have with us here today three officials from GAC. We have Mr. Sébastien Beaulieu, director general and chief security officer, security and emergency management division; Madame Sylvie Bédard, director general, Central America and Caribbean; and Mr. Sébastien Sigouin, executive director, Haiti.

Thank you for appearing before us.

Am I correct in assuming that you have one opening statement?

• (1820)

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard (Director General, Central America and Caribbean, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): That's correct.

The Chair: Madame Bédard, will you be doing it?

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: Yes, I will.

The Chair: Okay. You have five minutes for your opening remarks, after which we will go to questions from members.

Please look over at me every once in a while to make sure we're not going over the time allotment, not only when you're doing your opening remarks but also when members are asking you questions.

All of that said, the floor is yours, Madame Bédard. You have five minutes.

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

My name is Sylvie Bédard and I'm joined by my colleagues Sébastien Beaulieu and Sébastien Sigouin. I will give you an overview of the situation in Haiti, Canada's response to it, as well as the impact the situation is having on our employees and on Canadians who are in Haiti right now.

On February 29, the situation in Haiti deteriorated significantly, as attacks by criminal groups against critical infrastructure caused the closure of the Port-au-Prince airport.

On March 11, under the leadership of the Caribbean Community, or CARICOM, the main Haitian political players reached an agreement and are currently working to form a transitional presidential council that will be responsible for appointing an interim prime minister and his cabinet. The forthcoming announcement of the transitional presidential council is seen as a positive step forward. Canada has signalled its readiness to work with Haitian stakeholders, CARICOM and international partners to support the full and transparent implementation of this agreement. We will continue to address the most pressing needs of the Haitian people.

[*English*]

Canada continues to take a comprehensive approach. The Government of Canada strongly believes that the future of Haiti depends on it having a stable and democratically elected government. Prime Minister Trudeau, Canada's ambassador to the United Nations and I participated virtually in the March 11 meetings organized by CARICOM. Engagement by Minister Joly has also taken place to support the political dialogue and the upcoming multinational security support mission. The deployment of the multinational mission is critical to supporting the Haitian National Police in restoring security. Canada is providing \$80.5 million to the mission, and we encourage more international partners to contribute.

Canada is also working with international partners to provide the Haitian National Police with the necessary resources to stabilize the situation until the mission arrives, to be fully engaged during the period when the mission is active in Haiti and to maintain law and order after the mission departs.

[*Translation*]

Given the uncertain security situation, on Thursday morning, March 14, we temporarily reduced our staff at the Canadian Embassy in Port-au-Prince. These people have been temporarily transferred to the Dominican Republic. The operation was carried out by chartered helicopter. Our ambassador remains on site, along with a team that will maintain our diplomatic involvement as well as security and consular functions.

This adjustment allows us, first and foremost, to ensure a safe, sustainable and operational Canadian presence; to fulfill our re-

sponsibilities to our employees; and to continue to provide essential services to Canadians on the ground, from within Haiti, within the region as well as from our emergency watch and response centre in Ottawa.

[*English*]

The embassy in Port-au-Prince is temporarily closed to the public, and we are providing consular services remotely.

The security situation remains volatile. A state of emergency was invoked on March 3. Flights have been cancelled since March 4, and our travel advisory to Canadians since October 2022 has been to avoid all travel. We are communicating with close to 3,000 registered Canadians via our messaging system. Since March 3, we've had just over 150 calls. Some were general inquiries, while others related to immigration and departure options.

As part of our emergency preparedness mandate, we are working on prudent contingencies with our domestic and international partners. We continue to monitor and assess the security situation very closely, and we continue to advise Canadians to shelter in place and to contact us for any assistance.

This concludes my remarks. I would like to thank committee members for their attention and engagement on this important issue.

• (1825)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Bédard.

Before we start with questions, is it still the will of the members to set aside 15 minutes at the end for committee business?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay.

For this round, we will have five minutes per member, and we'll start with Mr. Hoback.

You have five minutes.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Where do I start?

First of all, I want to thank you for the work you guys and the ambassador have been doing in Haiti. It's not an easy job or an easy place.

I had a constituent who was stuck in Haiti. They managed to get out this morning by helicopter, so there's some good news. I'm also hearing stories of people walking across the mountain to get across Haiti, taking serious risks.

Do you see the ability to get people out of Haiti improving in the near future, or is this one of those situations where they'll just have to buckle down and try to stay as safe as they can until things stabilize?

Mr. Sébastien Beaulieu (Director General and Chief Security Officer, Security and Emergency Management, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): The advice to Canadians currently is to shelter in place and to make sure they have enough food, water and medicine for the forthcoming period.

Unfortunately, I can't speculate on how things will evolve, but be assured—my colleague Madame Bédard mentioned prudent planning—that we are actively planning a range of options in case they become necessary.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Looking back, we know this has been going on for a while. This has been getting worse, not just in a matter of a short period of time, but over a year or two years—basically since 2022.

Who in the international community was dragging their feet in having some sort of reactionary process put in place to try to head this off before it got to such a bad place? Was the U.S. dragging its feet? Was it Canada? Was it other Caribbean partners? Why was it allowed to fester to this point?

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: Mr. Chair, let me begin by saying that no one is indifferent to the situation in Haiti. Everyone agrees that action is urgently needed and that Canada is very much involved.

Canada has been doing a lot for Haiti for a long time. That was the case in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake. It was also the case when President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in July 2021. It's definitely the case now, in our response to the spiralling security situation.

Over the past two years, Canada has invested more than \$380 million in development assistance, humanitarian aid, support for the Haitian National Police and the justice sector. Just recently, Canada contributed \$80.5 million to the Kenyan-led security mission in Haiti.

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: I hear you. That's all good, and I want to compliment you on doing that, but in the same breath, the situation seemed to get worse and worse, even though we were adding more money to it. It seems like we are not being impactful in how we are spending that money and how we are doing the training. Maybe I'll stop there.

Looking forward, a lot of Haitians who now live in Canada are looking at their relatives. Provided we can get in there and provide some stability with the Canadian Forces—or however we see that happening or unfolding—there is still going to be a situation, for example, with hospitals, doctors and those types of things.

Do we have military resources that are going to be stationed on a ship outside of Haiti? Are there other things being considered to provide that assistance, as there were when the earthquake happened?

What game plans are being made just to provide humanitarian aid once you get a stable situation? I ask because there is going to be a lot of need and a lot of requirement for it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: Mr. Chair, Canada's \$380 million in assistance to Haiti specifically has been provided over the past two years. A large portion of this assistance is dedicated to developing humanitarian aid. We are in constant contact with our partners on the ground to overcome obstacles and challenges related to the delivery of this development and humanitarian aid.

You may have heard that, for two days now, the UN has been able to allow an air bridge to be set up. The organization is using one of its helicopters to allow goods to be brought into Haiti, mainly medical supplies for the time being, to address emergencies on the ground. There are a lot of discussions right now with our partners to see how we can continue to facilitate the delivery of basic commodities to Haitians who are in an extremely critical situation.

• (1830)

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: In regard to refugees, what's your plan?

The Chair: I'm afraid you only have four seconds remaining, Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: We have, again, lots of Haitian families looking at relatives. Are we going to allow temporary visas? Are there any talks or discussions in regard to providing relief that way?

The Chair: If you can, respond in less than 10 seconds, please.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'm sorry. He's tight with the watch.

Mr. Sébastien Beaulieu: There's a broader immigration program in place for the Americas. I understand that's being discussed in a parallel committee with my colleagues from Immigration Canada.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we go to MP Chatel.

You have five minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): I'll continue in the same vein as my colleague Mr. Hoback by asking questions on the same subject.

In my riding, there's a large Haitian community with a lot of family in Haiti—sisters, brothers, relatives. They are being told to stay put, even the Canadians, but the people in my community want to bring their families to Canada. They're very worried about their safety.

Can you tell us more? What discussions are taking place right now with the immigration department to help people in this situation?

Many have already applied to be sponsored, receive visas and be granted temporary stays, which are in the system. Are we going to speed up these processes?

Mr. Sébastien Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, I will answer that question from the member, whom I thank for her question.

At the Department of Foreign Affairs, we deal with issues that fall under the consular services. Unfortunately, we can't answer your question, which is actually the responsibility of the immigration department. It would be better dealt with by my colleagues, who happen to be appearing before some of your colleagues in another room.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: There have been precedents. It's been done in other dire situations like this.

You advise and collaborate with immigration. You don't work in silos, do you?

Mr. Sébastien Beaulieu: No, and we'll be happy to pass on this committee's questions and comments at our next daily interdepartmental meeting.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Wonderful, thank you.

Earlier, you mentioned the transitional presidential council, which is currently under negotiation.

What are your expectations? The Haitian community in my riding is worried. There have been negotiations before and they failed. The situation is very tense. There are street gangs and criminal gangs out there. What are the key elements of these negotiations? What hope do you have for the success of this agreement?

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: Mr. Chair, Haitians have been working for 30 months to establish a political governance entity capable of leading them to free and fair elections. The transitional governance arrangement committed to on March 11 was an extremely positive step. That said, its implementation remains a challenge, which is no surprise. These political groups are not accustomed to working together. Since the agreement was reached in March, it has taken a few days for the various groups—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: May I interrupt you for a moment, please?

Mr. Chair, I'm having a really hard time hearing the answer. Any time Mr. Bergeron or I speak, it seems as though there is suddenly a lot of noise.

• (1835)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: It seems as though it's less important to listen to the discussions in French.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: That's more or less the feeling I have.

I apologize to the people behind me, as well, but I would like to hear the answer.

May I continue? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Bédard, could you start again?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, MP Chatel, but can you give some guidelines, 30 seconds maybe?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I didn't hear anything, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are you saying that for the entire five minutes you didn't hear anything?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I really tried, but you were talking, and there were conversations taking place all around me. I'm sorry. Maybe I need to put my earpiece in to hear the answer.

[*English*]

The Chair: If that is the case, then going forward, perhaps members could inform us right there and then, because we have just wasted five minutes.

Are you willing to abridge your time to maybe three minutes?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Yes.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have three minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: For the past 30 months, Haitians have been working to establish a political governance entity capable of leading them to free and fair elections. The agreement reached on Monday, March 11, was indeed a positive and important step. It should come as no surprise that its implementation remains challenging. The political groups that are part of this presidential agreement are not accustomed to working together. The agreement is gradually taking shape.

Strengthening the country's political governance is essential to stabilizing security in Haiti. That said, in the short term, we shouldn't necessarily expect the announcement of the formation of the presidential council to be immediately welcomed by local groups in the country. We can therefore expect the local security situation to remain fluid over the next few days.

Of course, looking at the medium and long term, all the support provided by Canada and the international community to establish and strengthen political governance in Haiti was essential. It is a cornerstone of the efforts to stabilize the situation in the country.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, MP Chatel.

We will now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for joining us today and answering our questions. Mr. Beaulieu, I very much appreciate your offer to bring these questions and comments to the interdepartmental committee. However, we'd also appreciate it if you could return the answers to us. We'd be very grateful.

It's no secret that Canada didn't necessarily want Prime Minister Henry to remain in office. Was it the right time to make that change, when there was a new outbreak of violence? History will be the judge of that.

I have two questions. The interim committee was supposed to have been formed within 24 to 48 hours. We're well past that. Should we be concerned about that?

Also, how were the groups that are meant to be part of this interim committee selected, knowing that some of the groups selected haven't always been the most upstanding citizens?

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: Mr. Chair, following the latest iteration of the crisis in Haiti, which began when President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated, Canada took the time to establish contacts with Haitian representatives from a variety of sectors. We've maintained those relationships because it's really important that we listen to the voices of the Haitian people in order to better guide our response to this crisis.

One of the guiding principles to emerge from these consultations is that everything done to support political governance must come from the Haitian people, and that they must make it their own. In our work to support political dialogue, we have always been careful to listen to the Haitian people. The meeting in Kingston took place with the participation of Haitians. Since the airport was closed at the time of the meeting, the Haitian political players took part in the discussions virtually. They were also part of every discussion leading up to the meeting in Kingston. Many of them submitted proposals for a political agreement, and, basically, what we see in the March 11 agreement are the common points that came out of some of the proposals submitted for consideration at the meeting in Kingston. These common points came from a variety of political players representing, broadly speaking, a large proportion of the political movements in Haitian society at this time.

The various stakeholders also set out the criteria to guide the appointments of the various members of the presidential council who will represent each group. These criteria include not having a criminal record and not being known to have participated in criminal acts. They also include not being subject to any of the sanctions regimes put in place by the United Nations Security Council. Finally, another important criterion is that any candidate for the presidential council, anyone who is appointed, must back the Kenyan-led security support mission.

It was based on these criteria and considerations that this proposed agreement was developed, set out and accepted by the various Haitian stakeholders.

• (1840)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: If everyone agreed, why is it taking so long to finalize it?

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: Each of the political groups has its own base, its own members, whom it represents, and each of them—

[English]

The Chair: You're over time, but I will give you an additional 20 seconds.

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Each of them must agree on the appointment of its representative. This process takes time. It is Haitian-led and, most importantly, it is not being imposed by the international community.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Bédard.

We now go to Madam McPherson.

You have five minutes, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for coming today and providing this briefing for us.

When I asked last week that the committee undertake this briefing, it was because what we were seeing was such a deterioration. The situation is so worrying and so dire at this moment.

I was receiving some information from Médecins Sans Frontières. I know they are one of the only organizations still actively working in the country to provide humanitarian support. I recognize that you have talked about the humanitarian support the Canadian government is providing.

I'm worried. First of all, is that support able to get there? Are there plans to work with those very few partners that are still able to work in that context? How is that support getting on the ground and getting to the people who need it most of all?

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: Mr. Chair, I mentioned that Canada was doing a lot in terms of humanitarian aid and development assistance. The United Nations has also launched an international appeal for \$674 million in donations.

In the current circumstances, it's very difficult to get humanitarian aid to the people who need it most. The Port-au-Prince international port was closed for several days. It has since reopened, but the situation remains very fragile. The port is one of the main entry points for humanitarian aid containers. Once the basic goods and equipment have left the port, it's difficult to get them to the hospitals, the various regions of Port-au-Prince and the rest of the country, because so many roads are blocked.

As I said earlier, one of the emergency solutions implemented very recently, in the last two days actually, is the creation of an air bridge to deliver emergency medical aid, specifically by helicopter. That is one of the United Nations' solutions to the current situation. We are discussing other possible solutions with our partners on the ground.

In such a context, the support given by Canada and other international partners to the Haitian National Police and to the Kenyan-led security support mission also remains very important, if not, I would even say, crucial. One of the objectives of the security support mission is precisely to clear the roads and protect the country's critical infrastructure.

• (1845)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much for that.

You spoke about meeting and speaking with Haitians and making sure they are at the centre of the solutions for Haiti right now, and about how important it is that we are listening to them. History has shown us that there isn't a solution when it is not centred on Haitians.

We know we have an enormous Haitian community in Canada, of Canadian Haitians, particularly in Montreal. La Maison d'Haïti is one of the organizations.

Have you been speaking to Haitian Canadians? What are you hearing from them on what they would like to see the Canadian government do more of?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Bédard: Prime Minister Trudeau and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly, have done a lot of work with members of the Haitian community in Canada. They've been listening to that community.

Earlier I said that one of our guiding principles in all aspects of our response to the situation in Haiti is to continue to listen to

Haitians. That also includes members of the Haitian diaspora in Canada.

In Haiti, we are in constant contact with Haitian representatives, ensuring that they are as diverse as possible. In particular, we are in contact with representatives of the various political groups, as well as representatives of religious groups, including the Vodou, Catholic and Protestant communities, among others, and representatives of civil society, young people, women's groups and girls' groups. This great diversity of Haitian perspectives is what's shaping Canada's response at this time.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: That concludes questions by members.

Allow me to thank you all for having made an appearance on, essentially, short notice. We're very grateful for your insights and perspectives on this issue.

We will now go in camera for committee business. There are only 10 minutes remaining. As you know, resources are only available until seven o'clock, but we'll try to switch over as soon as possible.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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