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• (1635)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): Welcome to meeting number 33 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members before we commence.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. Please mute yourself when you are not speaking. Interpretation, for those on Zoom, is at the bottom of your screen. You have a choice of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Wednesday, September 21, 2022, the committee commences its study of the extreme flooding in Pakistan.

It is now my pleasure to welcome, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan, director general, South Asia bureau; Mr. Christopher Gibbins, executive director, Afghanistan-Pakistan division; and Ms. Tara Carney, acting director general, international humanitarian assistance bureau.

You will each be provided five minutes for your remarks, after which we will turn to the members for any questions they may have.

If we could please start with—

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, may I raise a point of order before the witnesses begin?

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I was disappointed—and maybe other members were—that Monday's meeting was cancelled. Obviously, that's not something we want to see happen, especially with short notice and without consultation. I wonder if you could advise the committee as to why Monday's meeting was cancelled. I hope we don't see last-minute cancellations of meetings.

There are a number of issues that we could have considered at that meeting.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

I have to say that I am fully aware of the fact that you were disappointed. It was something that you emphasized in the proceedings in the House yesterday on several occasions, so it comes as no surprise.

As you are aware, our intent was to hear both from you and from the principal sponsor of the bill as well, Senator Ataullahjan. The clerk was good enough to reach out to you and to the senator. Regrettably, the senator was not available for Monday, so we just decided that it would be a waste of the committee's time if we did not also have the opportunity to hear from Senator Ataullahjan.

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

• (1640)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I don't know if you're looking for a response, but I suspect that Senator Ataullahjan would have preferred to see the bill proceed more quickly. I think my views on this are well known.

I just hope that if in the future meetings are cancelled there would be some consultation with other parties before we receive a cancellation notice. I'll leave it at that, but I think that at least a consultation and an opportunity for input would be appreciated.

The Chair: What I can say, Mr. Genuis, is that we're in no position to make judgment calls on behalf of Senator Ataullahjan.

We will endeavour to make sure that the committee does devote time to your bill, Senator Ataullahjan's bill. We very much look forward to having a robust discussion regarding the bill.

Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): If I understood correctly, there are no witnesses participating in the meeting remotely.

[English]

The Chair: Yes. We do have witnesses for both hours.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Right.

Then I want to be sure that the sound tests have been done and were successful. Is that the case?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I have another question, Mr. Chair.

We have received an amended calendar that seems to say we should provide our witness lists tomorrow. Did I miss an episode?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, as the clerk advises, it's important, and this is important for all members to be aware of.

As you know, we are trying to proceed with as many meetings as possible, but in order for that to happen, it is important that every member provide the clerk with their list of witnesses for Haiti by end of day tomorrow.

This is something we didn't have an opportunity to discuss in previous committee meetings, but I would ask that all members put it in their schedules to make sure they get their—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, are you aware that this is an extremely tight schedule?

[*English*]

The Chair: Just for the benefit of all members, next Monday, for the first hour, we will be hearing from Minister Sajjan regarding the flooding in Pakistan, but the second hour will be devoted to Haiti.

Is that okay with everyone?

Shall we proceed with the witnesses?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Right, we have to deal with it, but it is very unusual for us to be asked to provide a witness list on such a tight schedule.

[*English*]

The Chair: My apologies for that, Mr. Bergeron, but we are trying.

I should say a word of thanks to the clerk and to the analyst for moving forward with these meetings with immediate dispatch. We have generally provided them very little runway to organize these meetings, and they have consistently delivered. I apologize for any inconvenience this may cause, but that's what happens when we're constantly behind on committee hearings.

On that note, we will proceed with our witnesses.

Again, thank you ever so much for being with us.

We will commence with Ms. Hannan.

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan (Director General, South Asia Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would just like to clarify, before I begin, that, as we are all from Global Affairs Canada, from the same organization, I have some prepared remarks on behalf of our organization. My fellow witnesses do not have prepared remarks, so we can get into the questions even more quickly.

The Chair: As you wish.

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Thank you.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to speak to you today about the devastation caused by the floods in Pakistan, Canada's engagement and Global Affairs Canada's response to the crisis in support of the people of Pakistan.

[*Translation*]

Canada has a more than 70-year history of productive cooperation with Pakistan. Our bilateral relationship with Pakistan is solid and is supported by extensive interpersonal connections. Together, we are tackling urgent global problems, such as the climate crisis and the economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.

• (1645)

[*English*]

Pakistan is the eighth most climate change-affected country in the world and is at significant risk of extreme weather events. Temperatures are expected to rise by 3°C to 6°C in Pakistan by 2100, which is higher than the global average.

Rainfall is predicted to have greater annual variability, and low-lying coastal areas are at risk from rising sea levels. Pakistan is considered to be a high-stress country for water availability, since the Himalayan glaciers, Pakistan's largest freshwater source, are receding.

Since mid-June of this year, heavy monsoon rainfall and floods in Pakistan have affected over 33 million people, left more than 20.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and resulted in over 1,700 deaths.

Since the first week of August this year, unprecedented amounts of water accumulated due to the above-normal rainfall, especially in Balochistan and Sindh, which surpassed the records of the past 62 years with a colossal 450% increase.

While the flood waters have begun to recede, approximately 37,000 square kilometres of land remain flooded across Pakistan, down from 42,000 square kilometres at the end of September.

[*Translation*]

The department is committed to working alongside the global community to provide urgent and vital help to the most vulnerable people in Pakistan as well as support for rebuilding.

The extent of the damage caused by the floods has meant that Canada, with the international community, has had to make its contribution to meet the immediate and long-term needs.

The Minister of International Development, Mr. Sajjan, traveled to Pakistan in September 2022 and stayed there from September 12 to 14. He was accompanied by three members of Parliament: Iqra Khalid, Salma Zahid and Shafqat Ali. I want to note that my colleague Christopher Gibbins, who is with us today, also accompanied Mr. Sajjan on his trip to Pakistan in September.

The purpose of the visit was both to let the Pakistani people know that Canada was supporting them and to see how Canada could best play its role in the response to the crisis.

In his testimony next week, the Minister will undoubtedly provide you with the details of what he saw and heard.

[English]

On August 29, Canada initially responded by announcing \$5 million in humanitarian assistance funding. Then, on September 13, Canada increased its total announced flood assistance to Pakistan to \$33 million. This figure includes a matching fund of \$7.5 million.

In addition, Canada also supported the deployment of a humanitarian expert to Pakistan through Canada's deployment of the humanitarian experts project within the Canadian Red Cross Society and the mobilization of essential non-food items from Canada's humanitarian stockpiles in Dubai and Mississauga.

On October 4, the Government of Pakistan and the United Nations jointly increased the Pakistan flood appeal from \$160 million U.S. to \$816 million U.S. This was in response to the rising needs and scale of destruction caused by the current disaster. Over two million homes have been destroyed or damaged, forcing people to live under open skies, exposed to threats of dengue, malaria and the impact of weather. More than 1,500 health and support facilities were badly damaged, as were 13,000 kilometres of roads, making it difficult and sometimes impossible to reach families and communities in need.

[Translation]

Recently, on October 14, Canadian representatives participated in a high-level round table in Washington organized by the World Bank, dealing with how to respond to the consequences of the catastrophic floods in Pakistan.

Regarding the next steps, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, the Asian Development Bank, the Government of Pakistan and the European Union have committed to preparing a needs assessment following the disaster in order to provide an initial assessment of the impact of the situation surrounding the 2022 floods, which continues to evolve.

[English]

This needs assessment, once available, will detail the physical damages, the economic losses and the costs of meeting the recovery needs of Pakistan.

Canada will continue to align our relief and recovery assistance with the identified needs of the most vulnerable in Pakistan. The department commends the work of local and international organizations in responding to the crisis, and we will continue to engage with civil society, other international donors, the Government of

Pakistan and the United Nations on how best to support the vulnerable populations affected by the floods in Pakistan.

Thank you.

• (1650)

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

I should, for the benefit of all members, repeat the position of each one of our witnesses.

Ms. Hannan is director general of the South Asia bureau. Mr. Gibbins is the executive director of the Afghanistan-Pakistan division and was with the minister when he visited Pakistan. Ms. Carney is the acting director general of the international humanitarian assistance bureau.

With that, we will now proceed with questions from the members.

Mr. Genuis, you are first.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is a very important issue—a very important study. I was pleased that our party was able to push for more hearings on this, because I think this is an issue we need to explore and ask some questions about.

I want to start by drilling into the issue of the matching programs the government operates for humanitarian assistance. This has been an issue that I've continually raised in response to other humanitarian crises: the fact that this government has made a pattern of introducing matching programs that only apply to certain charitable organizations and not others.

The effect of this—and I anticipate some of the testimony we're going to hear in the second hour—is that organizations that are present and active on the ground, and that have a high degree of capacity, are shut out from the benefits of the matching program and actually have a much harder time raising money, because their donors come to them and say, “How come the Government of Canada is matching these organizations and not these other organizations?” In other words, the policy of the government, in terms of arbitrarily matching some organizations and not others, causes potential reputational damage to these organizations, which are present and doing good work.

I've raised this before, on Lebanon and Ukraine. We spoke about it in the context of the matching program the government announced for Atlantic Canada. I don't know if those concerns, raised by parliamentarians and the community at large, are being heard at all. Again, we have a case where the government is selectively matching donations to some organizations and not others. That does a great deal of damage, especially to many small and diaspora community-led organizations.

What's going on here? Why hasn't there been a responsiveness to the concerns raised, and why is there persistence in matching contributions to some organizations and not others?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, for questions related to the humanitarian assistance program, I'm going to turn to my colleague Tara, who is responsible for this area within Global Affairs.

Ms. Tara Carney (Acting Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Mr. Chair, thank you for the question.

Matching funds is an important tool for Canada when it responds to a natural disaster, particularly in terms of engaging Canadians, which is why we pre-established matching fund mechanisms with select partners that are indeed experienced humanitarian partners that can directly implement on the ground. What a matching fund such as this one does...through the Canadian Humanitarian Coalition, which includes 12 key humanitarian partners, as well as the networks that fall behind them, such as the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, which has an extensive network of smaller organizations underneath its umbrella.

What a matching fund allows us to do—though there are some limitations to it—is respond very quickly and in a timely way, because the due diligence and back-end operations on these organizations have already been done. It also allows us to match Canadians' donations one-to-one, so they know that, if they give a dollar, we will equally give a dollar back to the organization that has raised the funds.

The matching fund mechanism is also an important piece that allows us to respond in a timely way, so we are not delayed as fundraising efforts continue across.

• (1655)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, respectfully, the witness didn't really answer my question.

I agree with you that matching programs are wonderful in principle, but there's a specific problem when you exclude some organizations. I agree that the organizations that are beneficiaries of this program are doing great work, but if you offered a social program to people in one province and not another, or to people with one hair colour and not another, people would understandably object.

Why do you have a matching program that, by design, excludes other organizations that are doing good work? In many cases, these are small, diaspora-led organizations with a significant footprint on the ground being left out, in favour of established partners of the government—in effect, larger organizations that have pre-existing relations with the government, as opposed to some of the smaller organizations that are still very active and present.

Can you take another run at answering my question and explaining why the government isn't looking for alternatives to be more inclusive here?

Ms. Tara Carney: The matching fund mechanism, as it currently stands, is actually built on lessons learned from previous attempts to engage on humanitarian assistance within the Canadian population.

Our goal, when there is a natural disaster, is really to ensure that timeliness of funding reaching the most affected populations on the ground. In order to do this, we need to have a mechanism that is ready to be unrolled more or less at the press of a button, and to actually then, once fundraising is complete, get the money out the door in very short order.

In years past, there were mechanisms that actually allowed for a broader reach of a matching fund, so that there was a broader partnership level of people who were able to donate to organizations. That resulted in significant delays in getting funding out to the people most affected by the crisis, sometimes in fact with money rolling out long past the—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm almost done, but could you share evidence of that with the committee in writing?

The Chair: I'm afraid you're out of time, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Just a yes or no—

The Chair: It's over six minutes, Mr. Genuis. You're out of time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I hope you can share some written evidence with the committee on that.

The Chair: We'll go to MP Sarai next, for six minutes.

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

I'm glad, Mr. Gibbins, that you actually visited there. I have a considerable ask from Pakistani Canadians who are in my riding. They were very concerned, as were many people from the Punjabi diaspora in general who hail from that region.

What I want to know... We all know it's because of climate change, but to what degree did climate change impact the extent and devastation of the flooding in Pakistan?

This is for anyone.

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: I will turn to my colleague, Christopher, to answer the question.

If I understand correctly, the question is to what extent climate change impacted the flooding.

Mr. Christopher Gibbins (Executive Director, Afghanistan-Pakistan, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): It did, to quite a significant degree. As the opening remarks commented, the increased rainfall was significantly above what has been experienced in the past, and it's increasing. That is also accompanied by the Himalayan glaciers melting, so it's also adding to the downflow. Because of the volume of rainfall, the ground is completely and utterly saturated, which is why there is still so much that remains inundated, and will remain so for quite an extended period.

It's fair to say that climate change was a significant factor. There were other factors, as well. Any country that would receive that much rainfall... The infrastructure just wasn't able to endure those consequences. That's obviously something that we are, globally, having to address. That was certainly a challenge, and is also a challenge for Pakistan.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: On the same topic of climate change, we know, obviously, that reducing greenhouse emissions will help that, but that's a global thing.

How can Canada help Pakistan on infrastructure to mitigate such damages in the future, whether it's dikes, flood zones, controlled zones or dams?

Mr. Christopher Gibbins: That question is going to be a huge challenge for international communities, because of the scale of it. As we noted in the opening remarks, the needs assessment is still being undertaken, and we're all awaiting that eagerly. It's being done in close collaboration, review, and finalization with the Government of Pakistan, so it actually aligns with its assessment of what those needs are.

There are a number of global funds to which Canada contributes, which will be able to initially start to address some of those immediate infrastructure challenges. Canada will be very much part of those conversations, whether at the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, or the IMF.

• (1700)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Do you know if any of Canada's \$5.3 billion for international climate finance is being delivered to Pakistan, or if any application for that has been made?

Mr. Christopher Gibbins: I'm not aware of any applications, but I do know that Pakistan is eligible to apply for those funds. It is definitely one of the countries identified in the top rank eligible in line, in part because of their climate vulnerability.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: On August 17, Minister Joly spoke with Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. How was the first interaction between the ministers, and how would you describe our bilateral relations between Canada and Pakistan?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: The interaction was quite friendly. I can report that I was a listener to that call, and it was a very good start to an interaction with her counterpart. In general, we have had relations with Pakistan for well over... I think we're celebrating 75 years of relations. As two countries that co-operate in a number of forums, we enjoy good, healthy bilateral relations.

We are looking forward to continuing to support Pakistan through this very challenging time that it is experiencing due to the flooding. The world's attention is on Pakistan right now, and we are happy to be supporting Pakistan as a partner and friendly country.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Has Canada thought of sharing technology or engineering tactics?

We have a huge watershed. Canada is built on primarily watershed areas and has dealt with similar types of scenarios, as recently as Abbotsford in British Columbia. On raising village levels or other types of scenarios, has Canada offered to exchange technology on how it can mitigate the risks of flooding in the future, especially to livestock and human and agricultural needs?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, certainly I can confirm that through our trade commissioner service, which is active on the ground in Pakistan, definitely they're engaging with government and the private sector in Pakistan on offering technologies and experience and know-how from Canada that could help to address these challenging areas.

There is always an annual process of determining the target and most useful areas where we could offer some assistance. That is definitely factored into our annual business planning and the priori-

ty sectors for engaging and trying to bring the right kind of Canadian expertise to bear on the problems that Pakistan is facing.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Sarai.

We now go to Monsieur Bergeron for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for being with us to provide us with information about the situation that prevailed and still prevails in Pakistan.

On August 26, 2022, the coalition government of Pakistan declared a national state of emergency in response to the serious flooding. In addition to the ravages caused by the floods, Pakistan has been faced with political instability and an economic crisis since Imran Khan was removed from office after losing a confidence vote in April 2022.

My question is very simple.

How may the floods have exacerbated political instability and the economic crisis? And vice versa, how may the economic crisis and political instability in Pakistan have interfered with operations to deal with the floods?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, the Government of Canada is obviously well aware of the economic and political challenges Pakistan is currently facing. It is not really our place to comment on how the people of Pakistan will respond to the crisis or how they will go forward in deciding their future.

Certainly, a country facing multiple problems at the same time will have a bigger challenge to overcome. To date, however, we have observed that despite all these challenges happening at virtually the same time, the government has continued to function and perform its duties. Of course, it has requested a lot of international aid to deal with the flooding, but I see no causal connection between the floods and the political and economic situations referred to earlier.

We note that this is quite a difficult period, but the government of Pakistan is continuing to engage with the international community and respond effectively to the situation.

• (1705)

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

Just to make sure I am clear, I did not in any way intend to suggest that there was a causal connection between the events. I simply wanted you to provide us with information as to the impacts of these floods on political instability and on the economic crisis or, vice versa, the impacts of the economic crisis and political instability on the country's reaction to this natural phenomenon. I do see that there is some understandable discomfort with the idea of taking you down this road.

According to the Global Climate Risk Index, Pakistan is one of ten countries in the world, as you noted, that were most affected by extreme weather events between 2000 and 2019. Mr. Sajjan's mandate letter states that he is to:

Work with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to mobilize and provide climate finance in order to support developing country adaptation, mitigation and resilience, including support for small island states at particular risk of climate-related emergencies.

Has action been taken on that aspect of the mandate letter?

If so, what action relates to Pakistan specifically?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: First, Mr. Chair, I would just like to apologize if I misunderstood the previous question. My intention is not to give the impression that there is a cause and effect relationship. It is just that I didn't see the impact of one on the other.

Regarding the question about climate events and Minister Sajjan's mandate letter, I would just like to ask that the question be repeated, just to make sure I have understood correctly and have all the points to which I need to respond.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Once again, Mr. Chair, my question is this.

What action has been taken on this provision in Mr. Sajjan's mandate letter?

If actions have been taken, which ones have affected Pakistan, more specifically?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Thank you.

I think it has been mentioned that Pakistan is one of the six countries in the world that are eligible for funding from the climate funding envelope, which comes to \$2.65 billion.

One of the measures we have taken is to make sure that Pakistan is eligible for that, because we see that it is one of the countries in the world most affected by the instability associated with climate events.

I don't know whether my colleague Mr. Gibbins could add something.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm afraid we're out of time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, have you taken into account the fact that I had to repeat my question?

[*English*]

The Chair: Sure. Could you keep it to under 30 seconds, Mr. Gibbins?

Mr. Christopher Gibbins: Mr. Chair, to that, I can simply add that Pakistan has three approved green climate fund projects, for a total of \$120 million U.S. in financing focused on flood risk reduction.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: We now go to Ms. McPherson.

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

I thank our guests for being with us today and for sharing this information with us.

I'm going to follow up on some of the questions with regard to the climate funding, because I do think that we all know this was a direct impact of climate change. This is not going to be the last time we see climate emergencies happening. Of course, as parliamentarians, as Canadians, we don't want to be on our heels in responding. We want to be more proactive on this.

Could you tell me about the climate funding? In particular, what I would like to know is, for example, how much of the \$2.6 billion has been allocated and how much has been spent, and if you could you share with me the eligibility for applying for that. Also, what size of project is required for that? Just to add to that, could you also tell me how much of that is being spent for bilateral, multilateral, local or Canadian CSOs?

Thank you. That's like seven questions in one.

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Yes, Mr. Chair, it's a multiphase question, so I will try to be as detailed as possible.

To start off, the \$2.65-billion climate finance commitment that Canada has made is of course delivered in partnership with and through multilateral partners like the World Bank.

I'll try to address the questions about what Canada has done specifically.

The \$2.65-billion climate finance commitment to developing countries has been delivered through regional and multilateral initiatives. I can give the example of \$200 million to the second phase of the Canadian private sector fund at the Asian Development Bank, which aims to mobilize private sector support for climate action in Asian and Pacific countries that would not otherwise happen due to market barriers.

Pakistan is eligible to receive support through this fund in areas like renewable energy, energy efficiency, agriculture, water management—

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm sorry. I'm going to interrupt. I just want to make sure that I'm clear here. Is the climate financing that the Government of Canada provides provided only through the World Bank or through other multilateral institutions?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: It's provided through regional and multilateral initiatives.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Is there funding available for Canadian CSOs?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: The majority of our climate finance commitment was designed from the beginning to be delivered multilaterally, and it didn't include direct bilateral support to Pakistan. We do have other direct bilateral support to Pakistan, but this particular envelope was, from the beginning, designed to be delivered multilaterally.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Are there any envelopes that are developed for Canadian CSOs, for Canadian organizations?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: I'm not aware of any.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any climate adaptation funds that Canada gives for which smaller projects would be eligible, say \$2 million or \$5 million? Is there anything that would engage more with local CSOs or local organizations?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: I can cite our contribution to the green climate fund, which is the world's largest fund to support developing countries in realizing their nationally determined contributions toward a low-emission and climate-resilient future.

Pakistan has three approved projects under this green climate fund, for a total of \$120 million U.S., so I can imagine that each of them is below that amount. It focuses on flood risk reduction, water management and zero-emission rapid transit—

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm sorry to interrupt again. I have such limited time.

I want to make sure that this is clear. These are all delivered through other organizations, so Canadian funds are given to other organizations to deliver them.

Do we direct these funds in any way? Also, do we have any way of ensuring that they align with our feminist international assistance policy?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: We have very strict monitoring and performance management standards. We are definitely following certain criteria, including adherence to the feminist international assistance policy. Any assistance delivered from Canada through these multilateral organizations is tracked and reported on.

• (1715)

Ms. Heather McPherson: One other thing that I'll ask—and I know I'm going to run out of time—is on the Canadian Coalition on Climate Change and Development, which commissioned a paper in 2020. One thing they talked about is the vital need for Canada's climate commitments—our adaptation and mitigation commitments—to be on top of our ODA commitments and that there be some additivity to that. Of course, this is an additional issue that we are dealing with as a global community.

Has there been any discussion on our climate commitments being in addition to our ODA commitments? Our ODA, of course, is extremely low. I think it's still at 0.3%, if I'm not mistaken.

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, I am not aware of discussions about commitments in addition to official development assistance.

If my colleague is also unable to confirm that, we would have to check and come back to the committee on that question.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Okay.

Could I ask one final question, then?

The Chair: I'm afraid you're out of time, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Oh, I'm sorry. I could have gone all day.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hannan, for undertaking to provide that additional information.

We will now go to the second round of questioning, and each member will be given four minutes.

The first person up is MP Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for being here in person. It's so nice to see you here.

I have two ranges of questions: one is about during the flooding activity and our response time, and then one on postflood and the realities of accommodation and what's happened on the ground—loss of crops and things like that.

During the flooding time, did we have our assets in place to help as best as possible? When you talk about the climate crisis and the forecast of 3°C to 6°C increases, are we really looking at where we have assets located around the world to make sure we can respond to areas of high risk for events like this in the future?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, I want to make sure that I understand the question about Canada having its assets in place.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I should add the United Nations to the equation.

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Of course, Canada has representatives on the ground, who are based at our mission in Islamabad, and they are watching the situation as it evolves. This flood is of a catastrophic nature, and, of course, it was an evolving situation. It continues to impact the country, knowing that still tens of thousands of square kilometres are flooded.

I would say that the real-time reaction and quick action to respond to the floods marked our action in terms of days, not weeks, because this was a situation that demanded quick action.

I'm not sure this answers the question fully—

Mr. Randy Hoback: I guess maybe I can clarify.

I want to make sure that Canada's military—whether it's DART or other groups—has the ability to get to that rapid response. Are we really looking at things globally in light of climate change to make sure we have them in the appropriate locations? For example, in the hurricane response out of Panama.... If we're going to see more flooding in Asia, should we be putting more assets in a region somewhere in that area?

Are you looking at that?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: I feel like my colleague Christopher is ready to take this question and respond.

Mr. Randy Hoback: It has to be very short. I apologize. I only get four minutes.

Mr. Christopher Gibbins: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

In the immediate response, the Government of Pakistan was extremely well equipped and they did not ask for any immediate international assistance such as DART.

When DART is deployed, it's always based on a request for assistance. In this case, the Pakistan military and civilian...were firmly interlinked to respond to the crisis in the immediate.

Mr. Randy Hoback: My next question is on some reports I have here. There were some 800,000 cattle lost. The rice crop is lost. They're the fourth-largest exporter of rice. Wheat is possibly lost. As we look at the world crisis in food, how is this impacting it globally?

Then I look at their debt situation with the IMF. The IMF came out with a bailout package, but then put in some strict requirements with regard to getting that bailout package.

Is Pakistan actually going to be able to feed itself going forward? What are the domino effects of them not having a crop, as it associates with Africa and the surrounding areas?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Thank you.

The global impact is, of course, quite devastating. As I mentioned in the opening remarks, at the moment a study is being undertaken just to understand the extent of the damage overall, because this will be long-ranging. We're talking about 13,000 kilometres of roads and many crops that were lost at a time when food insecurity is heightened because of situations beyond Pakistan's borders—the Russia-Ukraine conflict chief among them.

Pakistan is one of the top 10 food-insecure nations in the world, so this is definitely a global impact that has not yet been measured because it's not yet possible to understand the extent of the damage.

In terms of the IMF bailout and the domino effect that this may have on Pakistan, I think it remains to be adequately studied whether Pakistan will have a more solid economic place from which to continue to negotiate. This is really part of the challenge facing Pakistan right now.

We are trying to focus on the humanitarian relief and the ongoing support that will help Pakistan come back to a place where they're able to engage with the international community and show that they are delivering on at least the commitments that they made already.

• (1720)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Just a quick comment on that—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hoback. You're considerably over your time. I'm sorry about that.

We go next to Dr. Fry.

You have four minutes.

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

I wanted to pick up on some of the questions that were asked earlier in terms of the fact that we know climate change is going to keep impacting Pakistan. There will continue to be floods and problems at that level. What are we doing to look at resilience and at how we build structures that will not allow for this to happen? That's the first question.

The one that concerns me a lot is the fact that, as we know, when there's flooding, there are fecal-borne infections and mosquito-borne infections. We see dengue and cholera, etc. Is there any immunization program being rolled out to help immunize people in this part of the world?

Third, women tend to be impacted a great deal. In many countries, floods and the lack of infrastructure often do not allow people in the rainy season—never mind during a flood—to be able to access clinics, to access reproductive health care, to have babies and to get the kind of help that they need.

What are we going to do to look at resilience in that region? Do we have to wait every time until there is a flood or a problem to do this quick emergency mitigation, but not build infrastructure to prevent it in the future and to create resilience?

The Chair: I apologize for jumping in before the officials provide an answer.

As you will notice, the bells are ringing and the lights are flashing. Do we have unanimous consent to go on until five minutes before the vote?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's excellent. Thank you.

Now we can go back to the officials for their response.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I hope you stopped the clock, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, I did.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you.

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, I believe the question illustrates a number of the multi-faceted impacts and the ways that it is extremely important to prevent and to act before things are at a crisis level.

In fact, Canada's overall bilateral assistance program for Pakistan, which has been in place for many years, aims to do just that, so thank you for the opportunity to highlight that the continuing challenges were there before the floods, and they are exacerbated by the floods, but they will continue to be a challenge.

Canada, in fact, does have specific bilateral assistance to address things like the challenge of polio. That is one program we support with financial assistance.

We recognize the particular impact of this crisis and some of the ongoing challenges associated with the development profile of Pakistan. We do recognize it has a higher impact on women, and there are multi-faceted approaches that are used in order to address those, including through the Canada fund for local initiatives—

• (1725)

Hon. Hedy Fry: I'm sorry. Excuse me. I don't have a lot of time. I just want a couple of basic questions answered.

Are we going to look at helping to build health infrastructure that would help clinics where women can go to deliver their babies and have that kind of need attended to? Are we looking at infrastructure with regard to electricity so we can have lights and we can have intravenous drips for people who need them? Are we looking at immunization to prevent these kinds of diseases from happening in the future?

There's a health component that I want to find out about.

Mr. Christopher Gibbins: Health is fundamental to our development assistance program currently. It's an integral part of any humanitarian response, and it's also going to be integral to the assessments that are under way currently. They are always, for Canada and for the UN, done through a very clear gender lens and recognition that women and girls are particularly affected at times of crisis and just generally in terms of situations of poverty and challenge.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you kindly for that.

Next, we go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have two minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

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

We know that on June 30, 2022, Pakistan had nearly 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees, according to the United Nations.

Are you able to tell us more about the situation of these Afghan refugees in Pakistan?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, one of the things that our commitment to Pakistan stresses is the situation of Afghans in Pakistan. That is part of our commitment to negotiate and continue working with Pakistan on the issue of barriers relating to travel and exiting Afghanistan. That is being done under a program that offers them safe passage.

Canada is committed to bringing 40,000 Afghans here. We have already admitted 21,000 refugees from Afghanistan. Many of them travelled through Pakistan, because that was the most likely exit

route to date. That is one of the possibilities, but many people have travelled via that route. We have worked closely with the government of Pakistan to bring them to Canada after that.

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

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 10 seconds, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I'm going to come back to Mr. Genuis's first question.

I would just like to know how it was decided what matching funds the Canadian government was prepared to pay in connection with the money paid by Canadians from August 1 to September 28, 2022.

Why was the cut-off September 28, 2022?

[*English*]

The Chair: Could I ask you to respond in less than 15 seconds, please?

Ms. Tara Carney: The matching funds time period was determined in consultation with partners. It was backdated to what was effectively the onset of the calamity portion of the monsoon rain season, the goal being that we always try to do matching funds within a period that allows for that really active engagement with Canadians to mobilize their funding.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Carney. I'm very grateful.

We now go to Ms. McPherson.

You have two minutes, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

I'd like to follow up on one of the comments you made, Mr. Gibbins, on the aid that has been delivered to Pakistan and the lens of the feminist international assistance policy being used. How is that being done? How are you ensuring that it's happening? What mechanisms are in place to ensure that there is some accountability for that?

Mr. Christopher Gibbins: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Any agreement we have with any implementing partner is very rigorously drawn out and negotiated in many respects. It always includes those kinds of gender qualifications, among others. Built into that are also strong monitoring mechanisms, whether that be our development team on the ground, who go regularly to sites and interact with the implementers, or very often audits that are undertaken. Before the final disbursement is made, it's confirming that all of those indicators are met, whether they're gender, financial or otherwise.

• (1730)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

I have one last question, just very quickly, going back to a question that was asked earlier. We know that Pakistan is dealing with enormous debt and has an enormous debt burden. Would it not be useful for Canada to also play a role in helping to alleviate that debt burden? It is one thing to give funds for humanitarian assistance, but in the long term, in terms of building the country up so they're able to withstand future disasters and ensuring that they actually have the funds available to do that, debt relief is a key role.

What role is Canada playing and what role can Canada play?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, on this question, I think it would be difficult for us to go beyond the remit of the department. We're working within the lanes of the policy that is established. We might be providing advice on policy, but I think it would be going beyond my remit to comment on things that we should be doing in the future. Perhaps the minister would be better placed to comment on this question.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I will ask the minister.

Thank you.

The Chair: We now go back to Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Hoback, you have four minutes.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Thank you, Chair.

Going down that same line, you're saying it's a policy decision on whether we want to intervene at the IMF and what they put in for conditions. I know that the Arab countries have basically restructured debt repayments differently. They've given them a break so they can use that money internally. Is that something Canada would consider? Or would that be considered a policy question for the minister?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: I will just stick to the facts on this one. I'm not aware of any discussions of Canada considering restructuring debt repayments to the IMF, this large multilateral organization. I think it's something that would have to be considered very carefully with a lot of like-minded nations. It's not something that Canada would be considering doing alone.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Okay.

You mentioned that Minister Sajjan went in September to the region with some other Liberal MPs. Was that paid for by the department?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: The minister, as far as I am aware, has a budget for travel, being international development minister, and was working within the allocations that are provided to the international development minister, along with his portfolio, to engage with partners and in situations around the world.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Again, I don't mean to put you on the spot, but in a scenario like this, why weren't members of the opposition included in a delegation with the minister? Why was it only Liberal members? Do you know?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: I'm afraid those questions are not ones that I am able to answer.

Mr. Randy Hoback: That's fair enough.

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: I don't think the decision about which members were included in the minister's delegation is one on which Global Affairs provided advice.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Okay. For us in the opposition, it would have really helped us question you if we had been on the ground like some members of the Liberal Party were. I feel disadvantaged in that scenario.

Looking forward, we're going to see starvation. We're going to see hunger. We also have to look at the situation. We're going to have to help their agriculture sector. Canada is very good at doing that. What would be done at this point in time within Global Affairs to start putting in place Canadian expertise and Canadian groups to go and assist them in rebuilding their agriculture sector?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, it is great to look forward and to think about rebuilding. It's a very important aspect of the overall response. I'm certain that going forward we will have opportunities to assist in ways that are practical and take advantage of the know-how and the expertise that Canada has. This is something we are actively engaging in, especially through our high commission and the staff on the ground, who have an opportunity to engage on a day-to-day basis with officials, civil society and everyone in Pakistan to determine what the needs are. They're quite focused on reaching back to Canada for that kind of assistance.

We will certainly be supportive going forward to encourage these kinds of very practical linkages and partnerships to address this situation.

Mr. Randy Hoback: So there are no formal examples of things in place, and it's still too early.

• (1735)

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: I will just say that I think until we understand the overall needs.... It's difficult to say that we have programs. It's quite soon to talk about specific programs to address this when we're still assessing the scale of the damage. The immediate response has really been focused on those situations that are the most dire, rather than on choosing new programs.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I have just one quick question, then. In a scenario like what we see in Pakistan now, where people are going to be hungry and we're going to see different groups coming in with different ulterior motives to try to influence people with food, will that destabilize the region? Do you see the possibility of having more—I'm not sure what the right word is—groups radicalizing people through food and distributing radicalized ideas through food? Do you see that destabilizing the area even more?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, I think that in any natural disaster and destabilizing situation, there is the possibility for internally displaced people and those who are long-term displaced from their usual social networks to turn to radicalization. It's certainly an area that we are concerned with and are following, and that we aim to address through other channels of our engagement with the country.

We are certainly not unaware of security aspects, and we attempt to address that with other types of engagements that we undertake on a regular basis with Pakistan, in particular.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to MP Zahid.

You have four minutes.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to our witnesses and our officials for appearing before the committee today.

Pakistan is experiencing very challenging times. I was part of the delegation under the leadership of Minister Sajjan in September. I have seen first-hand the extent of the damage.

You mentioned that a needs assessment is being done. You also quoted a figure of \$816 million...that some sort of assessment has been done.

There are still many parts of Pakistan where the water has not receded. When I travelled to the province of Sindh, especially the Dadu district, it was all under water. People are living in schools. Kids are not going to school. Most families are dependent on farming. This year they have not been able to plant crops. The seeds were supposed to go in in late September, early October. Winter is approaching. People have lost their houses.

What role can Canada play to make sure the needs assessment gets done? Can we provide some sort of technological help to Pakistan, to see if there is any technique that we can help them with to help recede the water? In parts of KPK, the water has receded. It did damage, but it's not there. But especially in Sindh, where the water is not receding, what can be done? Has someone looked into it? What can be done to provide help to Pakistan to make sure the water can recede so that at least the redevelopment process can start to happen?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Mr. Chair, for this question, I believe it is still in the overall zone of our humanitarian response, so I think my colleague is better placed to address it.

Ms. Tara Carney: In terms of needs assessments from a humanitarian perspective.... In order to develop the appeal that was referenced—the \$816 million—humanitarian actors came together and completed the immediate response assessment, which is what allowed them to reach that figure to address those needs. That money goes until May 2023. It looks at the needs in the immediate, but also the relief needs that are going to be needed from January to May.

As part of that, Canada has supported a number of humanitarian partners with unarmarked funding that allows them to continue to use that money. As water recedes and areas become accessible, they will go in and help provide some of those populations with some of the services and relief items they haven't yet been able to access in their home locations.

Coupled with that is the ability to respond to winter, which has been factored in. As the needs assessments were done, the humanitarian community was not unaware that winter was approaching. Certainly, humanitarian needs shift as temperatures drop.

• (1740)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: I have one quick question in regard to medical needs, because there are parts of Pakistan where there is water still. It's giving rise to water-borne diseases such as dengue, typhoid

and malaria, with medications not being there. I was told that, in Dadu, 60,000 women have to deliver babies.

Is there any drive being done to make sure we can provide some help on that and the appropriate medications needed in Pakistan?

Ms. Marie-Louise Hannan: Generally speaking, as my colleague Christopher mentioned, health is very fundamental to our development assistance. I think the question is, in the immediate response, within our humanitarian response, whether access to medication is being considered, if I'm correct.

I'll go again to my colleague Tara.

Ms. Tara Carney: From the humanitarian perspective.... This is a crisis where the WHO went in for this very reason, quite early, and released funds—\$10 million U.S.—from the contingency fund for emergencies, to which Canada is a donor, annually. The multi-lateral system will be providing some of the water-borne disease response that is going to be needed.

Equally, we have provided direct support to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies via the Canadian Red Cross, which will provide some emergency, immediate health-related response in country.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That concludes our first panel of witnesses. Allow me to thank them, not only for their remarks but also for their expertise. It will certainly come in very handy for us.

I will suspend this session, and then we will be returning with representatives from various organizations in the next hour, as soon as voting has concluded in the chamber.

Thank you.

• (1740)

(Pause)

• (1810)

The Chair: We will now resume our meeting, for the second hour of hearing from witnesses on the flooding in Pakistan.

We are very honoured to have with us four different witnesses. First, we have Mr. Shariff, who is the chief executive officer of the Aga Khan Foundation Canada. He is here with us in person. We're also fortunate enough to have three additional stellar witnesses: Mr. Rahul Singh from GlobalMedic; Dr. Aslam Daud, who is the chairman of Humanity First; and Mr. Usama Khan, who is the chief executive officer of Islamic Relief Canada.

Welcome to all of you.

Each of you will be provided five minutes to provide us with your remarks and observations, after which we will proceed to questions from the members.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: How long do we have?

The Chair: We have exactly an hour.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Is that starting now?

The Chair: That's starting now.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Right, thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

For the benefit of our witnesses, if I hold this yellow pad up, that means you have one minute remaining for your remarks. In addition to that, if I hold it up when you're answering questions, that means please try to wrap it up as soon as possible.

• (1815)

Since Mr. Shariff is here, we will start off with him, and then Mr. Singh, Dr. Daud and Mr. Khan.

Mr. Shariff, the floor is yours. You have five minutes for your remarks.

Mr. Khalil Shariff (Chief Executive Officer, Aga Khan Foundation Canada): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I will absolutely be brief, because I think we'll get lots of insight from my colleagues who are online as well.

Let me just thank the committee, first of all, for turning their attention to this really serious crisis. I won't spend any time now rehashing the scope and scale of it here. I think you've heard from officials, and I think you know even from the press reports what an unprecedented crisis this is for Pakistan.

Let me just say a word about the Aga Khan Foundation Canada and its response so far. The foundation is part of a global family of institutions known as the Aga Khan Development Network, and we have had a very long presence in Pakistan. In fact, I would characterize our response as deeply locally rooted and globally connected, and I think that's part of the strength that we bring to the response.

We have been working very closely with the Government of Pakistan and with the governments of the various provinces affected to respond to the crisis in a variety of ways. Let me give you just a couple of examples.

The Aga Khan University, which is the country's top health sciences university, has been responding to the extensive health needs emerging from the flooding. Dr. Fry talked about this in the previous session. It has served over 300,000 patients across Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Aga Khan Agency for Habitat has been working with hundreds of teams of volunteers to respond from a community basis to evacuate 10,000 people, supporting thousands of households with food assistance and dewatering across Sindh, Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan. The response has tried to harness every capacity we have in the country. That has been necessary.

I want to express our gratitude to Minister Sajjan, who made it an early priority to travel to Pakistan to see first-hand the effects of the flood, not only in the very significantly affected populated areas but also in some of the more remote areas, which he made time to visit to see the effect of the floods and to really understand their national scope and their impact.

I might very briefly now just offer three thoughts about how donors might respond and what kinds of design principles the situation demands.

The first principle I would offer is that there needs to be a lot of flexibility in the framework of our assistance. I say that because what we are likely to see and what we are seeing is a multi-dimensional crisis. On the one hand, we'll see urgent humanitarian assistance, early recovery and reconstruction needs occurring simultaneously, because, as you know, parts of the country are still under water. There are some parts of the country in which just recently the water has receded, and there are other parts of the country where, in fact, some reconstruction work is now possible. These situations are going to exist simultaneously, and we're going to need to be able to respond to them simultaneously.

It's also multi-dimensional in the sense that, as I think you heard in the discussions you had in the previous session, there's a massive agricultural impact; the health system is under massive stress at a time when the needs are very severe; we have an educational crisis that has been compounded now since the crisis with COVID; and, as is the case in all crisis situations, we have a gender equality crisis because the situation of women and girls in a humanitarian crisis like the one we are witnessing is going to be, of course, the most vulnerable.

So we're going to need to have a lot of flexibility with respect to both the stages of recovery we're responding to simultaneously and the dimensions and sectors in which we're ready to respond.

The second principle is that we're going to need to take a truly inclusive approach in our response and take into account the differing needs of different parts of the country.

This has been a national disaster. We have been witnessing the scale of the disaster in the populated parts of the country: Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan. That's been very severe. We also shouldn't forget that more remote and sparsely populated parts of the country have also been affected and they will have their own needs. A truly inclusive response is going to require us to take into account the differing needs across the country. Winter, I think, was raised in the previous session. In the north, obviously winterization has to be a massive priority because that is already now with us. If you are in a remote and isolated part of the country, there's been massive damage to infrastructure. Connective infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, etc., is going to have to be a very significant priority.

I have a third principle. Again, you've talked about this in the previous session, but as we look to the future, we really need to think about how we invest in preparedness and disaster risk reduction. The plea I want to make is that we think about this also at a community level. The first responders in every crisis situation in every part of the world are the communities that are affected themselves. They are always the first people who are there. With the capacity of those communities for training, infrastructure investments, stockpiling and early warning systems, the things we can put into the hands of the communities themselves as a result of this crisis will help equip them to deal with the crises that are invariably in front of us.

I will stop there, Mr. Chair, with those three principles. I look forward to the discussion with the committee.

• (1820)

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

We now go to Mr. Singh from Global Medic.

Mr. Singh, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Mr. Rahul Singh (Executive Director, GlobalMedic): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The crisis unfolding in Pakistan is a humanitarian catastrophe. GlobalMedic has teams on the ground installing water purification systems in villages, providing essential medicines to field hospitals to treat patients, distributing food rations, and providing thousands of families with family emergency kits that include a point-of-use water purification unit to ensure those families have access to clean drinking water.

Unfortunately, the Government of Canada has implemented a policy that actually hurts the humanitarian sector and, by default, it hurts the very people we as a sector are trying to help. The government has a policy of matching funds raised by humanitarian charities. The idea is to encourage Canadians to give by doubling their impact. Historically, the policy matched the funds raised by all responding agencies and created a pool of those funds, which the government then programmed.

A few years ago, the government changed course and started appointing only one charity to be the matched partner. Matching funds given to only one entity actually come at the expense of the other charities in the sector. We know this because we receive calls and emails from donors who do not donate to us when they hear that the funds will not be matched. These are individuals who have previously donated to us and our organization, and because of this policy we lose their support.

The crisis in Pakistan is so large that we need a widespread approach. The policy hurts the broader sector that is responding and trying to help, and thereby hurts the very people who have been affected by the floods. This policy needs to be changed. It also leads to a few questions that should be answered.

First, to a charity, a donor is like a customer. In this scenario, the government is using the force of its power to incentivize donors to give to certain charities at the expense of others. Would the government ever provide a free matching airline ticket to customers buying on Air Canada but not WestJet? Would they provide a free cell-

phone to someone who bought a cellphone from Bell but not Telus or Rogers? Of course not. The policy actually creates an uneven playing field. The government's job is not to create monopolies.

Second, it's a very difficult time for the charitable sector, and a policy like this hurts smaller charities. Thus far, only three entities have been given the matched funding: the Red Cross, UNICEF and the Humanitarian Coalition. To be clear, I am not disparaging the agencies. I'm calling out a bad policy.

These entities are all large and have lobbyists. The public needs to understand if lobbying occurred to make this policy change. If it did, was the lobbying done fairly and appropriately? Was it declared? Was there broader sector consultation? You should know that \$157 million of funding has moved towards these three agencies in the past five years because of this policy. Now listen, if no lobbying occurred and the government chose to make an arbitrary decision, why was this done? Where was the broader sector consultation?

Third, members of the Humanitarian Coalition make a contribution annually so the coalition can operate. The members tend to be larger agencies, and the current requirement sets the bar at \$10 million. It's hard to imagine that our government would allow a program to exist whereby a charity would have to pay to join a group in order to access government funds. Pay-for-access programs are not appropriate.

The last point I want to raise is that I've spoken to other members in the charitable sector—other leaders—and they share the concerns I'm bringing to you, but they are hesitant to speak out because they are afraid of losing government funding and of how this actually may impact their professional careers. This is not a good sign for a democratic country. The Canada we live in should not have the fear of speaking truth to power and calling out a bad policy.

By incentivizing Canadians to give only to the Humanitarian Coalition, our government—the Canadian government—has hindered the ability of other agencies to help Pakistanis in their desperate moment of need. If you had kept the old policy, dozens of humanitarian agencies would be working to rally their donors and create a larger movement of help.

I want to be clear before I close: I'm not disparaging the work of other agencies. I'm not even requesting government funding. I'm requesting that this government stop taking funds away from smaller charities with this policy. As members of this committee, you have something that we as humanitarians don't: You have the power to stop this bad policy.

• (1825)

Thank you.

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

Now we go to Dr. Daud.

Dr. Daud, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Dr. Aslam Daud (Chairman, Humanity First): Thank you very much.

Good evening, Mr. Chair and committee members.

I will not go into describing the situation in Pakistan. Previous speakers have covered that and, in the previous session, details and statistics were given.

I will introduce Humanity First. It is an international humanitarian aid agency with branches in 62 countries. Our Canadian headquarters are based in the city of Vaughan, Ontario. Humanity First provides emergency assistance using a global volunteer network, irrespective of race, gender, age, religion or political affiliation. Since 1995, Humanity First has responded to over 190 emergencies in 99 countries and assisted around 2.5 million people affected by natural disasters, including major responses in Haiti, Bangladesh and the Philippines. This is in addition to our other humanitarian programs.

Since the start of flooding in Pakistan, Humanity First has continued to assist victims of the flood. Humanity First has provided over 1.1 million meals, distributed thousands of care packs and helped tens of thousands of people with emergency supplies. We have helped 68 medical camps, where over 101 doctors treated over 25,000 patients. Humanity First has given tents, mosquito nets and water purification tablets to affected people. In fact, 3,395 volunteers have worked over 34,700 hours to help.

Our long-term plan includes building 500 homes for impacted families, continuing our medical clinics, providing farmers with feed for their livestock and providing crop compensation and fertilizers for farmers. We will also be assisting with other needs, such as education of children and psychosocial support.

Like all other international organizations, Humanity First is also facing various challenges on the ground, including but not limited to the safety and security of our volunteers, the fund transfer process, and the inflation, which is not only impacting Pakistan and Canada but is worldwide. However, the biggest challenge that Humanity First has faced was not on the ground in Pakistan; rather, sadly, it is being faced in Canada, our homeland.

I would like to bring to the attention of this committee how the launching of the matching fund has adversely impacted Humanity First and many other small Canadian NGOs. The Government of Canada announced funding of \$30 million to help humanitarian partners provide life-saving services. Also, on September 13, Canada launched a matching fund in which the government matched dollar for dollar donations made by individuals to the Humanitarian Coalition and a couple of other organizations. The funds were matched up to a maximum of \$7.5 million. Sadly, Humanity First did not receive any funding from the \$30 million announced, and we are not part of the matching fund.

What was the impact of that? Canadian donors are among the savviest people, who want to ensure that their donation has the

maximum impact. When they find out that the government is going to match their donations to certain organizations, they choose only those organizations to get the value of their donation doubled up. It definitely makes sense. Who would not like to complement their generosity by increasing the value of their donations? However, this unfair practice negatively impacts organizations like Humanity First in terms of fewer donations, resulting in the shrinking of our response, despite our potential. Moreover, some donors take it as a credibility issue. They prefer and trust those organizations that are funded by the government. We received numerous calls asking us if the government would match their donation. When we said no, they did not donate to us. We lost a substantial amount of donation that could have been used by us in Pakistan. We rely on our donors to provide this help.

The government completely ignored some key factors when deciding about matching funds, factors such as on-the-ground presence, past track record, availability of resources on the ground, volunteer base and the agility and nimbleness of the organization.

For example, Humanity First has a proven track record of being a trusted partner of the then CIDA when we responded to typhoon Haiyan in 2014. We built over 400 homes and two schools with help from funding by the Government of Canada, a project on record that was successfully delivered by Humanity First. The fact that Humanity First has over 100 doctors and over 3,000 volunteers on the ground in Pakistan with the ability to reach out to a wider population, and that we have already helped thousands of victims from our own resources, was never considered by the government when deciding matching funds.

I have only two recommendations.

We recommend that the government consider pre-qualifying a larger base and a mix of large and small organizations as their trusted partners who are eligible and may automatically receive government funding as their on-the-ground partner.

● (1830)

As well, for matching funds, the government should impartially and universally match funds for all charitable organizations that receive donations for the particular cause and that are also active on the ground.

I will end my submission by saying that it is never too late to change this unfair policy. There is an urgency for the need to help the people who are impacted, and aid delayed is aid denied.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Daud.

We now go to Mr. Khan, from Islamic Relief Canada.

Mr. Khan, you have five minutes, sir.

Mr. Usama Khan (Chief Executive Officer, Islamic Relief Canada): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair and committee members, for discussing the situation in Pakistan.

Islamic Relief Canada is part of a global family, a global network. In Pakistan specifically, our teams have been active for more than 30 years. Currently, we have 400 staff members throughout the country, and 100 specifically working in Balochistan. Islamic Relief Pakistan has, so far, reached more than 550,000 individuals in providing life-saving aid.

I'd like to provide a first-hand account from August 17 to August 28. I was on the ground in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan. This is a province that, even compared to the rest of the country, has already been lagging in terms of the infrastructure that's there. Most of the areas that have been impacted by this flooding.... Most of Balochistan was already under extreme poverty. You're talking about six million out of the 12 million individuals there already living in poverty.

What I saw on the ground were people who had lost not only their homes—and in some cases their lives—but a dignified way of earning a livelihood. Most of the rural parts of Pakistan rely on either agriculture or animal rearing. Because of global warming and climate change, what has happened is that in this area of Balochistan, just two months before the flooding, there was a severe drought. It hadn't rained there for a long period of time. You go from drought-like conditions to excess rainfall, where the infrastructure isn't there to manage all of the excess water. More than 30 million people have been impacted and have lost the ability to provide a dignified livelihood for their families.

Even when the cameras leave, when the media stops talking about the situation in Pakistan, we know and we fear that for many years down the line the impact will still be there. This is a larger impact than the earthquake and the floods that happened a decade ago.

Islamic Relief is doing what we can. We appreciate the Government of Canada for initially announcing rapid deployment funds of \$5 million, and then \$30 million. Islamic Relief has had a presence in Pakistan, and \$2 million was deployed through us. Islamic Relief is also part of the Humanitarian Coalition, a pre-vetted group that has received government funding in order to make sure that efficient, transparent and effective aid can get to the people who are in most need.

Canadians have been very generous in this crisis. I can report that just with Islamic Relief Canada, we have raised \$5.5 million since the middle of August, specifically for Pakistan. Canadians from coast to coast do care about the crisis and are willing to heed the call of the matching funds to donate more.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to mention that in the previous session we spoke about climate change. I think one element of this crisis in a country like Pakistan is that when you look at their GDP and their debt financing, it is really handicapped by not being able to invest in climate-resistant infrastructure.

An initiative that I saw on the ground, when we talk about disaster reduction, is something as simple as a \$5,000 flood wall. It's stones and can be built in strategic areas near the villages. The villagers showed me videos where the flood waters came and because we had done that intervention just six months ago, the waters bypassed their village and their homes, and their crops were protected.

I think it's this type of climate-resistant disaster risk reduction and common-sense initiatives that we need to empower both the NGOs and the governments to do more of.

Both the IMF and the World Bank, in terms of multilaterals, and I think Canada and some of the other nations, have a responsibility to talk about how we can do debt swaps to make sure that the country is not burdened by debt repayments. Some of those external debts can be forgiven and converted into climate-resistant and climate-adaptive interventions.

● (1835)

As you know, the ODA from Canada is extremely low. That's another area we'd like the government to increase, but the needs will remain for the people of Pakistan.

It's our hope that we can be standing with the people of Pakistan. They have more than 5,000 or 6,000 glaciers in the north. Unfortunately, global warming and climate change will probably mean that we will be having this conversation in the near future again, with climate disasters. It is an area of urgency.

Thank you so much.

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

We will now go to the members for questions.

I would just ask the witnesses to slow down a bit in their responses. We heard from the interpreters. They were having a bit of a challenge keeping up with you, so we'd appreciate it if you spoke a bit more slowly.

For the first question, we go to MP Epp.

You have six minutes.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

I'll take your admonishment, Mr. Chair. I have that same problem of speaking too fast at times.

I'm relatively new to the committee, so in the interest of transparency, I did serve on and was employed by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for five years, prior to being elected in 2019. I wanted to put that on the record. If my bias shows through, I apologize for that up front. I'll endeavour not to have that happen.

I'd like to start, Mr. Khan, with what you just referenced in one of your closing comments. Canada's ODA is fairly low. We heard in testimony earlier that Canada has committed, I believe, \$33 million to a UN estimate of \$816 million of immediate need.

Can you comment on how that compares to other countries?

Mr. Usama Khan: I don't have the specific facts and figures, but we do know that Canada has a positive reputation throughout the world. We feel that it can do more. It can do more to help developing countries, like Pakistan and countries throughout Africa. It can do more to increase the amount of funding, not just through multi-lateral partners, but also directly with NGOs that are operating in those countries.

I know a lot of work happens in the sector. There are competing demands at home with Canadians and with inflationary pressures on the budget, but we feel that Canada should be doing more to meet some of the objectives and the expectation that is there, frankly, for Canada to step up on the global stage.

• (1840)

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you, Mr. Khan.

I'd like to go to a question for a number of the witnesses regarding how your organizations work. Can you be fairly short and succinct, but also tie it back to the accountability to your donors and to the Canadian government? Do you work largely through local partners, or do you work largely with staff based in Canada? How does that translate into accountability back to your donors and back to the Government of Canada?

My understanding from past experience would be that working through organizations such as yours with local partners to address disasters is far more effective than government-to-government or bilateral and then down through foreign governments.

I'll stop talking. Let's start with Mr. Khan and we'll go to Mr. Shariff next, please.

Mr. Usama Khan: Thank you for the question.

The CRA, for example, has a lot of requirements for Canadian charities when they're working with foreign projects. I know there's been a lot of movement on that. Compared to multilateral and compared to the UN agencies, Canadian charities have a very stringent requirement on books and records, for example.

Specifically for Islamic Relief, as I said, we have 400 staff throughout the country, so we work with the Islamic Relief global family worldwide through our intermediary there.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, a point of order.

We have a problem with the interpretation.

[English]

The Chair: My apologies, Mr. Khan.

Mr. Usama Khan: It's no problem.

The Chair: Mr. Khan, can you resume your remarks?

Mr. Usama Khan: Sure.

In terms of any government funding that's provided, there are reporting requirements back to the government on how the funds were spent, with—

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you, Mr. Khan.

I'm going to ask Mr. Shariff to chime in here, as well.

I apologize; my time is limited.

Mr. Khalil Shariff: I have three quick answers.

First, we work through local partners. Our Aga Khan Foundation in Pakistan is older than the Aga Khan Foundation in Canada, so it's a local partner. It's all staff from the region.

Second, I agree that the government has to decide on the portfolio: multilateral, bilateral or civil society projects. They all have their own profile of strengths and weaknesses, but the accountability that you get when you fund and support Canadian institutions is orders of magnitude higher than anything we see from the other two categories.

The last thing I would say is that when we do work with local civil society institutions, we have to insist they coordinate with the government. It's not really either/or. It has to be both. They have to be working closely with the governments in the region to ensure they're coordinated and getting the most bang for their buck.

Mr. Dave Epp: I'd like to continue. We heard in the first round of testimony from the officials that one of the reasons there are pre-vetted organizations was for speed of response.

I'll ask Mr. Daud, followed by Mr. Singh, to respond. How do you respond to that rationale for having matching funds only to pre-vetted organizations?

Dr. Aslam Daud: I totally agree with the idea of having a pre-vetted organization, but sadly, pre-vetted organizations are not considered. For example, Humanity First was pre-vetted. We were a partner organization. We have a proven track record, and we received funding for the response in the Philippines. We responded by building 400 homes and other projects. That was also reviewed and audited by a third party. The record is there.

Whatever the process for pre-vetting is, we are all for it. We agree to it, and that should be done.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you, Mr. Daud.

Mr. Singh, go ahead.

Mr. Rahul Singh: Listen, we are quick. We always have boots on the ground very quickly. We used to get funds from the government. We do not anymore. We don't even ask for government funds. I would ask you to go back and ask Ms. Carney if she ever considered the impact of her decision and how it would affect the sector and smaller charities, because it's very devastating.

Mr. Dave Epp: I'd like to ask one more quick question.

The Chair: I'm sorry, but you're out of time.

We'll now go to MP Zahid.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses for appearing before the committee. Thanks a lot for all the work you are doing during this difficult time in Pakistan.

My first question is for Mr. Khan. You mentioned that you have 400 staff members working in Pakistan, and you have over a hundred in the province of Balochistan. What phase of the work are you working on in Pakistan? Is it just providing humanitarian assistance right now, or have you moved toward redevelopment? Winters can be very severe, especially in Balochistan. Winter is approaching, so those who have lost their homes.... Has some redevelopment work started there, or are we in the providing humanitarian assistance mode?

• (1845)

Mr. Usama Khan: Even within the province, in different villages, you'll find different needs. Sometimes the water has not receded, so the needs of that community are much different, whereas in some other villages, even at the village level, you will get into early recovery. We've also seen from the ground there is an increase in water-borne diseases and—

The Chair: I'm sorry. Mr. Khan, it seems that your headphones are not connected to Zoom. The interpreters are having problems hearing you.

Mr. Usama Khan: Is this better?

The Chair: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Usama Khan: As I was saying, the needs are different even at different village levels. In some cases, we've seen water-borne diseases. We've seen early recovery activities in terms of livelihood recovery, so we give that flexibility to our teams on the ground who are directly working at the village level.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Are you part of the assessment process in order to determine what the needs are, and what the priorities should be?

Mr. Usama Khan: Yes, absolutely. Our programs team here is collaborating at a minimum on a weekly basis with our team in Pakistan. We do lean on their expert advice on what they're seeing to approve any allocation of the funding.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: My next question is for Mr. Shariff.

You mentioned the medical camps you have in different affected parts. In those medical camps, how are you dealing with the medication shortages? When we went to Sindh, we saw that there was a shortage. Panadol, for example, was not available there. How are you making sure that those medical camps have the appropriate medications that are needed?

Mr. Khalil Shariff: Thank you for the question. It's an incredibly important question.

There are shortages. Even getting stuff around the country, of course, has now become very difficult. There's no magic bullet here. We're doing what we can. In fact, because we are associated...the 300 or 400 camps established across those three or four provinces are associated with Aga Khan University Hospital. We're

able to rely on the university hospital's stockpiles, supply chain and purchasing capacity.

There are shortages. That's one of the things we're going to have to continue to deal with. We're going to have to work on supply and transport, which are both very important issues.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Have you determined which medications are short? Diseases like dengue, malaria and typhoid are on the rise, especially in those areas where the water has not receded. Is there any determination...?

I think the diaspora here wants to do its part. Have you made lists of which types of medication are missing, so an appeal can be made for that?

Mr. Khalil Shariff: We would definitely have an assessment of that. We're working very closely with the provincial governments and ministries of health to make sure we are feeding into their registries and the needs they are articulating to the National Disaster Management Authority, as well as the World Bank and UN processes that are trying to assess the challenge, globally.

Yes, absolutely, those are available.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: I have one more question for Mr. Shariff.

In northern parts, such as Chitral, Gilgit and Skardu, has the water receded totally? Has the redevelopment work started there?

Mr. Khalil Shariff: Winterization is full-scale now. The biggest, most urgent issue now is to make sure that housing, shelter...and general winterization takes place. That's the priority right now. The water has mostly receded there. There are some parts still dealing with those problems. For the most part, we are now moving very rapidly into winterization.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Do I have some time, Mr. Chair?

• (1850)

The Chair: You have another 40 seconds.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Okay.

My last question is for Mr. Daud from Humanity First. Thanks a lot for all the work you do across the world.

You mentioned that you plan to build 500 houses. Is there any specific part where you are planning this? What is your time frame for building those houses?

Dr. Aslam Daud: We are in the very early phase of assessment right now. We have not identified any particular area, but the two target areas where we will be building these homes are Sindh and the southern Punjab, where, in some villages, the houses were completely destroyed. We were primarily providing emergency assistance in those areas. Because we have already worked in those areas, we chose to help the population in those areas.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have six minutes, sir.

[Translation]

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here today, and especially for the work they are doing with their partners on the ground to help the Pakistani people. We know that since April 2022, Pakistan has been experiencing a major political crisis coupled with an economic crisis.

My question is very simple and is for all of the witnesses: in your opinion, how have the political crisis and the economic crisis been amplified by the floods, and vice versa, how might political instability and the economic crisis have interfered with operations on the ground after the floods?

[English]

Mr. Usama Khan: I can take a stab at it first. Thank you so much for the question.

The economic crisis is global. We've seen inflationary pressures throughout the world, including here in Canada. A developing country like Pakistan has been impacted by that in a very significant way. The ability to respond and provide aid to people.... The situation had already become so expensive, which has exacerbated the situation. Even in the urban parts of Pakistan, which are not close to the flooding areas.... When I was there, I saw the prices for household items—daily fruits and vegetables—quadrupling in all parts of Pakistan. I saw that impact first-hand.

With respect to the political instability, we saw that, at the time of the crisis, the narrative in the media...the social cohesion increased. All of the political parties got together to help the people throughout the country. On the front pages of newspapers and on TV channels, instead of political news being at the forefront, the humanitarian crisis took the forefront. Pakistanis have been quite generous in supporting...throughout the country.

Mr. Rahul Singh: Perhaps I can build on that.

The crisis in Pakistan has really shown a great deal of resilience from the communities rallying together, and they are absolutely helping each other. You're seeing that some widespread strikes are going to happen this weekend, which will make it impossible for aid agencies to deliver assistance. Some of those occurrences actually harm us and make it harder for us to deliver aid.

Overall, you have an increased demand for services and aid, just by the sheer volume of people who need help, counteracted by a decrease in the amount of available money, delayed money arriving, and then, of course, such rising costs, meaning that you can reach fewer people with those funds.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Does Mr. Shariff want to speak to the question?

[English]

Mr. Khalil Shariff: Mr. Chairman, I'll add perhaps one thought.

I think it's a very astute question. The country is facing a number of challenges simultaneously. In terms of the economic crisis, I think the most important implication will be on the fiscal room the government has on the reconstruction side. It's going to require a reformulation of the plans that were in place by the IMF, by the World Bank and by the Asian Development Bank. That is now in process, but I think we're going to have to expect that the path of

stabilization that had been agreed to by the multilateral organizations and the Government of Pakistan before the crisis is going to have to be revised.

I was in Washington at the World Bank 10 days ago at a flood meeting. I saw very keen awareness by all the players, especially the multilaterals, to look at everything they had been doing in light of the floods. That's going to be, I think, the requirement now—essentially, a reformulation of the plans in light of the crisis and the need for reconstruction.

• (1855)

The Chair: You have one minute, Mr. Bergeron.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Right.

Do any other witnesses want to speak to this question?

[English]

Dr. Aslam Daud: I would add that we have tried to keep a low profile just to avoid any political impact on our responses. We have worked with local partners and local government agencies, who have been helpful, but in Pakistan, because of the volatile situation, there have been risks to our volunteers. There have been rallies. People belonging to various political stripes have also been causing some hindrances in the relief work. We have tried to work in a very low-profile way with the assistance of the local community and local authorities over there.

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

We now go to MP Collins.

MP Collins, you have six minutes.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses for their testimony and for all the work they're doing in Pakistan.

First, Mr. Khan, Pakistan has contributed less than 1% to global warming, and yet it's one of the countries being most impacted. I'm curious to know how you see Canada's role in supporting Pakistan and ensuring that around the world we are better prepared for climate disasters. As well, COP27 is happening in the next few weeks in Egypt. There will be lots of conversations about international financing for climate-related loss and damage. I'm sure that the enormous damage caused by the flooding in Pakistan will be top of mind for people there.

You spoke a little bit about the need for debt swapping and debt forgiveness, and how that could help Pakistan with climate-resilient infrastructure. In my mind, Canada, as a high-income country but also with our historic and ongoing high per capita emissions, has a responsibility to do more. Can you speak a little bit about what it would mean if this kind of debt forgiveness were implemented, and why it's so important for Canada to step up on a global stage?

Mr. Usama Khan: Thank you so much for the question.

I think, really, in some cases Pakistan is maybe at ground zero for a climate change impact. I saw first-hand and heard from the teams on the ground that the same area that's been flooded for so many years had extreme drought-like conditions. For a pastoralist society, where the vast majority of the country earn their wages through either agriculture or animals, both of those are impacted when they have no water or, in this case, flooding and too much water.

I think there's a recognition that the impact of it will be very great. Pakistan's contribution to carbon emissions is incredibly low. Obviously, in the western world, including Canada, it's high. This is just one additional reason why there is a moral responsibility for Canada to step up and do more. It already has, obviously, made some commitments, but the need is for this to be sustainable and increase in magnitude. Even speaking to everyday Pakistanis on the ground, there is a recognition that western countries need to do more to help countries like Pakistan that face this.

Again, there are more than 5,000 or 6,000 glaciers in the north. They've seen those melting at a very rapid pace. Unfortunately, there's a fear that they may not even recover fully from this before we're dealing with this crisis again.

Canada has a large Pakistani diaspora. I think throughout the country we saw that in terms of the interest for this appeal. To get ahead of it, I think lots of Pakistani Canadians will be expecting Canada to do its fair share in the commitments that it makes at the global level in working with multilateral agencies like the IMF and the World Bank. A country like Pakistan has so much of its GDP on debt financing, and it's really crippled with the amount of debt that it has to pay to the multilateral agencies. We can convert and utilize some of that to make it more climate-resistant. Prevention is always better than the cure—sometimes the investment isn't that significant compared to what we're doing now. Just a little bit will go a long way.

Thank you.

• (1900)

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thanks so much.

I have a related question. Canada's official development assistance commitments are already severely low. Would you agree that ODA should be additional to our international climate financing?

Mr. Usama Khan: Yes, absolutely. I think the more Canada can do to live up to its international commitments...it will go a long way toward making sure that Canada has a leadership position on the global stage on these important initiatives. Definitely, more is better.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Wonderful.

The same question goes to Mr. Shariff. Would you agree that our ODA should be additional to international climate financing?

Mr. Khalil Shariff: Yes.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you so much.

I have another question for Mr. Shariff.

What were the needs in Pakistan before the floods, before COVID-19? Are you concerned that there will be declines in development indicators on things like girls' education and vaccination?

Mr. Khalil Shariff: Yes. I'm afraid what we're seeing is already the very long shadow that COVID-19 is casting, unfortunately. It has had a very severe impact across the country, as it has, frankly, in every part of the developing world. The health crisis of COVID-19 has now been overshadowed by a massive food security crisis, an economic crisis and an educational crisis—not to mention the gender crisis that COVID-19 has wrought. The floods, I think, simply exacerbate that.

I'm afraid to say that Pakistan is not unique in this situation. In a sense, the resilience of so many parts of the world has been depleted by the COVID-19 crisis. Governments' fiscal room has massively shrunk in many parts of the developing world. International donors' appetite and capacity in their fiscal room have shrunk.

I do think we're at a moment of very significant vulnerability across the world. We're going to have to be prepared to think about what kind of response is both sufficient and strategic in light of what are almost certainly going to be very mounting needs.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, do I have any time left?

The Chair: No, you don't. You're over your time. Thank you, MP Collins.

We go to MP Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you so much to all the witnesses for your testimony and, more importantly, for your work on the ground.

I appreciated the comments that were made with respect to the vital need for reform to the matching program. It is the intention of this committee to prepare a report following these hearings, and my hope is that the report will include a strong recommendation to the government to reform the way they do matching programs. As I mentioned previously, this is a problem we've seen in multiple different cases, and I think there are alternatives the government could be pursuing that would achieve the objectives it wants to achieve while also being fairer.

I want to put this question without asking anyone in particular, but just opening it up to whoever wants to answer. It's about the challenges around minority rights in Pakistan, and how we can ensure that development assistance is available to all communities and also that Canada is playing a constructive role in addressing threats to minorities.

I was very disturbed recently to read of the horrific incitement to violence against the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community by one cleric in particular, who was calling for violence against pregnant women. We have other instances of violence and legal discrimination against Christians and various other minority communities.

Would any of you like to speak to the issue of how we can ensure equal access to development assistance for minorities in the context of Pakistan?

• (1905)

Dr. Aslam Daud: I could go first.

It is true that in Pakistan there is racial, religious and ethnic turmoil, where people are against one another. You just mentioned the edict about attacking pregnant women—Ahmadi women—and this is a very sad situation.

Another incident was that there were some tomatoes that were imported from Iran and one group of people said that they would be destroyed because they were Shia tomatoes and Sunnis cannot have them. This is a very sad situation, and this is because of illiteracy, because of fanaticism and because of misguidance that is being spread over there by certain factions.

I think that, at a time of need, the country and the international community should ensure that aid reaches out to all sectors, all groups of people, without any discrimination. That can be ensured by putting some conditions on this: that the government report on how the aid was distributed and how various ethnic, religious and other groups have benefited from the aid that has been provided.

There's not much that can be done about it, because it's the people on the ground who are fanatics who take this action, but the government can be forced to prevent that or at least stop the violence against various ethnic groups and make the aid reach them.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'll jump in here, just because I have limited time.

Dr. Daud, you had a good suggestion there around conditions. To your knowledge, is that being done right now? Is the government attuned to these issues or have they not taken those steps?

Dr. Aslam Daud: I'm not aware of it at all.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I want to try to get in one more question in the next minute and a half, but does anyone else want to weigh in very briefly on minority rights?

Mr. Usama Khan: Yes, I can quickly, in 10 seconds.

When I was in Quetta, we made sure that we were meeting with all of the faith groups there: a significant Hindu community, a Sikh community and a Christian community. Where we can, I think, as humanitarian actors, as NGOs, we do try to make sure there's cross-faith...that you're representing those communities to make sure that for any who are underserved, underprivileged, you can get the aid there.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much.

I know that one issue when it comes to debt relief—and there's been some discussion of that—is the risk that debt relief by western countries has the sort of perverse effect of leading to increased dependency on other lenders—in particular, China. How can we explore that option but in a way that doesn't lead to greater vulnerability given existing indebtedness to actors that may not share our values?

Mr. Rahul Singh: I would say we have to make sure our values are actually being adhered to. If the way we program funding is not even equitable or ethical, how are we now going to turn around and talk about debt relief or other things if we're not even doing it properly as a government right now?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I know I'm out of time, but if anybody wants to follow up in writing on that debt relief question—because I know it's a bit technical—witnesses can send written submissions afterward and that does contribute to the body of evidence we use for our report.

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

We now go to MP Gaheer.

You have five minutes.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for making time, and a big thank you, obviously, for the work you're doing on the ground.

My first question is for Mr. Shariff.

In regard to your third pillar, you talked about how we need to invest in preparedness. I think back to over a decade ago, when floods happened in Pakistan as well. I'm sure these discussions happened then as well. Has the world learned how to give aid better now after that, or are we still in the same position now?

Mr. Khalil Shariff: I think the obvious answer, Mr. Chairman, is that we haven't learned. I don't think there's evidence in the analysis I've seen that we're near the kind of investment we need to make in disaster risk reduction and preparedness. There was a global summit in Japan 10 years ago that came up with a number of commitments. Not only does the analysis show it, but common sense shows that if you can prepare and reduce risk, you're going to be spending far less than if you are always running to respond.

I do not think that we have made anywhere near the kind of investment that we need to make globally in this area, I'm very sorry to say.

• (1910)

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: In regard to your first pillar, you talked about the need for flexibility in assistance. The worry sometimes is that if strings aren't attached, the funds won't go towards the purpose for which they are intended and they'll actually fill the pockets of people who will take advantage of it.

Do you have any comments about that?

Mr. Khalil Shariff: I think it's an excellent question. I wouldn't confuse flexibility with the lack of accountability. What I mean when I say flexibility is that we need to design our programming with a view to the actual needs on the ground, so that we don't end up saying, “We're only in a humanitarian phase. We're only going to support humanitarian activity right now.” That's blind to the fact that even though there's humanitarian activity going on, at the same time we have to do some of the early recovery and reconstruction work.

What I'm calling for is that, in the design of donor funding programs, we are clear that we're going to have parameters that reflect the actual realities on the ground.

The question of accountability is absolutely essential. I don't think that has to be compromised at all in the kind of flexibility I'm calling for.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Thank you.

My next question is open to all the organizations.

We know that during disasters women and girls are disproportionately affected. How are the women and girls of Pakistan affected by this flooding? Does the humanitarian response take into consideration the gender dimension?

Dr. Aslam Daud: Yes, we definitely take care of that. We ensure that the cultural values or the religious values are not impacted. In the orthodox societies where women would like to stay separate, whenever we provide shelters, we either provide for a family unit at the shelter or have a separate space available for elderly women and children who do not have a male member in the family, and also provide security to them so they feel safe there.

That's the key thing in the emergency phase. At the time of the longer-term phase, when we are looking into building some houses and are repairing the homes, we are giving specific priority to widows and women who do not have an earning member so they can really benefit from this help in the long term.

Mr. Rahul Singh: MP Gaheer, I would tell you that all of our aid is designed at the family unit, which is really designed to get families access to clean water or access to food hampers. That goes a long way in addressing gender-based violence because you're always ensuring that women and girls are the centre and the core of the type of aid that you're giving.

I will point out to you that we're in a very critical phase in the world. There will be 270 million people this year in need of acute humanitarian assistance. That's four times the number of a decade ago. The money to meet those needs has not kept pace at that 400% increase rate. We need to do things better as a sector in order to meet that increased demand.

Mr. Usama Khan: I'd just like to add that the funding Islamic Relief is getting from the matching through the Humanitarian Coalition and the government is focused on women and girls. It's providing 4,250 women in affected households with cash grants. It's making sure there are dignity kits and menstrual hygiene management for 9,000 women and girls.

Lastly, but also most importantly, it's conducting a research piece on the impact of climate on pregnant and lactating women and infants in flooded communities, with proposed recommendations to look at some of the long-term impacts.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Great, thank you.

The Chair: We now go to MP Bergeron for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

According to a study published in September by Save the Children Canada, only one person in five reports receiving the humanitarian aid promised, and a relatively low proportion of the residents of the hardest hit provinces, Balochistan and Punjab, have received

humanitarian aid. In the case of Balochistan, the figure is 8.4 per cent, and for Punjab it is 25.8 per cent.

In your experience, are those figures accurate? What explains this situation?

[*English*]

Mr. Usama Khan: I'm not sure if I understood the statistics correctly, but the overall point I do agree with is that those percentages are probably correct in terms of the people who need aid, as a denominator, and the people who are actually receiving it.

Unfortunately, because of the amount of need that's there, with a province like Balochistan, where the road infrastructure isn't there and the aid agencies and the NGOs can't get to everybody who needs aid, there is a large gap. That's why, for example, with Islamic Relief, a quarter of our staff is based in Balochistan. That's where access is most difficult and that's where we feel communities and villages may be neglected by the local NGOs.

● (1915)

Mr. Rahul Singh: I would add that the need is so widespread and immense. It's throughout the country, and in different parts of the country the flood is in different stages. As you know, Dadu is still under water. Nowshera and other areas to the north are not. The local government has even made it so that you can't cross a provincial border with food because it's so widespread in terms of the need.

This is just a much bigger response. Remember, in 2010 when the floods hit here, 20 million people were affected. We thought that was the biggest event in the world. I remember leading the first team in for us into that. This is 33 million people; it dwarfs it.

It's just so widespread and there are so many people in need. That just means we have to double down on our resources and continue to work. That's why we need more effective funding mechanisms.

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, you have 20 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Does another witness want to add something?

[*English*]

Dr. Aslam Daud: I tend to agree. I don't have exact numbers, but I would say that we are not reaching out to all communities and all groups.

There is still a tremendous need that can only be achieved by having more partners on the ground and more organizations responding, because each organization has limitations. When you have a bigger group of organizations responding, then you'll be able to reach out to the maximum number of people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Ms. McPherson for the final two and a half minutes.

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

I'm sorry that I had to step out during the testimony. I was, unfortunately, giving a speech in the House.

It's been very interesting to hear. I'm going to talk a little bit more about the climate impacts or climate financing. We know that Pakistan, of course, has contributed less than 1% to global warming, yet they are bearing the burden of climate change and the climate crisis.

Perhaps, Mr. Shariff, I'll just finish with you, if I could.

How could or how should Canada be financing climate mitigation and adaptation better? How could it be better delivered? How could we ensure that it is reaching the most vulnerable people, that it's using indigenous knowledge and that it is aligning with our feminist international assistance policy?

Mr. Khalil Shariff: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

I think this is a really important question, and I'm sure I won't do it justice in the time we have. Let me say a couple things in terms of principles of work.

The first principle is that, worldwide, including in Canada, climate finance has had a very significant portion associated with debt and equity financing rather than grant financing. While I understand why that aspiration might be there, I think it's very optimistic to think that the dire climate needs we have can be adequately addressed through resources that are non-grant resources and that are going to have to be paid back somehow. There is absolutely room for so-called innovative finance work here, but I would say that it is a very particular response; it's not going to be the generalized response.

The second thing is that I think we probably have to be much more analytically precise about the specific issues, country by country, where we think we can make a real contribution. Let me take clean energy as an example. In many parts of the world, we have a situation where we have both climate fragility and energy poverty. That is to say, we need to expand massively the amount of energy available. At the same time, we're going to be much more conscious about carbon footprints. We need to bring a lot of innovation to the ability of countries to develop energy security plans that convert resources in those countries into sustainable energy sources. How expert are we at that right now? What's the relationship of our funding to that massive question?

The last example would be in agriculture. There is a massive opportunity for us to do much more in climate-smart agriculture. It's a very significant issue around the world. I think we have lots of opportunities to partner with communities. My sense is that if we walk toward communities with ideas here, they will run toward us.

We need to make a commitment, and I think that a lot of this is going to have to be grant.

• (1920)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shariff.

Thank you, Mr. Singh, Dr. Daud and Mr. Khan. We are very grateful for each of you generously sharing your expertise with us. We're also very grateful for all of the extraordinary work you're doing on the ground in Pakistan. Thank you very much. You can rest assured that your observations will be reflected in the final report that will be prepared.

Yes, Mr. Chong.

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

I wonder if the committee could quickly adopt four housekeeping items, so that we can have a smoothly functioning committee from now until the end of November.

The first housekeeping item that I hope the committee will adopt is regarding the two budgets that the clerk prepared for us.

I move that the committee adopt the project budget for the study on the extreme flooding in Pakistan for the amount of \$11,500, as well as the supplementary project budget for the briefing on the current situation in Haiti for the amount of \$10,575.

The Chair: There actually should be three, if I'm not mistaken.

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay, it would be all three budgets, yes.

I will move the third budget, which is the request for Bill S-223 for the amount of \$5,225.

The Chair: The witnesses can leave if they would like. Thank you.

This is for Bill S-223, the extreme flooding in Pakistan and the situation in Haiti.

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

Hon. Michael Chong: Very quickly, there is a second housekeeping item that I hope the committee can adopt to help the committee and the clerk. A statement was prepared by the analysts concerning the recent appearance of Evgenia Kara-Murza in front of our committee.

I think there was only one small change to the statement, which I think everybody supports.

The Chair: Yes. It was by Mr. Genuis, which is reflected.

Hon. Michael Chong: I'm wondering if the committee would adopt that statement so that it can be sent out by you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Michael Chong: The third item that I'm hoping we can do is to adopt the calendar, which the clerk has prepared and which the chair has distributed to members of the committee, to the end of November, so that the clerk can invite witnesses and prepare for November's meetings.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's excellent.

Hon. Michael Chong: I thought I had a fourth item, but I—

Ms. Heather McPherson: There is the SDIR study we've received. We could approve the SDIR study.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, we've received the report of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

I move that we adopt the subcommittee's report.

The Chair: Absolutely. Thank you for that.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: There are two more things. I will remind members one more time about witnesses for our Haiti study. We have until five o'clock tomorrow, because during the second hour on Monday we will be hearing about the situation in Haiti.

With respect to Bill S-211, I would ask everyone to kindly submit their witnesses by November 1, which is Tuesday.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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