



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 017

Monday, May 2, 2022

Chair: Mr. Sven Spengemann



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• (1105)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)): Good morning, colleagues.

Eid Moubarak to everyone celebrating this day in Canada and around the world.

Welcome to meeting No. 17 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Pursuant to the motion adopted on January 31, the committee is meeting on its study of the current situation in Ukraine.

[English]

As always, interpretation is available through the globe icon at the bottom of your screen.

For members participating in person, please do keep in mind the Board of Internal Economy's guidelines for mask use and health protocols.

[Translation]

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants to this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mic should be on mute.

A reminder that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

[English]

Colleagues, just before we welcome our witnesses, I want to raise with you the fact that we have a number of housekeeping items before us. My proposal is that we discuss them with the vice-chairs and Ms. McPherson through email in preparation for Thursday and that we adopt these decisions on Thursday.

We're dealing with a number of requests to appear. We are dealing with a motion that proposed that we reinstate the witnesses who were not heard at our last session. There is an opportunity to do so on May 9. We are dealing, importantly, with two proposals for committee travel, which we should adopt unanimously and well before Friday so that the opportunity exists for the committee to travel during the period of June to October.

If that's amenable with colleagues, I will work closely with your vice-chairs and Ms. McPherson so that these decisions are ready for quick approval on Thursday.

[Translation]

I would now like to welcome our first panel of witnesses before the committee, and thank them for agreeing to take the time to share their views with us.

With us today are two representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Leslie Scanlon, Ambassador of Canada to Poland and Belarus, and Heidi Kutz, Senior Arctic Official and Director General, Arctic, Eurasian and European Affairs.

[English]

From the Joint Delegation of Canada to NATO, we have with us David Angell, ambassador and permanent representative to the North Atlantic Council.

Welcome to our witnesses.

Ambassador Angell, I understand you'll be making the remarks on behalf of Global Affairs today. With that, I will give you the floor for five minutes of opening remarks.

Please go ahead, sir.

[Translation]

Mr. David Angell (Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council, Joint Delegation of Canada to NATO): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I too want to wish everyone *Eid Moubarak*.

I'm pleased to be here before the committee today.

I'll make some brief introductory comments, and then my colleagues and I will happily answer your questions.

On the 68th day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we are still witnessing an enormous amount of human suffering, destruction of cities and infrastructures, widespread sexual violence being used as a weapon of terror, indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas, forced displacements and in some instances, as in Bucha, what appears to be the deliberate massacre of civilians.

This is President Putin's war, a war he wanted and planned, and which he is continuing to pursue against a peaceful and democratic country.

Putin's actions are an attack against the rule-based international order. They have shaken Euro-Atlantic security and represent the most serious threat to Europe in decades.

The consequences of President Putin's careless actions go beyond Ukraine and Europe's borders. Russia is challenging the principles of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the sovereign equality of states. And yet these principles are the very foundation of our international order.

The invasion has also injected a new level of uncertainty into the world trade system, at the very moment it was just beginning to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. The war has led directly to an increase in the price of food and energy. Food and energy security have accordingly been seriously upset around the world. Developing countries that are highly dependent on Ukraine's agricultural output are particularly hard hit.

Russia's initial plan, a rapid military operation aimed at regime change, has failed. Russia overestimated the capacity of its own armed forces and underestimated the determination and professionalism of the Ukrainian armed forces, not to mention the heroism of the Ukrainian people. Russia is now focusing on the Donbas region, where most of its forces are now concentrated.

In this second phase of the war, the Ukrainian armed forces are still doing relatively well, but the war of attrition is likely to drag on.

• (1110)

[English]

NATO allies and partners have responded in three critical ways. First, individual allies and partners have supported Ukraine with substantial amounts of military assistance. The solidarity of allies and partners has been remarkable.

The first phase of assistance focused on providing Ukrainians with light weapons and Soviet-era heavy systems they could quickly integrate and deploy to the battlefield. Individual allies such as the Baltic countries, Poland and Slovakia transferred significant amounts of their legacy Soviet systems, but the Soviet-era stocks are dwindling. Individual allies and partners are now transitioning towards providing western heavy weaponry, on which Ukrainians will have to be trained. This is a complex operation in which Canada is very much a participant. Last week's conference in Ramstein, Germany, of more than 40 allies and partners demonstrated a collective willingness to ensure that we succeed in supporting Ukraine in the exercise of its right to self-defence in the face of Russian aggression, as provided for under the United Nations charter.

Second, NATO, as a defensive alliance, has reinforced its eastern flank to ensure that the conflict does not spread to allied territory.

Allies, including Canada, deployed additional troops, and NATO activated its graduated response plans. Four new multinational forward presence battle groups were established, in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. As we speak, there are now more than 40,000 military personnel under direct NATO command on the eastern flank and allies have over 100 ships and over 100 aircraft patrolling the skies and seas of Europe.

At the Madrid summit in June, NATO leaders will update NATO's capstone strategic concept and will adjust NATO's longer-term force posture over the medium and long term to respond to a fundamentally changed security environment in Europe.

Third, individual allies and partners and the European Union have responded with unprecedentedly robust and far-reaching sanctions, which were tightly coordinated, including through the G7. Again, the solidarity amongst like-minded has been remarkable.

NATO and EU countries were joined by partners such as Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland. One of the objectives of sanctions has been to degrade Russia's military capabilities by cutting access of its defence sector to western technology.

The war has led many countries to re-evaluate their security environment, including Finland and Sweden, which are key partners of NATO. Application for NATO membership is a sovereign decision and we fully respect every country's right to decide its own security arrangements, which of course applies equally to Finland and Sweden. Canada has always been a champion of NATO's open-door policy and will continue to support that open door despite Russia's threats. Prime Minister Trudeau has stated that Canada would support Finland and Sweden, should they choose to apply to join NATO.

In the meantime, Canada continues to engage the broader international community to uphold global norms, to condemn Russia's aggression, and to maintain pressure on President Putin.

We will continue to work with our NATO allies, with the EU, within the G7, the OSCE, the UN and other international fora, and bilaterally to support Ukraine as it fights for its independence and for democracy and freedom.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ambassador Angell, thank you very much for your opening remarks.

The first round of questions consists of six-minute allocations. Leading us off this morning is Mr. Morantz.

The floor is yours for six minutes, please.

• (1115)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your opening statement, Ambassador Angell.

Firstly, to Ambassador Scanlon, regarding the situation with Gazprom halting delivery of gas to Poland and Bulgaria, and Russia's claims that it wants to be paid in rubles, it's clear that Russia is really using its energy resources as a weapon of war and a foreign policy instrument.

Why did Gazprom target Poland and Bulgaria specifically? What impact do you think there will be on Polish households and businesses? Are there other countries that could be affected by this?

Her Excellency Leslie Scanlon (Ambassador of Canada to Poland and Belarus, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Last Wednesday at eight o'clock in the morning, Russia did indeed cut off gas exports to Poland and Bulgaria for their refusal to pay for the gas exports in rubles.

Is there more to this? Poland has been one of the more vocal nations in the EU and among neighbouring countries against Russia over many years—not just recently.

You asked how this will affect Poles. Inflation is already climbing, but on the actual gas and energy issue, Poland has about a 75% gas reserve status. That is above the 30% to 33% average in the EU for domestic gas reserves, so they are well prepared. They have also opened up a pipeline coming in from Lithuania. There's a Baltic pipeline that's starting up in the fall. There are lots of other methods for getting energy into Poland. Poland had the intention of cutting off imports from Russia this year in any event, so they have been working towards this.

There's no doubt there will be an impact on people's costs of living and on other issues. Business is working with government and there is a good dialogue on both sides.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you very much.

Turning to sanctions for a second, Canada has imposed hundreds of sanctions—Magnitsky-style sanctions and sanctions that are focused at the state level—in concert with our allies, NATO and otherwise.

Do you have a sense of what effect those sanctions are having? I note that Russia's oil sales are still about \$1.5 billion a day, which is essentially what they were before the war. They are making payments in euros on their euro bonds. The ruble has now recovered.

I know that sanctions do have an effect, but I'm wondering if you could elaborate on what we know is happening and what effect they're having.

Ms. Leslie Scanlon: If you're talking about impacts in Russia, I'll turn to my colleague Heidi Kutz, who might be better placed to speak to that.

• (1120)

Mrs. Heidi Kutz (Senior Arctic Official and Director General, Arctic, Eurasian and European Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you and good morning, Mr. Chair.

Of course Canada's efforts in working with like-minded partners are unprecedented in magnitude and breadth, as well as the common sense of purpose and coordination across international partners.

These sanctions have aimed to target the heart of Russia's financial system, institutions, major Russian banks, Russia's access to the SWIFT system, as well as oligarchs who have supported the Putin regime or benefited from Russia's invasion of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. As we know, many companies have divested or ceased their operations in Russia, so we do believe that sanctions are having an impact on Russia.

We expect the longer-term impact to be fairly significant. Some estimates are that Russia's economy will shrink by about 8% to 10% by the end of 2022. As well, we are seeing a rise in inflation, with some estimates as high as 20%, with a reduction in real wages.

Mr. Marty Morantz: I have very limited time. I appreciate that.

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: I apologize.

Mr. Marty Morantz: If you are reading from your talking points, you could table them with the committee and we'll have a look at them.

Early in the conflict—this is more for Ambassador Angell—Ukraine was asking NATO to impose a no-fly zone. For the record, I agree with the decision not to. What puzzles me more is why NATO would make that position public.

Strategically, wouldn't it have been better to keep someone like Mr. Putin in the blind, wondering whether we might or might not take such an action?

Mr. David Angell: Intelligence agencies were quite clear early on that President Putin was intent on launching an invasion. The risks with ambiguity signalling...if you're confident that the invasion will be launched, and you're ambiguous in your signalling, there is a real risk that failure to take the action you haven't announced will be seen as a sign of weakness.

There has been a determined effort by NATO to avoid putting NATO and Russian troops in contact with each other. The concern with the no-fly zone was, first of all, that we couldn't expect the UN Security Council to authorize one. Russia has a veto. Absent UN authorization, it becomes more difficult. A no-fly zone, of course, has to be enforced. We would almost certainly have seen a situation in which NATO troops and Russian troops were interacting.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Minister Lavrov has accused NATO of waging a proxy war, and said that the risk of nuclear conflict should not be underestimated. That language, coming from Mr. Lavrov, is extremely concerning.

What is NATO's assessment of the war escalating beyond Ukraine? What would NATO's response be if Russia used nuclear weapons?

The Chair: Ambassador, in the interests of time, please give a very brief answer. We may have to circle back to a more detailed explanation.

Mr. David Angell: The nuclear rhetoric that has been employed very much by President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov has been condemned. It's reckless and dangerous. There was an indication of a change of Russia's nuclear status, but in fact, we've not seen anything to back that up.

We are very concerned about the prospect of escalation, which is always present. We're also very concerned, for example, about the prospect of vulnerable partners, such as Moldova and Georgia, becoming embroiled in the conflict—

The Chair: We'll have to leave it there, in the interests of our schedule. I apologize, Ambassador.

Dr. Fry, please go ahead, for six minutes.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I want to thank you all for coming. This is such an escalating problem, and no one knows what is going to happen tomorrow.

I want to ask a couple of questions. One is about humanitarian....

The other one is about the fact that Canada, in the 2022 budget, gave about \$500 million to Ukraine for military aid. Do you think that is enough?

What is it that Ukraine expects from Canada and the allies in terms of lethal and non-lethal military aid? I know that everyone, including people here in Canada, thinks that things aren't moving quickly enough, although we have to work with our allies.

Do you feel that we are doing the things we need to do? Is Ukraine satisfied with our aid?

What can we do to help to move this agenda forward without provoking Russia into a war against NATO and escalating this even further?

• (1125)

Mr. David Angell: Perhaps I might take a first run at the answer.

Allies and partners met in Ramstein last week to increase our support and our ability to work together to respond to Ukraine's needs.

It's true, Mr. Chair, that the budget included an additional \$500 million for military support for Ukraine in response to Ukraine's wishes. This is in addition to the extensive assistance that Canada has provided so far, with over \$131 million in lethal and non-lethal aid, including, most recently, a supply of howitzers. In addition, we are providing cyber-assistance, intelligence sharing and access to satellite imagery.

Canada is one of a small number of countries that have been supporting Ukraine since long before February 24. Through Operation Unifier, we trained almost 35,000 troops.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Excuse me, Mr. Angell. I'm thinking maybe everyone is thinking it's not enough; it's not having any impact. What can we do? What is enough? What is going to cause impact? What is going to make Russia back off, if anything? Other than an all-out war which.... Russia is threatening Sweden and Finland with nuclear missiles, etc. Is there something we can do to help Ukraine? It is getting worse and worse. They're fighting valiantly, but they're not winning, really; they're just holding ground, so to speak. What can we do?

I don't know who can answer my second question. I'll just let anybody who thinks they can move in. We know that sexual assault and rape are now a tactic of war. It's no longer an unintended consequence, like collateral damage. What is happening? Are people who are working with refugees safe? Are they also threatened? What is happening with trafficking and rape against the women and children? It's mostly women and children who are out there as refugees. What are we doing to help? Is there something we can do?

Those are the two pieces. It just seems that everyone thinks that nothing that anyone is doing is working. I guess there's a sense of frustration.

Mr. David Angell: Mr. Chair, perhaps I might answer the first question and defer to Heidi Kutz on the second.

The premise of the Ramstein meeting was that individual allies and partners need to provide ever more sophisticated military assistance to Ukraine. This is a shift from the Soviet-era weaponry to much more modern systems. Part of the premise was recognition of the need to provide training. The types of weapons that individual allies and partners are providing to Ukraine are becoming much more robust, and we are seeing that the weaponry is having a significant impact on the ground. We are working very closely to respond to Ukraine's specific asks.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you.

Ms. Kutz, I'm really concerned about the impact on women and children—rape, etc. What can we do to stop it? Are even workers coming in being threatened as well with sexual violence?

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: Thank you for the question. I'll just add to the initial question of whether Canada is responsive to what Ukraine is asking for. Certainly, Ambassador Angell has outlined our military support, and then of course we have worked in support of Ukraine's economic resilience, providing funds through the International Monetary Fund and an offer of up to \$620 million in loans. We certainly stay in contact with that.

We are channelling significant humanitarian aid funds into Ukraine as well as the broader region, which is a little bit of an answer to your broader question—\$245 million in support of humanitarian effort. We continue to work with the local organizations and partners that we have always had on the ground to allow them to pivot their programming, including in important areas of support to women and children who, as you have outlined, are disproportionately affected by the conflict.

Furthermore, just from the accountability dimension, of course, we are pursuing actions within the International Criminal Court and supporting the effective gathering and collection of evidence to be able to track crimes taking place.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you, Ms. Kutz. I have a quick question. What are the current prospects for peace talks? I know this is almost an airy-fairy question to ask, but are there really any true prospects for peace talks?

• (1130)

The Chair: Give a very brief answer, please, in the interest of time.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Maybe Mr. Angell will do it.

Mr. David Angell: Mr. Chair, we would like to see peace talks succeed, but we see no serious Russian commitment to peace talks.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

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

I would also like to thank the witnesses.

Good day, Mr. Bergeron. You have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I apologize for these technical difficulties. That's why I was late in joining the meeting. I apologize to the witnesses, whom I would like to thank for being here and for giving us the benefit of their comments.

It's an open secret that when Canada decided to withdraw staff from its embassy even before the conflict began, we expressed a number of reservations, as we did when Canada decided to move its embassy from Kyiv to Lviv. We also expressed reservations when Canada decided to close its embassy in Lviv.

Some countries maintained their presence in Ukraine, or have since reopened their embassy. I'm thinking of Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, the European Union, France, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey. We know that staff from the British embassy are also in Lviv. The United States hopes to reopen theirs before the end of May. Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs mentioned the possibility of reopening Canada's embassy when it was secure enough to do so.

How can we determine when conditions will be secure and safe? Isn't that just a way of indefinitely postponing the reopening of our embassy in Ukraine?

[English]

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Perhaps I'll take this question.

Of course, as the minister has indicated, Canada is working to return to Kyiv as soon as possible. Those considerations are, of course, contingent on appropriate security conditions and mitigations. An assessment is currently under way, with a view to gradually re-establishing Canada's diplomatic presence in Kyiv, as soon as possible. This assessment includes an assessment of the safety and security of our personnel.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I understood that, and even mentioned it in my question.<

But my question is rather the following. In a war, how can anyone claim that the situation will become sufficiently secure for us to do what most of our allies are doing to demonstrate concrete support to Ukraine by maintaining an embassy there? Should we not at the very least reopen the facilities in Lviv as a preliminary measure before fully reopening the embassy in Kyiv?

[English]

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: Of course we're looking at all possible considerations. Ultimately a security assessment assesses the security threats that exist and the mitigation measures that we have in place to properly protect our staff and personnel. As I said, these assessments are ongoing. We hope to have news in the near future.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I'd like an explanation of how Canada's security considerations differ from those of Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, the European Union, France, Italy,

Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

What additional requirements do we have for avoiding a concrete demonstration of our support to our Ukrainian ally by doing what our other allies have done and reopening our facilities in Ukraine?

[English]

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: Given the nature of the topic, I'm not able to go into detail in terms of the security considerations, but I certainly can assure the committee that the government is looking at the considerations on the ground, with a view to our security considerations, as well as keeping in touch with like-minded partners, with a view to returning to Kyiv as soon as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: The situation is extremely difficult, to be sure. The conditions established by the Canadian government to welcome Ukrainian refugees are extremely stringent. We have made it even more complicated by requiring Ukrainians to leave their country and only afterwards approach the Canadian authorities.

Would not the presence of Canadian missions and staff on the ground facilitate the lives of people in Ukraine who want to be able to leave the country and distance themselves from the combat zones?

• (1135)

[English]

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: I'll take that question as well.

I think that the responsible department, IRCC, has undertaken many measures in order to facilitate the application of individuals interested in coming to Canada, including through online applications and other methodologies—

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I fully understand, but I'm going to repeat my question.

Wouldn't having people on the ground in Ukraine facilitate the lives of Ukrainians who want to leave the country? At the moment, their lives are being made much more complicated by requirements like having to leave the country before applying to come to Canada.

[English]

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: To clarify, I was pointing out the methodologies just to say that I understand that the department is working to facilitate applications online as well, given the challenges you have outlined with respect to mobility.

As we're able to establish operations in Ukraine, it will certainly become more accessible to those who are there.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: When he was in Quebec on April 29 to announce that a Moderna factory would be built in Montreal, the Prime Minister implied that Canada would be trying to keep lines of communication open with the Russian state and Russian civil society. What did he mean by that?

The Chair: Briefly please.

[English]

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: I'm sorry. I'm not familiar with the quotation. The Prime Minister has highlighted in the past the use of diplomacy as a method of keeping lines of communication open with Russia. Perhaps it was in that context.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

Ms. McPherson, it's over to you now for six minutes.

[English]

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

I would also like to thank the witnesses who have joined us today. This has been a very informative session so far.

My first question is for Ambassador Scanlon.

It's lovely to see you, Ambassador. I haven't had the opportunity to see you since I was in Poland visiting with you.

When I was in Poland I didn't meet with my counterparts within the Polish government, the members of parliament, who spoke back in March about the challenges that Poland is facing with regard to refugees coming into the country.

How is Poland managing that? What more could Canada be doing to support Poland at this time?

Ms. Leslie Scanlon: While I can't see you, it's nice to hear your voice again.

Canada is incredibly engaged, but the bulk of Canada's support goes into multilaterals like UNHCR and IOM, etc. All the multilaterals are here in force, so Canada is very present. When I meet with UNHCR or any of the other colleague international humanitarian organizations, we always get very good feedback on what they are doing and Canada is very present.

I did want to say as well that Canadians are here, like Khalsa Aid, which is the Sikh organization based in Toronto or Brampton, I believe. They are the only Canadian organization at one of the big reception centres that's providing a hot meal to 7,000 refugees every day.

The Canadian Medical Assistance Teams are here giving medical support on the border between Ukraine and Poland. Individuals are coming. Individual organizations and individual Canadians are very present, but on the higher level it's really done through the UN and multilateral organizations. We don't support Poland directly other than maybe with the CAF presence here.

We have CAF members working with the territorial defence force taking care of refugees in reception centres with medical care and with translation. We have a lot of Ukrainian ability in the Canadian Forces, so that's a very specific support for Poland.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

My next question is for Ambassador Angell. In terms of the sanctions, one thing I'm interested in is that it does seem like the

sanctions have been rolled out over a very long period of time. Instead of having all the sanctions in place before the February 24 war began—or continued, I guess—they were rolled out bit by bit.

I wonder if that is the best strategy. Why was that strategy decided upon?

Also, could you touch on how many assets have been seized to date? What is that dollar value? Could you share any of that information with us?

● (1140)

Mr. David Angell: It's certainly the case that sanctions have been ratcheted up gradually through a process of very close coordination amongst allies and partners. In part, the reason is that these are tough decisions for countries to take. We see there's still a debate within the European Union on whether they can put in place oil and gas sanctions, for example.

What was put in place in February was already close to being unprecedented. Where we're at now, we couldn't even imagine back then.

It's a very political process of agreeing on tough decisions, country by country. As one of the questions earlier implied, these are decisions that have real impacts on populations in terms of their ability to manage inflation at home.

We believe this process of ratcheting up sanctions is not yet finished. We're watching very closely and working very closely with EU partners to encourage further ratcheting up to include oil and gas because that is what will really have an impact in Russia.

In the meantime, we're seeing a very active attempt by Russia to mitigate the impact, but this extensive propping up of the economy is probably something that cannot be done on an indefinite basis. I think we will see sanctions having a greater impact quite soon.

Ms. Heather McPherson: The second part of that question was on the seized assets. How many assets has Canada seized to date?

Mr. David Angell: I'll need to take the question under advisement, Chair. I don't have that detail.

Ms. Heather McPherson: If you would be able to share that with the committee when you do have that detail, that would be great.

You did talk about the sanctions being rolled out, because they are complicated and whatnot. I guess my concern is that when they are rolled out so slowly, we see examples where Russian oligarchs have been able to move their wealth, to hide their wealth, and to avoid the impacts of the sanctions on their wealth—because they did move out so slowly. If we had put perhaps not some of the oil and gas sanctions but some of those individual sanctions in place sooner, they wouldn't have had the opportunity to do that and those would have been more effective, I believe.

The other question I have—perhaps this is a good one for Ms. Kutz—is on the nuclear rhetoric that we're seeing. Of course, one of the concerns we see coming out of this conflict is the ratcheting up of nuclear rhetoric. The ratcheting up of nuclear war means that other countries that have nuclear weapons, other rogue states, can see this as an opportunity. If you have a nuclear weapon, you can blackmail the world, basically, so obviously disarmament is our key priority now.

Has the Canadian government made a decision on whether or not they will be sending an observation delegation to the TPNW meeting in Vienna in June?

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: I know we're short on time, and I don't believe I have a report on that issue for you, so we'll be happy to refer it.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thanks.

The Chair: Colleagues, we have just under 20 minutes left in our time with this panel. We do have a second panel that we do not need to sound-check because they're here in person. If it's okay with you, I would propose for our second round allocations of three minutes and of one and a half minutes. That should take us right up to noon.

With that, we will give the floor to Mr. Chong, please, for three minutes, to start us off.

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

The European Commission has called on Canada to increase deliveries of liquefied natural gas to Europe. The Prime Minister and the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, issued a joint statement establishing a working group on this about six weeks ago.

The matter was of such urgency the working group began immediately meeting that week. Can you update us on what has happened at that working group?

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: I'm afraid I'm unable to give you the details of an update on that, but we'll be happy to try to get that for you.

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay.

During the same time period, six weeks ago, Minister Wilkinson, in Paris, at the International Energy Agency's meeting, announced that Canada would produce an additional 300,000 barrels of oil and gas a day by year-end in order to come to Europe's assistance to displace Russian oil and gas.

We know that at the NATO summit energy was discussed as a vital matter of security and defence for Europe and North America. Is Canada proposing to produce any more natural gas for Europe or making any further proposals for the upcoming NATO summit in Spain at the end of June?

• (1145)

Mr. David Angell: Chair, the domestic decisions about production are not something I have visibility into, but I know from discussions here that the main challenge is getting LNG to Europe.

Hon. Michael Chong: We know that this matter was raised by the German chancellor with the Prime Minister at their bilateral

meeting when the Prime Minister was in Europe just after the NATO summit.

Is the Canadian government doing anything to help European democracies with additional supplies of natural gas? A hundred thousand barrels a day of gas is a drop in the bucket of what Canada could produce, and it's a drop in the bucket of what Europe needs to displace Russian gas. Are there any initiatives going on?

GAC obviously would be the coordinating department. Are there any initiatives going on to come to the rescue, to answer the need of European democracies for natural gas to displace Russian gas, or is the equivalent of a hundred thousand barrels a day of natural gas it? Is that all we're doing? It is roughly, by my calculation, about six million cubic metres a year, a drop in the bucket in terms of some 60 billion cubic metres a year that Europe imports in gas from Russia.

The Chair: Please give a very brief answer.

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: Thank you. Reference has been made to Minister Wilkinson's announcement and Canada's commitment to engage with partners to help in ways that we can, including through the increase in production, as well as working with partners in areas of renewable energies.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Chong.

Mr. Sarai, please. You have three minutes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

My first question is to Ambassador Scanlon. You mentioned in a recent interview that a mobile biometrics processing project was established in a period of two weeks after the government removed in-person processing. You mentioned it could be used as a pilot project.

How has this project served Ukrainian refugees? How could this mobile processing project serve other vulnerable populations or serve as a guide for future crises?

Ms. Leslie Scanlon: To get specifics on that, you might get a better answer from IRCC, but what I believe I was referring in the interview was the rapid ramp-up at the embassy here in Warsaw. We haven't had a visa program for Poles going to Canada since 2008. I feel that we were very quick. IRCC responded incredibly fast and we had support.

Right now, for example, we have 29 temporary duty staff here from IRCC, from across Canada and other missions in the region, helping exactly with getting the Ukrainians who are applying for visas to go to Canada. If you're in one of six countries in the region, you can get your visa very quickly. If you are outside those six countries, it takes a bit longer, but everything is flowing as quickly as it possibly can.

I'm not sure what to say about the use in other circumstances. I'm sorry. I can take note of your question, though, and I can reach out to IRCC to get more information on that.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you. That would be appreciated.

Also, can you share with the committee your insights on the role of disinformation and how it's played in Russia's attack on Ukraine?

Ms. Leslie Scanlon: Maybe Heidi would be better to respond to that. In Poland, they do talk a lot about disinformation from Russia, but maybe Heidi has a broader answer than what I could give you.

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: Thank you.

Disinformation and its continuous use is, of course, of considerable concern to Canada. We have condemned President Putin's use of disinformation, not only to create a pretext for the original invasion but also in pursuing a narrative throughout the period of the conflict.

Canada has undertaken a number of initiatives in order to support efforts against disinformation, including through the Canada-led G7 rapid response mechanism. As well, the Prime Minister has announced a \$13.4-million support to the rapid response. We are working with stakeholders with a \$15-million multi-donor stabilization initiative in Ukraine and also work to identify disinformation, including disinformation in Ukraine, in order to counter it.

We're also working through our peace and security operations funding in Ukraine to support Ukraine in combatting disinformation on the ground.

• (1150)

The Chair: Mr. Sarai, thanks very much. That was spot-on three minutes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, the floor is yours for a minute and a half.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, my question is for Ambassador Angell.

I'd like to follow up on an earlier question from our Conservative colleague, Mr. Morantz, about the fact that we more or less gave Vladimir Putin carte blanche to do just about whatever he wanted in Ukraine.

How would NATO react if Russia were to use a tactical nuclear weapon?

Mr. David Angell: I'd like to thank the member for his question.

[*English*]

We have been very clear that every inch of NATO territory would be defended. We've put in place absolutely robust defence plans, which were implemented seamlessly. If there were a use of nuclear or chemical weapons against NATO territory, there would absolutely be a response.

Certainly, use of nuclear or chemical weapons on Ukrainian territory would also cross a red line globally, given that the impact

would be felt elsewhere, but this is not the sort of decision that is taken beforehand. The alliance would take the decisions required immediately when required.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam McPherson, please, for one and a half minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Chair.

My question is around food security predominantly, but how Canada can be supporting Ukraine as we look at.... This is spring; this is the planting season. We know that Ukraine grows food. This is a key role that they play in the global economy, and we have heard from people who say that the land mines that have been put in some of these fields are a big problem.

Will Canada be playing a role to help Ukraine demine those fields so that planting can go forward?

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: I can respond quickly just confirming that Canada has already dedicated funding through its peace ops funding in support of demining. As well, we are working with our development partners on the ground, programs that we have worked with previously, to see if there are areas that we can pivot areas of support into agriculture and food security.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Is that going to be happening quite quickly because, of course, urgency and speed is the name of the game. The planting season is now. Are efforts being done at the moment?

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: We have been and are definitely in direct contact with some of our programs on the ground with respect to the immediate ability to strengthen food security, yes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Morantz, please, for three minutes.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Ms. Kutz on the Arctic Council.

The Arctic Council has basically condemned Russia's invasion and announced that they're temporarily pausing participation on meetings of the council pending consideration of the "necessary modalities that can allow us to continue the Council's important work".

I'm wondering, first, if any of those modalities have been employed. Is there any work going on whatsoever?

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: I can certainly confirm that discussions have been regular and ongoing with respect to the pause of the Arctic Council, including not only amongst the states involved but also with Canadian stakeholders and permanent participants represented to the council in order to try to effectively map out modalities that will allow the council to proceed, notwithstanding the impossibility of co-operating with Russia at this point.

Mr. Marty Morantz: In terms of Russia's military posture vis-à-vis the Arctic, since its invasion of Ukraine do we have any information that it's changed in any way? Have they become more aggressive in their posture or is it unknown?

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: I would say that would probably be a question better posed to the Department of National Defence.

• (1155)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Okay.

In terms of Russia's membership, clearly the rest of the countries have said Russia shouldn't be part of this anymore. What steps could be taken to keep Russia out or limit its membership in the Arctic Council and also the fact that it's the chair?

Mrs. Heidi Kutz: As you correctly point out, one of the contributing factors right now is that Russia currently chairs the Arctic Council between 2021 and 2023. The membership of the Arctic Council is on the basis of geography and therefore all Arctic states are members.

Again, the statement that Canada made together with Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the United States was specifically in protest of Russia's actions that run contrary to the principles of the council and hence the reason to go into the pause. Members are—I would like to highlight—concerned about the importance of the council and its work of course in terms of working with and benefiting northern communities. That's why we are very actively looking at how elements of the council's work may continue.

The Chair: Mr. Morantz, thank you very much.

Our final intervention with this panel this morning is Mr. Ehsassi for three minutes. Please go ahead.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Allow me to thank all the witnesses for today's session. It's been incredibly informative.

If I could start with Ambassador Angell, I was wondering if you could possibly provide us with more information on the NATO response force? Of course, this is the first time this has been activated. Over 3,000 Canadian members have been contributed to this. Could you tell us how it has been progressing from your perspective?

Mr. David Angell: NATO has taken a whole series of actions to strengthen our eastern flank. One of them is the deployment of the first stages of the NATO response force to which, as has correctly been said, we have offered 3,400 troops. We have also made available troops immediately to strengthen the enhanced forward presence battle group that we lead in Latvia. We have increased our support in terms of air policing, and we've increased our support in terms of naval presence.

The five graduated response plans were implemented for the first time extremely effectively, and the transfer of troops to SACEUR's command has happened extremely effectively. There's been enormous work done to strengthen the NATO collective presence on its eastern flank.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you.

Now I'll turn to Ambassador Scanlon.

Ambassador, you indicated that there were six countries—I assume they would be the neighbouring countries—from which Ukrainians can apply on an expedited basis to come to Canada.

Could you tell us what six countries those are for the benefit of people who may be listening in on today's session?

Ms. Leslie Scanlon: I'm rushing to look in my notes to find them. I may have to send that to you in writing. It includes Austria. It's related to where we have processing centres. I believe Romania, Poland.... If you don't mind, I'll send it just so I'm not going to name something.... I'm going to be shuffling through papers to get them to you, but I can send it to you very quickly.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: As I'm sure you will agree, there is a pressing need to help as many Ukrainians as possible. From your perspective, do you have adequate resources, or would you like to see more resources in Poland?

Ms. Leslie Scanlon: I will say that we can see, by the pressure on the system, that we're not at capacity. We have appointments that are outstanding. We have people who are not turning up because they're deciding to stay in Poland. I think that we have what we need on the ground here. We'll be shifting our full operation out of the embassy—that is to say on visa processing—to the big centre that was set up called the CBOC. It's a big visa processing centre. The demand is not what it was, so we are today able to meet the demand.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you.

The Chair: Colleagues, on our collective behalf, I'd like to thank the team of witnesses from Global Affairs who were with us this morning.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to thank you very much for appearing and in particular for the work you are doing on Canada's behalf.

• (1200)

[*English*]

We will let you disconnect, and we will invite our panel for the second hour to come forward and to take their seats.

We'll suspend briefly.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1200)

The Chair: Colleagues, we will resume.

It's a great pleasure to have with us for our second panel Yuliia Kovaliv, ambassador-designate of Ukraine to Canada, and also Andrii Bukvych, chargé d'affaires.

Ambassador-designate Kovaliv, thank you very much for taking the time to appear before us today along with Chargé d'affaires Bukvych. A very warm welcome to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Without further ado, I would like to hand you the floor for five minutes of opening remarks. Please, go ahead.

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv (Ambassador-designate of Ukraine in Canada, Embassy of Ukraine): Dear ladies and gentlemen, thank you for inviting me and the chargé d'affaires as witnesses today to the committee meeting. A heartfelt thank you for Canada's cross-party and nationwide full support of Ukraine. We can feel the sincere support here in Canada.

We are grateful for Canada's military aid, financial and humanitarian support, sanctions and pressure on Russia and efforts to isolate it globally, and for Canada's hosting of displaced Ukrainians in Canada. We are grateful for Canada's permanent support of Ukraine in international organizations. The financial support of Canada to Ukraine within the last three months is unprecedented. The latest supply of heavy weapons and armed vehicles is vital for the defence of our territory and our sovereignty. Very recently, in openly calling things by their names, Canada's Parliament recognized Russian crimes in Ukraine as genocide against Ukrainian people. History books will commend Canada for its strong stance with Ukraine against Russia's barbaric war. Ukrainians will never forget that Canada was shoulder to shoulder with us in these dramatic times in our modern history.

Let me briefly inform you of the developments in Ukraine on the ground. We've already gone through two months of full-scale war in Ukraine. Russia is continuing its unprovoked war, but Ukrainians are bravely withstanding due to our courage, wise military tactics and the weapons provided by our allies. As President Zelenskyy mentioned, courage is now our Ukrainian brand, and we are spreading this brand worldwide.

Russia regrouped its major forces to the eastern part of Ukraine. Now it aims to occupy the entire territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk region and to try to secure the land corridor to Crimea and across Mariupol. In the meantime, it continues to launch missile strikes on military and civilian infrastructure throughout all of the country. The territory of Belarus has been actively used by Russians for its military purposes. A lot of missile attacks in support of the Russian army are coming from that territory.

Several cities and towns are temporarily occupied, like Kherson, Berdyansk and Melitopol. Some are continuously attacked or besieged: Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, and the huge disaster in Mariupol. In the temporarily occupied cities and towns, Ukrainians are actively protesting against Russian invaders despite significant threats to their lives. A number of mayors, members of local parliaments and civil activists have been abducted. Some of them were tortured and even murdered.

It's estimated that around a half-million Ukrainians were forcibly deported to Russia. Agreed humanitarian corridors are regularly vi-

olated by Russian troops. Just half of them have been successfully done.

Yesterday, evacuation of Mariupol finally started. More than 100 civilians were evacuated from Azovstal. It is a big Mariupol steel mill controlled by Russian forces. It was a shelter to civilians in Mariupol. Just imagine, Mariupol was a city with a population of 400,000, and 95% of the city has been totally destroyed.

Thirteen million Ukrainians fled their homes. Around 5.4 million of them left the country to find a safer place.

Russian soldiers have proved themselves to be shameless looters. Occupiers are now stealing millions of dollars' worth of grain in storage from the Kherson region and are trying to transport it to occupied Crimea. That is a shocking reminder for all of us of Stalin's practice of the 1930s.

Extensive environmental damage is also present as water supplies, sewage systems and communications are also being targeted. According to the latest from Unicef, this situation has already led to 1.4 million people having no access to clean water and another 4.6 million people having only limited access to water. This is in the middle of Europe in the 21st century.

In addition to the crime of aggression, Russia is progressively extending the list of its war crimes under numerous international conventions.

● (1205)

To name but a few, there are deliberate attacks against civilian objects; wilful killing of civilians; using prohibited weapons; sexual violence, including to children; torture; forcible deportation. Russian troops have stolen the occupied Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. This is the biggest nuclear power plant in Europe. Russian cruise missiles have been recorded flying at low altitude over the Zaporizhzhya and two other nuclear power plants. Russia is permanently neglecting international law and rules-based order.

On Friday, Russian missiles hit residential buildings in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, just two kilometres from the location where UN Secretary-General António Guterres, while visiting Kyiv, Bucha and Irpin, had the meeting with President Zelenskyy. Thus, the UN Security Council permanent member explicitly demonstrated to the UN Secretary-General its attitude to UN international law and the rules-based order.

I would like to underscore that it's not a one-man show. The entire Russian society, not only Putin and his proxies, should bear responsibility for Russia's war against Ukraine. Just imagine, 74% of Russians support this war.

The Ukrainian economy, due to the full scale of the Russian invasion, will shrink this year at least 35%, according to IMF. The active war could increase this up to 50%. The monthly budget deficit is \$5 billion, not including military expenditures. In such a challenging time, Ukraine continues to serve its sovereign debt on time and in full. The national banking system is fully operational.

Being a global leader of food supply, Ukraine expects that over 70% of our agriculture land will be planted. The mining of the fields, affected by the war, is an urgent issue. The logistics of the previous year's harvest and next year's harvest remain the biggest challenge, as the major export routes, which are the seaports of the Black Sea, are being blocked by Russia. Four and a half million tonnes of harvest from the previous season are now blocked in Ukraine seaports. That could lead to further food price increases globally.

Let me reiterate that in this hard and tragic situation in Ukraine, we are very grateful for Canada's comprehensive and indeed robust backing. We highly appreciate that the draft budget for 2022-23 envisions significant support for Ukrainian military, financial and humanitarian needs. However, I would like for all of us to have a common understanding: Financial and military aid must increasingly and urgently flow to Ukraine as the war unfolds.

In terms of the military support, we appreciate the support of the Canadian government with the supply of heavy weapons. You can see it makes a difference on the ground. But we need also to keep in mind that the war is going on, and the further prompt supply of needed weapons is essential. Each day, Russians are trying to penetrate and break our defence, but we hold the line. Hence, it's time for brave and quick decisions, synchronized with our allies in terms of timing for delivery of needed weapons.

We are here and in close contact and permanent contact with the government agencies. First of all, it was GAC and DND on the critically needed supply list.

The estimated damages to the Ukrainian economy are now counted in hundreds of billions of dollars. Hence, we need a recovery strategy that is similar to the Marshall plan after World War II. With Russia's property and assets frozen, sites abroad have to become a major part of these rebuilding plans. In this regard, we welcome the government's initiatives to establish a mechanism of seizure and forfeiture of Russia's frozen assets in Canada being further transferred to Ukraine.

• (1210)

We appreciate the Canadian government's efforts to work with us on the future rebuilding of Ukraine.

The increase in trade relations, including further expansion of our free trade agreement, CUFTA, on services and cancellation of all tariff and non-tariff barriers for Ukrainian export, like we have with the decision with the U.K. and the ongoing decision to be made by the European Union, is envisioned to be an additional instrument to support the Ukrainian economy.

On the sanctions, you can imagine that with two months of the war and significant losses to the Ukrainian economy, Russia received 62 billion euros for its oil and gas supply mainly to Europe.

Therefore, the full ban of oil and gas supply from Russia is essential to not allow Russia to finance this bloody war. We do believe that Canada can help the EU to support its energy security both in facilitating the transition to renewable sources of energy and in an urgent shortage of hydrocarbon supply.

We also ask Canada to strictly enforce and monitor the implementation of the sanctions and to work with their allies to eliminate existing loopholes that can provide the chance for Russia and Russian oligarchs to evade the sanctions.

We do hope that Canada will follow the other partners and substantially decrease Russian diplomatic presence in Canada.

We rely also on Canadian leadership, and we're grateful for that, in isolating Russia worldwide from a lot of international organizations, including the G20 and ICAO, and putting Russia on a fat blacklist. That is also an important diplomatic tool and we appreciate Canada's leadership role in that.

On humanitarian support, we are also working closely with the Government of Canada. We appreciate the funding that was committed and partly disbursed to humanitarian support. It would be very helpful to establish quick and flexible tools for disbursement of the funding for humanitarian needs. The needs in humanitarian support are quite broad, starting with essential food and medicine, to temporary housing units, bombs used for mining, movable bridges, and so on.

We also call that all the funding or goods supplied should go directly to Ukraine, because there are still the cities, especially those that have been encircled by Russian forces and that have been recently liberated where people still feel the shortage of food. That is one of the crucial points.

In the first days of the Russian invasion, we also witnessed that the well-developed international humanitarian channels were not quick enough to respond to a crisis of such big scale and magnitude.

We look forward to and also appreciate the work that Canada is doing in supporting Ukraine and supporting Ukrainian law enforcement agencies to bring Russian war crimes to justice.

The Russians a few days ago killed a young mother, taped her living child to her body and attached a mine between them. While unwinding, the mine detonated.

To have a feeling for and sense of the ongoing situation on the ground, we also invite you to visit Ukraine and show solidarity with the Ukrainian government and Ukrainian people in the darkest times of our modern history.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Glory to Ukraine.

• (1215)

The Chair: Ambassador-designate, thank you very much for your opening comments. There is a lot of information. A lot of questions will come from members.

As a very brief point of housekeeping, your conversations with members of the committee are very carefully timed. I will announce ahead the allocation of time. When you're 30 seconds away either from the end of testimony or the end of questioning, I will try to signal with this yellow card just to make sure that everybody has a chance to get their questions in.

We will go into round one. These are six-minute allocations. The first intervenor with you this afternoon is Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Aboultaif, please go ahead. You have six minutes.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Good morning, Ambassador-designate. Welcome to the committee.

I would like you to know that Canadians of all political stripes are with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in this unprecedented time and in this tough situation.

Throughout the last few months, since the situation and the war began in Ukraine with almost a quarter of Ukrainians having to flee the country to seek refuge, with economic decline, and the disastrous situation that Ukraine is going through, there was help and support of all different kinds that Canada and allies have been able to provide to Ukraine and Ukrainians. Can you name the most significant effort that we have provided in order to help Ukraine and Ukrainians at this time?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: First, the unprecedented and, importantly, joint support of all of the democratic countries has been vital for Ukraine. Canada today is one of the biggest single government-to-government providers of financial support to the budget of Ukraine. Within the last three months, the total amount of funding that is either already disbursed or being allocated is \$1.5 billion, Canadian, which is unprecedented in terms of the volume and the speed.

The second is military support. It is a huge priority, as you've heard from me today. Each delivery of military support saves not only Ukraine and serves to defend Ukraine and its territory, but also defends security in Europe and global security as well. Security in Ukraine today has different dimensions, including the sovereignty of Ukraine as a country; defending NATO, which is just 100 kilometres across the border, 20 kilometres from spots where Russian missiles are hitting; food security, globally, which is also where Ukraine plays a very important role; and energy security, globally and in the European continent.

Military aid that is quick, brave and timely is essential support that both Canada and allies are jointly providing now.

• (1220)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: The situation in Mariupol and the whole region, and the access of products to Ukraine, or exports, through Odessa, are also big concerns. Although you may have the ability to export some products that are also very vital to the world, how is the situation in Odessa? Would you describe it and brief us on it?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: I will first refer to your mention of Mariupol. The situation in Mariupol is horrible—a city with a population of 400,000. Half of the people have left the city, but there are around 100,000 civilians who remain surrounded by Russian forces. The number of civilians killed in Mariupol is already about 20,000. The humanitarian corridor, as I mentioned yesterday, started with the first 100 people who were taken from Mariupol to Zaporizhzhya. That is the most tragic situation overall.

Odessa and the Odessa seaport are the major export routes, not only for the agri-sector, but also for metallurgy and other sectors where Ukraine was exporting a great deal. Of course, it is strategic for us, and not only for us, but for the global commodity markets that Ukraine needs to control the greater Odessa area, in terms of the seaport. That is why I come back to military aid. The timely delivery of military aid is the way for Ukraine to defend our sovereign territory and access to the seaport.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: It is the supply chain to Odessa now. How much fear is there that this can be disrupted by any Russian operation, at any time?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: First of all, the Ukrainian railway is working. Inside the country, the logistics work, with some disruptions and breaches. In general, the railway system works, which is the main route to take throughout the country to the seaports. That part is working now. There were some major targeted breakdowns, but in general it works.

With the seaports, there is the situation of the mining of the seaports. That is another challenge. We will work further with our allies on the mining. In general, the key for the export facility is to control and preserve the access to the seaports.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Aboultaif.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Bendayan, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Your Excellency, for being here today. It is truly an honour to welcome you to our committee. I think it speaks to the importance of the work that the foreign affairs committee has been doing for some time now. The situation was indeed a priority for our government members well before the invasion. As you may know, we put forward a motion as a matter of urgency and began studying this matter in this committee in early February.

I don't believe it's trite to once again repeat that Ukraine is fighting not only for its own sovereignty and democracy but indeed for the democracy of all countries, and that includes Canada. I would also like to thank you for recognizing, as you did in your introduction a few moments ago, Canada's unwavering support to Ukraine. You mentioned in particular our economic support but also the shipments of lethal and non-lethal weapons. I think that's important to highlight along with the recent announcement for the provision of howitzers and additional ammunition, and the \$500 million that was included in our government's budget, which, to your point just now, will also go for the provision of weapons. I do hope, given your call to action to us today, that this budget will pass very quickly.

[*Translation*]

I also believe that it's important to underscore the extraordinary community work being done on the ground across Canada, including in my riding. I'd like to tell everyone here that Sandra Ezril, who runs the Terrasse Royale hotel in Montreal, recently opened the doors of her establishment to Ukrainians, absolutely free of charge, to help these newcomers.

• (1225)

[*English*]

In your presence, Your Excellency, I would also like to recognize Katherine Smolynech from my community. She is the president of the Ukrainian National Federation in Montreal. Just this weekend, she welcomed Ukrainians seeking safety in our country.

On this topic of civilians trying to reach safety through humanitarian corridors, I would like you to comment on the situation at the moment. It is my understanding that Russia is repeatedly bombing and attacking the safety of our humanitarian corridors in Ukraine. How would you describe the current situation of these humanitarian corridors, speaking in particular, as you just did, of the situation that is absolutely devastating in Mariupol?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: I will start by saying that just before this meeting, I was in Montreal. I came back from there just 15 minutes before the meeting. We feel and we see how much across Canada—in Montreal, in Toronto, in all of the cities and towns, and everywhere—Canadians support Ukrainians who are coming here.

In terms of the humanitarian corridors, as I mentioned, around 50% of all scheduled humanitarian corridors have not taken place. Russians are violating the agreed-to humanitarian corridors. In cities like Mariupol and others that have been circled, there is limited access or possibility to deliver essentials like food, health care and water. For those cities that have been liberated, a network has already been quickly established on the ground to supply these humanitarian needs. The quickest and best way to deliver humanitarian needs is through Ukrainian Railways. This is a state-owned company. They are now delivering all the humanitarian aid free of charge for everybody, whether it is international organizations or civil society or volunteers who would like to deliver this support.

There are already established humanitarian hubs in our neighbouring countries, such as Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and others, for all the humanitarian support that's coming from European countries, from Canada, the U.S. and all over the world. These are the

points where this humanitarian support is delivered and then delivered throughout all of the country in a quick and timely way.

The big difference, and what we are now trying to work on with international humanitarian organizations, is that contrary to other humanitarian crises, Ukraine already has its own resources, speed and courage to deliver humanitarian support within the country. There is already an established network of delivering this support. The only need for us is the physical supply of this list of humanitarian support. We are working closely with GAC on all of the requests that the Ukrainian government is asking our partners for in order to find a way in which we can deliver this humanitarian support to Ukraine. We also appreciate Canadian companies in the private sector.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Your Excellency.

In the short time I have left, I would like to come back to the topic of returning the Canadian embassy to Ukraine. I would like to quote the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who said this before the Senate:

It is clearly the goal of the Government of Canada to reopen its embassy in Ukraine. We are looking at different scenarios right now, and my objective is to do so in the coming days and coming weeks. We [just] need to make sure there is a secure environment for our staff.

I would like to get your comment on how important it is for Ukraine.

The Chair: Excellency, give a very brief answer, please, in the interest of time.

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: Yes.

It is important.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Bergeron, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I'd like to go into greater depth on Ms. Bendayan's question.

I'd like to begin by thanking the ambassador-designate and the chargé d'affaires, both of whom we know very well, for being here with us today to give us the benefit of their comments.

A number of countries, including Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, the European Union, France, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom have maintained or returned their embassy to Kyiv. The United States is considering doing so in May.

I know just how important this is to our Ukrainian friends, but what security considerations might still be used by Canada to avoid doing what the other allies have done? Is Ukraine in a position to provide Canada with any guarantees about the safety of staff who would be working in Kyiv?

• (1230)

[English]

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: As I mentioned in my speech, when the Secretary-General of the UN was visiting Kyiv, Russians had missile attacks on a civilian building where a journalist was killed. The only guarantee for the protection of civilians, which I will come back to one more time, is prompt military aid to Ukraine.

Of course, ensuring diplomatic ties and having the people on the ground is important to further work. However, I would like to say that we are now in very close co-operation and contact with GAC. We are working here on the ground with GAC in Ottawa and with the Canadian embassy in Ukraine and in different locations. In terms of guarantees, as I mentioned, only significant increased military aid is the best guarantee that can be provided as of today.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: As for military aid, Canada supplied M777 howitzers and ammunition. Carl-Gustaf anti-tank munitions were also sent.

What precisely is expected? Without going into details, can you tell us what Canada is expected to do in the short term?

[English]

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: As you've seen, this support makes a big difference on the ground, and what is important is that Ukraine is already using NATO standard ammunition. That makes Ukrainian forces more successful on the ground.

In terms of further military support, we are in close co-operation and working on a permanent basis to meet the needs. These needs are now being coordinated with all of the allies, and that is now a matter only of timing of the deliveries and the coordination, which is happening on a 24-7 basis. I would call it like this.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you very much.

When six Ukrainian colleagues came to speak to us in the House of Commons, they told us that to date, only seven of about 300 Russian banks were being sanctioned and disconnected from the international SWIFT system. This would appear to indicate that there are many workarounds for the Russian companies and oligarchs who want to continue to operate through the other Russian banks.

Do you think it will be necessary to extend the sanctions to all Russian banks or at least to many more of them, as well as to other Russian institutions, and to disconnect them from the international SWIFT system?

[English]

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: Yes, disconnecting all Russian banks from SWIFT is another way of getting Russia to have limited or zero access to all the financial markets and foreign currencies. We are in close contact with GAC on the sanction list, and as you see each week or even more often the sanction list is being increased. This is also coordinated with our other allies and partners, and yes, increasing the list of Russian banks that are disconnected from SWIFT is crucially important.

• (1235)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: We have sanctioned a number of Russian oligarchs, but some of them continue to elude Canadian sanctions. Based on what you have told us, Mr. Abramovich is sanctioned in a number of NATO countries, but not yet in Canada, probably because of his strong economic ties.

Once again, do you think that the list of oligarchs sanctioned by Canada should be extended to others, including Mr. Abramovich?

[English]

The Chair: Just a very brief answer, please.

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: As I've mentioned, we are closely working with GAC on the list of sanctions of personal and legal entities, and this list is enlarged from week to week. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Ms. McPherson, please, for six minutes.

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

I would like to thank both of you for being here today. This has been very informative. Thank you for the work that you're doing. I think the entire global community is seeing what is happening in Ukraine. We see the Ukrainian people as heroes. We see what they are doing. We see how they are fighting for their sovereignty. As my colleague, Mr. Aboultaif, has said, we stand with the people of Ukraine.

I'd like to follow with some questions, following my colleague Mr. Bergeron, regarding the sanctions. Having a robust list of sanctions is very important, of course, and I would suggest that perhaps it could have been implemented and rolled out quicker than it has been, but there are a number of people in the sanctions and it is quite comprehensive. My worry is that the sanctions are not being enforced, that they are not robustly being defended. We have not been able to get any information about any assets seized by the Canadian government through the sanctions. I'm just wondering if you could talk about how we can make sure the sanctions are more robustly defended, more robustly enforced, so that those assets that should be used to help rebuild Ukraine are available.

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: Thank you.

As for sanctions, most of the sanctions imposed in terms of the assets that have been frozen or forbidden are from a specific list of activities that could be done with the sanctions.

As for seizure of the assets, the draft law that has been presented by the Government of Canada to Parliament is the instrument that is establishing this instrument of the seizure of frozen sanctioned assets, and we do believe that these assets should be the biggest portion of the future rebuilding fund of Ukraine.

Supporting this legislation is the practical instrument that will allow the seizure of Russian assets in Canada and also make an example for other countries to follow.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm worried that some of those assets have already been hidden and moved before the sanctions were put in place. We have heard reports of that.

The other piece I want to ask you about a bit is the crimes against humanity, the war crimes and the crimes of genocide against the Ukrainian people by the Russian Federation, and Canada's support for the International Criminal Court.

First of all, what are those pieces that Ukraine requires from Canada right now to ensure that there is the gathering of evidence and the reporting, and that the forensics are in place? Can you talk a bit about what Canada can do to support Ukraine at this time?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: First of all, Canada has already done its donation to the international infrastructure that will support Ukraine in collecting evidence and also in presenting the case to the International Criminal Court. There are a lot of international teams on the ground now in Ukraine that support the Ukrainian law enforcement agencies in taking the evidence of those crimes. Our general prosecutor's office is leading this process of collecting the evidence.

There is already some technical support that we asked the Government of Canada to provide. Mainly, that is tools and instruments, the DNA equipment and forensic equipment to get this evidence and the proof of the evidence. We are now working on it. This process is now actively proceeding with all of the partners, including Canada.

• (1240)

Ms. Heather McPherson: That's wonderful.

One of the things that we have heard reports of that is particularly... I mean, there are so many horrifying stories coming out of Ukraine right now, but in one of the stories we have heard, the example is that of children being abducted and taken to Russia. Can you give us any more information about that, please?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: There are a lot of cases that we document as kidnappings, because these are the children who are forcefully taken from those territories that are now temporarily occupied by Russian forces. There is evidence that these children are now located throughout all of Russia, including Siberia and Vladivostok, hundreds of kilometres from the Ukrainian border. They were taken with evidence that it was without their will, without their parents and without any proper process or documents.

These are pure kidnapping activities that Russia is doing now. We are trying, with our partners, to find these children, and I can assure you that the Ukrainian government will find—and will do their best possible to find—and bring back all of the Ukrainian children.

Ms. Heather McPherson: That's heartbreaking, just atrocious, and now we are seeing the attacks on the humanitarian corridors.

There's one thing that I would like to finish off with, if I could. I'd like to take a moment to honour two of the volunteers who have been helping in Edmonton. Thomas Lukaszuk and Ed Stelmach have been trying to send medical aid to Ukraine.

I just want to take a moment to acknowledge the two volunteers who were delivering that aid to Ukraine over the weekend and lost their lives due to an attack by Russians. I want to express my deep sadness for their family and loved ones.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. McPherson, thank you very much.

Colleagues, we can go to a second round. I think we have just slightly less than 20 minutes in our scheduled time. If colleagues agree, we would go to four-minute and two-minute rounds in the second round. That will take us right up to about one o'clock or maybe a couple of minutes past.

If that's agreeable, we will start with Mr. Genuis, please, for four minutes.

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

Thank you so much, Your Excellency, for your important words. I think you know there is a great connection felt between the people of Canada and the people of Ukraine. This obviously leads us to expressing solidarity, but it's important that we, as leaders, be pushed to go beyond expressions of solidarity and take the concrete actions required to offer concrete support. I do want to say that my riding is a hub for the Ukrainian community in Canada. I hope that, during happier times, you'll be able to visit.

Speaking of visits, 11 prime ministers have visited Kyiv, by my count, since the start of the most recent invasion, as well as various senior U.S. officials and the UN Secretary-General. Could you speak a bit more to the importance of Canada? What would the specific impact be if a Canadian minister were to visit Ukraine, and are there plans for a Canadian minister, or for the Prime Minister or foreign minister, to visit?

The Chair: Your Excellency, just before you answer, I'm going to hit pause.

Colleagues, we have a bell. I'm assuming this is a half-hour bell. Normally, we extend by unanimous consent for 15 additional minutes. I'm wondering if colleagues would be amenable to extending until 1:05. That should take us through the round as I've outlined.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay, let's go until 1:05.

Your Excellency, please continue.

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: The support that Canada provided before the war, and has provided especially during these two months of full-scale Russian war, is unprecedented and on a different level. I've talked to many mayors of cities, members of Parliament and members of the Senate. It is everywhere on the street, and we appreciate the joint support of Canada's variety of communities as they stand with Ukraine.

We also see that the whole world is standing with Ukraine. Yet even with that support, since the situation began in Ukraine, it's still challenging. The missile attacks are everywhere—they are in Lviv, 50 kilometres from the NATO border of Poland. The matter of a visit is an issue for security staff and of security roles. Yes, we are working on a variety of visits to Ukraine, on both the government and Parliament levels.

• (1245)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

I thought your comment was interesting when you made a point of saying that this is not a one-man show on the Russian side, and you cited opinion polls. Of course, it's difficult to know how much stock to put in those opinion polls. We are seeing, I think, some evidence of meaningful fissures within the Russian regime, and maybe some strategically relevant levels of disobedience.

I would appreciate your reflections on those fissures—on what you're seeing on the ground in terms of possible disobedience within the Russian army, and desertion, and the impacts of those. Could you also speak to similar issues in the context of Belarus? Are we seeing increasing levels of resistance from the Belarusian people toward what is effectively the occupation of their country and the use of it by the Russian army? What is your level of coordination with the pro-democracy movements in Belarus and Russia?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: As I mentioned, the latest polls in Russia show significant support: something like 74% of people support this war, and it is on all levels throughout the country. This is what the Russian regime, and a total lack of democratic procedures established in Russia in the last 15 years.... In comparison to Ukraine, which is a democratic country with free elections, a free press and an active civil society...Russia does not have these instruments. This is one of the things that afforded Putin the chance to provide this kind of war. These—

The Chair: With apologies, let's leave it there, because we have very tightly timed allocations for this final round.

Thank you very much, and you're free to explore your answer in a response to a subsequent question.

Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'll let you know that you could submit answers in writing as well. If there is any additional information for any question, you could submit it in writing to the committee.

Thank you.

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant, please go ahead, for four minutes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Your Excellency.

There are two things that I want to begin with. We are always attempting to make Canada's support for Ukraine a non-partisan issue. We think it is critical—and I know there will always be barbs from the opposition—that the more that we do as Canadians to support Ukraine, the better we, as Canada, will be and the better Ukraine will be.

The second thing is I think we can unanimously agree that we should push the government to quickly get you accredited, because your leadership is needed in Canada, as well as in Ukraine. We'll do our part and get you going. It's very good to have you in Canada.

You used the word “barbaric” earlier. I would say that Canadians have been shocked. This is the 21st century, yet the war being waged by Russia against Ukraine is nothing like it should be in the 21st century. It shouldn't be happening, of course, but it feels like an ancient war, where civilians and infrastructure are targeted, and there is an aggression that we have not seen—that I have not seen in my lifetime. Canada will continue to stand in solidarity.

As we do that—I'm building on what Ms. McPherson said about the International Criminal Court—there is also the International Court of Justice. Canada very quickly supported Ukraine at the International Court of Justice. These are just the first two activities.

Could you say a bit about that early intervention by Ukraine to go to the ICJ?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: In terms of the old war crimes and going to the ICJ, we are now collecting all the evidence. There is already a big group of experts, including internationally recognized lawyers and activists for human rights, and this group is now working closely with all of the law enforcement agencies and international partners to make a case.

This is now in progress. As the case is presented, there will be horrific documented evidence of the war crimes. I think they are the worst in the current century.

• (1250)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: On that, if Canada.... We're not unique in this, but if we have one particular focus, it is women and girls. We have a strong concern with a feminist foreign policy, as well as gender-based violence and those things. The horrible stories of women being subjected to rape, sexual violence and horrendous activities are something that Canada is very concerned about.

Is there anything you think Canada should be doing right now in attempting to get Russia to cease this? Going forward, how will we call Russia to account?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: You are right. These horrific war crimes include sexual war crimes. The horror is that children are victims of the sexual crimes, which are committed under their parents' eyes. We share that sexual crimes are part of the Russian weapons against Ukrainians.

We are now working to establish a separate track for studies investigating and documenting the sexual crimes against women and children that have happened and that we have witnessed in Bucha, Irpin and other cities throughout the country.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Over to you for two minutes, Mr. Bergeron.

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

We also have a list of oligarchs' names, provided to this committee by the chief of staff of the Russian dissident who is currently in prison. The government keeps saying that it is looking at the list and that it plans to broaden the sanctions to also include these people.

You've told us that you are in contact with Global Affairs Canada about the list of companies and individuals who are to be sanctioned. A few moments ago, we talked about Russian banks. Do you have any information or hearsay to indicate that the list could soon be extended with a view to ramping up pressure on Russia's economy?

[*English*]

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: Let me say that with regard to the sanctions, they should be widespread and the timing and not announcing too much are important so that people who will be sanctioned will not pull their assets out of the country.

The second thing is that already Ukraine has made public the list of companies and people who are under the sanctions in different jurisdictions. You can see the big significant list of companies and people, and you can watch which countries have already sanctioned them and which have not. If that is of interest to you, we can share this big database showing the public sanctions with the members of Parliament for you to follow.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Your Excellency.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

[*English*]

Madam McPherson, go ahead, please, for two minutes.

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

That would be very interesting if you wouldn't mind sharing that with the committee.

I just want to end by asking a few questions about humanitarian aid and how Canada can support Ukraine with humanitarian aid. One of the areas in which I think we sometimes fall down is the recognition of long-term dependable, predictable aid. We know, according to reports, that Ukraine has suffered approximately \$600 billion worth of infrastructure damage. What would you like to see the Canadian government commit to? I would like you to speak about that long-term commitment. We know there is an immediate need, but what should the long-term commitment be in terms of humanitarian aid and in terms of helping to rebuild Ukraine?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: We thank you for the question, and it's also important. We are now working on the big rebuilding plan. The key

concept of this plan, which was presented in the Ukrainian parliament today, was the main pillars of that, and we are now working on a deeper understanding of the needs. Unfortunately as the war unfolds, the damages caused by Russian war increase each day, but there are a few significant things. First, we are now working on and also we appreciate the leadership of the Canadian government in the creation of joint united allies' support of that fund.

The second thing is the seizure of Russian assets not only in Canada but globally. And here, we will appreciate the adoption of the laws and the instruments that will make Russia pay the bill.

The third is the support from the budget of Canada and other countries to donate to this fund.

Fourth is the instruments that will include Canadian businesses participating in the rebuilding of Ukraine. There will be a huge need for infrastructure, building, construction and energy—enormous sectors. We are now seeing that Canadian businesses are keen on looking at the instruments whereby they can participate in the further building of Ukraine.

● (1255)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Mr. Chong, go ahead, please, for four minutes.

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

Ambassador-designate Kovaliv, thank you for coming to our committee.

I'd like to know what the Ukrainian military's objective is in this war. Is it to push Russia back to the pre-February 24 border or is it to push Russia back to the pre-2014 border, or is it some other objective?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: It is the restoration of Ukrainian sovereign territories.

Hon. Michael Chong: Do you mean those from pre-2014?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: It is the Ukrainian sovereign territories.

Hon. Michael Chong: So that's pre-2014. Thank you for the answer to that question.

I have a second question related to energy. You mentioned in your opening remarks how vital it was to get Europe off Russian natural gas. According to Reuters, every day since the beginning of this year, European democracies have transferred anywhere from 200 million to 800 million euros to Russia as payment for natural gas. This is up to over \$1 billion Canadian a day to fund the Russian war machine. How important is it to Ukraine that countries like Canada, the fifth-largest natural gas producer in the world, step up to the plate to displace Russian gas in western Europe?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: Since 2014, Ukraine has made efforts, and we are not relying on a supply of Russian gas. It was very painful, but we succeeded in this. And it's very painful now in the European Union and we as Ukraine support the efforts that will help European countries that still rely significantly on Russian oil and gas to cut those ties and to cut the flow of money for oil and gas to Russia, because this money is mostly financing the military and the war in Ukraine. In terms of this support, I mentioned that there are two ways—the support of renewables and the support of fossil fuels by the European countries that are suffering the most. That is crucial for the joint energy security of the European continent.

Hon. Michael Chong: Does the Ukrainian government consider this a high priority?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: The Ukrainian government advocates for a total ban of Russian oil and gas supplied to Europe. That's essential for us to avoid feeding, more and more, the Russian economy.

Hon. Michael Chong: As you know, the Canadian government allocated \$500 million, in the most recent budget, for military equipment for Ukraine. What equipment do you need right now?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: We need heavy weapons. The list of weapons is quite wide. Some of them were already shipped and delivered to Ukraine. Some of them are in progress. We worked 24-7 with GAC and DND to make it happen more quickly, more extensively. They answered the demands from Ukraine, which are actually being articulated on a weekly basis. Since the situation in Ukraine changes, the demand changes. There is also already an established coordination among our allies, about 40 countries that made a decision to coordinate their efforts to Ukraine on the transfer.

• (1300)

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

Ambassador, I'll just finish by quickly saying we appreciate your invitation for this committee to travel to Ukraine. We are actively considering it. We believe it's important that we show solidarity with the people of Ukraine through the legislative-to-legislative branches of our systems. We appreciate that invitation.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Our final intervention this afternoon goes to Madame Bendayan.

[Translation]

You have the floor for four minutes.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As my colleague Mr. Oliphant was saying, this is not a partisan issue for us. I think that we would all like to be on the ground in Ukraine.

Ambassador, could you tell us a little more about the importance, not only of humanitarian aid, but also weapons and ammunition? In very concrete terms, do you need more weapons in Ukraine right now? What has the international community's response been? You said that you're expecting several shipments.

[English]

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: Yes, we need military aid now, and even for yesterday. We do expect that the next few weeks will be very important in terms of defending our territory. We urge military support within the next days and weeks.

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

As part of the international community, what can we do to help women and victims of sexual violence? Is there something Canada can do to help them, Ambassador?

[English]

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: There are three important things. The first is documenting and bringing Russia to justice for all these war crimes.

The second is the support programs for women who were victims of sexual crimes. The Ukrainian government is now in the process of developing such programs. We will hear, with Parliament members and also the government, the ideas we are working on and the proposals to join the efforts to work together.

The third thing that's important is also to be vocal globally on sexual crimes being a part of war crimes and being one of the instruments of the Russian war. It is also important that the world knows it, and the world stands with Ukraine against Russia on it.

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Can you tell us about any developments at the United Nations and other international organizations?

We know, of course, what Ukraine's position is, but as a diplomat yourself, are you aware of any ways that Russia's power and influence within these organizations can be weakened in the short or medium term?

[English]

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: We are working on that, with the support and leadership of Canada, which was helping us to expel Russia from international organizations. There were a variety, a range of them.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I understand that Ambassador Rae has been playing a leading role at the United Nations. Is that the case?

Mrs. Yuliia Kovaliv: Yes.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you very much, Your Excellency. Thank you once again for your appearance today at our foreign affairs committee.

[Translation]

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

[*English*]

On the collective behalf of colleagues, I say a very warm “thank you” to our witnesses for this panel. Ambassador-designate Ko-

valiv and Chargé d'affaires Bukvych, thank you very much for your testimony. We look forward to working with you.

Colleagues, with that, we stand adjourned until our next session.

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