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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi



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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to meeting number 62 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, as well as remotely, using the Zoom application.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of the members and witnesses.

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

Members, I ask for your indulgence this morning. I was unable to make the flight for reasons beyond my control.

Today, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the committee will commence its consideration of the main estimates 2023-24. Votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20 and L30 under the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, vote 1 under the International Development Research Centre and vote 1 under the International Joint Commission (Canadian Section) were referred to the committee on Wednesday, February 15, 2023.

Now it's my pleasure to welcome to the committee today the Honourable Harjit Sajjan, Minister of International Development. Moreover, welcome should also be extended to his officials, who will be supporting him today in the consideration of the main estimates 2023-24.

We have several officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, including Christopher MacLennan, deputy minister of international development; Anick Ouellette, assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer; Peter MacDougall, assistant deputy minister of global issues and development; Patricia Peña, assistant deputy minister of partnerships for development innovation; Annie Boyer, director general and deputy

chief financial officer of financial planning and management; and Andrew Smith, director general of international assistance policy.

Minister Sajjan, thank you for once again appearing before our committee. You will be provided a maximum of five minutes for your remarks, after which we will open it to the members for questions.

Minister Sajjan, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of International Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to members of the committee.

I'm glad to be here today to discuss Canada's leadership in international assistance.

As members know, the world is facing a rising tide of instability, with the lingering effects of the pandemic's disruption of global supply chains; Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine; the multi-dimensional humanitarian crisis in Haiti; the devastating outbreak of violence in Sudan; more frequent and extreme weather events as a result of climate change; the Taliban's aggressive moves against women and girls; restrictions on reproductive rights in Poland, the U.S. and other countries; and a backlash against gender equality across the world.

These are immense global challenges. Canada has played and will continue to play an important role in rising to meet these needs.

Against this backdrop, I'm proud to report that Canada continues to meet and even exceed its goals for international development assistance under the feminist international assistance policy. In 2021-22, nearly 99% of Canada's bilateral international development assistance either targeted or integrated gender equality—meeting and then exceeding our target of 95% by 2022.

We continue to address the root causes of poverty and inequality by focusing on those most likely to be left behind, and empowering women and girls in all of their diversity.

We're also committed to constantly improving the quality and effectiveness of our international assistance.

These achievements have not gone unnoticed. Canada was one of the first countries in the world to put a feminist international assistance policy in place. Others are now following suit. For the fourth year in a row, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development acknowledged us as the top bilateral donor for gender equality.

Now, looking forward, Canada's leadership is more consequential and needed than ever before. For example, Canada is delivering on its commitment under the Paris Agreement to keep the 1.5°C goal within reach. Our global climate investments are expected to prevent or reduce more than 228 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

Take Canada's support to the Global Environment Facility. As the seventh largest donor, our support is helping more than eight million adapt to climate change and protect almost 99 million hectares of marine biodiversity.

But we know that funding alone is not enough to address the uneven impacts of climate change. That's why we continue to advocate for the resilience and adaptation of developing countries through our engagement in both the Green Climate Fund and the Climate Investment Funds.

At the same time, we continue to work with like-minded partners, including multilateral organizations, to phase out coal and promote investments in clean energy.

We continue to advocate internationally for small island developing states and least-developed countries that contribute the least to climate change, yet are most vulnerable to its impacts.

The most vulnerable countries today are at the front line of some of the most challenging crises of our time, including but not limited to climate change. As we speak, in 2023, over 346 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. More than 100 million people have been forcibly displaced. Over 345 million people are predicted to be food insecure.

Canada continues to be a leader in addressing humanitarian needs that rise year on year.

In 2022, we were the fifth largest humanitarian donor, providing more than \$1 billion in humanitarian assistance.

Last year, we allocated over \$400 million in humanitarian assistance to respond to needs in sub-Saharan Africa, \$227 million to respond to needs in Ukraine, and over \$143 million to Afghanistan and the region.

We also allocated nearly \$650 million for humanitarian food and nutrition assistance in response to the growing global food crisis. Our assistance helped the World Food Programme to reach a record 158 million people who were food insecure in 2022. It's an impressive 27% increase from 2021.

We also contributed to providing humanitarian assistance and protection to more than 100 million refugees and other forcibly displaced persons through the UNHCR in 2022.

In line with the FIAP, Canada continues to be a strong advocate for gender-responsive humanitarian action.

Canada also remains committed to the triple nexus approach that integrates humanitarian development, peace and security actions to more effectively respond to and ultimately prevent conflict. That is what good development assistance does. It goes hand in hand with peace and stabilization actions.

• (1110)

Global Affairs Canada is constantly working to improve the quality and effectiveness of Canada's international assistance. While the Auditor General's recent report affirms the urgent need for Canada's feminist international assistance policy, it also calls for improved systems to capture and report its results and to better integrate gender equality, human rights and intersectional considerations into our projects to ensure that we are reaching the poorest and most vulnerable.

Through the ongoing grants and contributions transformation initiative, Global Affairs Canada is also finding new ways of working that are faster, more transparent and more flexible. This will further enhance Canada's capacity to both report on and deliver sustainable results that make a positive change in people's lives.

Meaningful climate action and humanitarian assistance go hand in hand with gender equality and also human rights to build a more just and more prosperous world for all of us.

That is why we are making the most of the transformative potential of Canada's feminist approach to international assistance. It's to tackle the root causes of inequality and poverty to transform the lives of those most in need around the globe.

Thank you very much for listening.

I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your opening remarks, Minister.

Now I'll open the floor to questions from the members. Our first member is Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Genuis, you have six minutes.

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

I want to start today by honouring Kyle Porter and Cole Zelenco, who are two Canadian heroes who died during fighting in Bakhmut after joining the Ukraine international legion. Those who knew them must be feeling a lot of pain right now, but also a lot of pride for the courage these young men demonstrated in this important fight.

Minister, thank you for being here to take our questions.

During the fall of Afghanistan, a Trudeau-appointed senator issued fake Canadian travel documents. This is, obviously, extremely serious. Emails were sent to you about this at the time, but you said that you didn't read those emails.

As the Minister of International Development today, do you check your emails and would you say that you read all of them?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, at the previous committee, I took the time to answer those questions.

Mr. Chair, if you want me to answer questions on the emails or the mains, I leave it to you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I control the time and I'd like you to answer the question about your current activities as Minister of International Development.

Do you check your emails today? Do you read the emails you receive?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I do read emails.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Do you read all of them?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I can assure you....

Mr. Chair, if you want me to answer the question and give me the opportunity to answer it, we were in a very intense time—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm just asking. Do you check your emails now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, if you want me to answer the question—

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): I have a point of order.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Let me answer the question. I'm happy to do so. If you want a little sound bite, you can try to get it, but if you want—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: No, I'm asking now. As Minister of International Development, do you check your emails?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: If you want me to answer the question, I answered at the last committee and I'm happy to answer these questions, but give me the opportunity to answer fully.

The Chair: I understand that we have a point of order.

We will proceed with the point of order.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to clarify, on relevance, the topic that we're talking about this morning, please.

The Chair: Yes, I would ask the members to keep it relevant to the main estimates, which is the reason the minister is with us today.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Chair, on the same point, I was asking the minister if, in his current role of Minister of International Development, he checks all of his emails and reads them.

It's hard to argue that this is not relevant to his current activities.

The Chair: That's fair enough.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

The Chair: We will now turn to the minister.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Go ahead, Minister, please.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Yes, I do check my emails.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

What was the precise period during which you did not check your emails?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: When there are intense times during defence and when we're busy with extreme operations, yes, I have to prioritize my time for the issues at hand. At those times, if there are many events, my emails go to a lot lower priority.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: During those intense times, do you have staff members who review your emails for you—they can bring important items to your attention—or do they just go unchecked?

• (1115)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Well, that's a great question. Normally I would, but at that time, I had very limited staff.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Today, if it's an intense time.... We're dealing with an evacuation situation in Sudan. I would think that international development is a very intense portfolio as well.

Do you have staff who check your personal email when you're not able to and who can bring important items to your attention?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Yes, I have staff to check my work email, in my current portfolio.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: They bring important items to your attention, presumably.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Do you use an alternative email during those times for high priority items?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I do not.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's a bit of a challenge in that, during these intense times, people obviously need to get a hold of you, as minister.

Senator McPhedran appears to believe that you were aware of what was going on. You say you weren't.

Is there a reason she would believe that? Did you have conversations with her other than those on email?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, if you want to keep going down this path, allow me to explain.

During the evacuation from Kabul, the work that was required of me during that time, with limited staff.... Keep in mind that at times I'm in an area where I'm actually not even close to my phones, because most of the work that we do, most of the reporting and systems that we have to have in place, is classified.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That wasn't my question, though, Minister.

Senator McPhedran is under the impression that you were aware of these fake documents that were distributed—

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: And as I told you—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You say you were not aware. My question was: Why would she have that impression?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: —being cc'd on emails all the time doesn't mean that I see all of them. And at the same time, if I happen to leave—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. How many staff do you have in your ministerial office right now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Well, for example, I think it's important to—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry, but how many staff do you have in your ministerial office right now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, if you want me to answer the question, because at the same time you're allowing these dubious questions—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'd like you to answer the question I'm asking. How many staff do you have in your ministerial office right now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Will you let me answer the question?

The Chair: Would the member allow the witness to answer the question.

Minister, the floor is yours.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Again, Chair, this is my time. My question is this: How many ministerial staff do you have right now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'm not going to allow you at the same time to put me into a position.... I need to provide the full context of where you're trying to lead this.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Chair, could you ask the minister to come to order, please? He has an obligation to answer the questions—

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I am trying to answer.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —not just to decide what he will or won't allow.

The Chair: I will allow the minister to answer the question, in context, as part of his response.

Minister, the floor is yours.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: The question is this: How many staff do you have in your ministerial office, Minister?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We have a number of staff in my ministerial—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: What's the number?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I can't remember off the top of my head.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is it more or less than you had when you were Minister of Defence?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Well, if I can give you the context to explain, it's a little bit less. However, at that time, no, I did not have staff. I had one chief of staff at that time, with minimal staff at that time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay, so the context was you had only one member of staff during that crisis, so you weren't checking your emails and you didn't have someone else to check your emails.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I didn't have my normal staff who would assist me in my normal day to day at that time, and during that time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

In terms of GAC, what we have heard is that your chief of staff at the time, George Young, received the template from someone at GAC—

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): I have a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —that was then used for producing those illegal documents. Who is the person at GAC who—

The Chair: One second, please.

There is a point of order, Mr. Genuis.

We have Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Now I believe that my colleague is going into things that don't have to do with the main estimates. Also, I believe he's badgering the witness.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On that point, I was asking actually for the name of a GAC employee who provided those documents.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, you do recall that the chair has to permit you to speak.

I want to once again emphasize to all members to please keep their questions relevant.

Thank you, Mr. Genuis. You have the floor for another 25 seconds.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Minister, who was that GAC employee who provided those documents?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'm sorry. Can you repeat the question? I'm not fully understanding what you were saying.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Who was the GAC employee who provided to your chief of staff the template that was used for producing these fake documents?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, I wasn't tracking the actual process for the facilitation letters.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You must have followed up on this information more recently, have you not, Chair?

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

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: We will now go to the next member. We will go to MP Zuberi.

You have six minutes, MP Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Minister, for being here today, and to your officials and your entire department for the excellent work you are doing to help Canada to give back to the rest of the world. It's actually an important obligation for us as a G7 nation. We need to give back to the world, and I want to sincerely thank you and your team for doing that.

I know you've been quite active in this current Parliament, in the last year or so, visiting different parts of the world to ensure that our development assistance has been well delivered. Before I get into questions, I do want to salute you for the work you've done in Bangladesh; to deal with refugee education in Pakistan; and to address climate change, when you visited the Philippines and Senegal—again to ensure that we are giving back to the world. That's extremely important work.

You touched upon climate change. Your visit to Pakistan also addressed the issue of climate change. Can you share with us and help us understand how climate change will become an increasingly important issue? How will it impact communities and millions of people in the world, in the global south? What we are doing to mitigate climate change and help people adapt to it?

• (1120)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Thank you very much for the question.

Sadly, I would say that climate change is already impacting and has been impacting the developing world quite extensively. The most recent examples of this have been the floods in Pakistan and disasters—typhoons—in the Philippines, and, as you know, many places in Africa.

Canada, through its climate adaptation funding and, most recently, biodiversity funding, is doing its part to help nations that had very little impact in creating the crisis to deal with its impacts, not only in responding directly to the disasters, but also in looking at how we can put in early warning systems and at making sure we can provide humanitarian support and then ultimately trying to mitigate some of those disasters. Some of these programs have had very good effects in some parts of the world.

Sadly, some of these disasters are hitting other areas that we hadn't anticipated, but now, through our funding, we will look at opportunities for how we can try to protect and save people's lives but also their livelihoods. For example, agricultural fields are being completely flooded in some areas. In other parts of the country, it's because of drought. We are taking measures on how we deal with this, because ultimately what we're trying to do is deal with the impacts on food security as well.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: You touched on food security. What are we doing to help shore up food security? We are one of the key funders of the World Food Programme, an amazing UN agency that is helping to ensure people have basic nutrition so that they can continue on with their lives and develop fully as global citizens. What are we doing to help shore up food security on the global stage?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: For food security, it's a multidimensional approach.

One is that where there's a need, you have to provide direct humanitarian support, something that we have been doing in having to increase our support. In fact, we had to increase our support last year in an off-cycle budget request, which the Prime Minister announced, of \$250 million. Some of the funding went to Ukraine, but the majority of it was for the global south.

What we're trying to do now is increase our support on building capacity within nations, working with nations, especially in Africa, to look at their own country plans and to look at what their vision is and how we support them. I also want to emphasize that this is not just about increasing agricultural food products or the blue economy. This is about creating food systems. Where do you grow the food? The storage is a key component. Right now, 30% of food is lost because of lack of storage or of transportation. Also, through this, how do we create sustainable jobs?

We're looking at the entire food system and looking at other barriers to what we can do. Sometimes there are trade barriers. How do we support nations on trade?

It's a multi-faceted approach that we're taking, but ultimately what we want to do is look at building capacity. This has worked well in other parts of the world, especially in the Pacific in previous decades, and is something that now we're emphasizing in other parts of the world.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Certainly, and I recently participated in a really great meeting with the World Food Programme. They had a representative from the Middle East, North Africa, Turkey and Palestine. They helped us to understand the important work that's being done to help people be food secure as a way to help with global peace and stability, which you alluded to in your earlier remarks in terms of how international development actually helps with global peace and security and helps mitigate conflict.

Do you want to elaborate a bit upon that?

• (1125)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Thank you.

This is something that I think all of us should be emphasizing even more. When we look at conflict, we can usually find a root cause that started the ripple effect or allowed nefarious groups to recruit people into organizations, usually because of hunger.

Because of the hunger crisis right now, I've been deeply concerned about potential crises, whether it's the food protests that took place in Syria that led to the rise of Daesh within the region or other issues like this in other parts of the world. When you make people's lives better, when food is there and you can look after their health, it insulates them from factors that lead to instability.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you, and that's—

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go to the next member.

MP Bergeron, you have six minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

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

Minister, thank you for being here with us today.

In your mandate letter, the Prime Minister of Canada set out as your objective to increase international development assistance every year towards 2030—

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the translation just gave way.

The Chair: My apologies for that, Mr. Bergeron. Is everything okay, Madam Clerk? Is everything in order?

Go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Minister, that's what I like to call the “translation break”.

In your mandate letter, the Prime Minister set out as your objective to increase Canada's international development assistance every year towards 2030, in order to realize the United Nations' sustainable development goals. I would remind you that donor countries have been given a target of 0.7% of their gross domestic product.

However, in the last federal budget, the government indicated that 15% of the international assistance budget would be used elsewhere. You were quoted by Radio-Canada saying that money wasn't everything and that it wasn't enough to simply announce funding, but also to ensure that the right programs were in place in order to get the desired results.

My question is very simple, Minister: do you still believe that the target of 0.7% of gross domestic product is an objective that we should reach and that we should strive to reach? Do you still intend on hitting that target?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I'm here to assure everyone on this committee that our government is committed to increasing our international development assistance. It's something that we announced in the throne speech and also most recently in the budget.

We know the importance of the work that we do, and we will continue in the years to come to look at a plan to increase international development.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Minister.

You spent a lot of time in your opening statement talking about the food crisis. Canada responded to the global food and nutrition crisis with support totalling \$250 million, concentrating on Sub-Saharan Africa, but that funding dried up on March 31, 2023.

How do you reconcile the priority that you seem to be giving to ease the food and nutrition crisis and the fact that we are reducing budgets for food aid, particularly given the current situation, with supply problems caused by the war in Ukraine?

● (1130)

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, Canada will always step up at times of crisis. If you will recall, that \$250 million was not in the original budget. That was requested because of the need to make sure that we got people through this year.

We do have funding that we provide for food security within our current budget. We are also working on a wider plan on how we can do our part to increase capacity within many nations. That plan is still being worked on, and once we have that, this is something we will bring through cabinet for greater work.

Money is important, and our government is committed, but we also need to make sure that we have a plan to meet the results we want.

Some of the work is not just about increasing food capacity or giving food. What we want to do is look at some of the research—for example, some of the research that is done in Nairobi that we fund. A lot of the food and beans that are being developed there are more nutritious. I'm always reminded by my nutrition colleagues not to focus just on food; it has to be nutritious food.

Sadly, in some places like a refugee camp I visited, Kakuma refugee camp, food was cut to one meal a day. As sad as that is, at least the food they were cooking was more nutritious.

Given the food security crisis, as the former head of the World Food Programme has said, at times they are taking food from the starving to give to the hungry. This is why we are focused on this issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Minister. We will be most interested in any new developments on the issue.

I will now share one of my concerns that I spoke about with my colleagues when we met with representatives of other western countries, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine.

One of the things that we see internationally is that a good chunk of international assistance budgets from western countries has been repurposed to provide assistance to Ukraine, which is absolutely vital, of course, but which deprives the countries of the global south of part of the funding that they would normally have received. The countries of the global south have the impression that the war in Ukraine is a spat amongst rich countries. This is obvious in the voting results at the United Nations. Countries such as Canada have over the years withdrawn from continents like Africa, which left a vacuum for countries like Russia or China to fill. We all know what has happened there and it is obvious in the voting results at the United Nations on the war in Ukraine.

Shouldn't we be increasing our development assistance budget again, rather than redirecting towards Ukraine part of the funding that would normally be given to countries from the southern hemisphere? We would avoid reducing aid for those countries and boost our support for Ukraine with new funding.

[English]

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

I would ask the minister to provide a very brief response to Mr. Bergeron's question.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Yes, it is very important. I think we can all agree that we should support Ukraine at this time. However, sadly, while other countries have...Canada has not reduced its support to the global south. In fact, that \$250 million I talked about was more support. We actually increased our food security support.

I'm happy to talk to you about it offline, if you'd like.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will next go to MP McPherson.

You have six minutes.

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

Thank you very much to the witnesses.

Thank you, Minister, for being here with us today.

As you know, I spent my career prior to politics in the international development sector. I have many questions for you, so forgive me if I interrupt you.

I have to start by saying that some of your words don't match the actions of this government.

You talked about the need for peace and security. The government promised 600 peacekeepers. I believe we have 60 in the field right now. You went to Qatar. You've not spoken out about Saudi Arabia taking weapons and using them against innocent civilians. I worry about that.

You talk about the need for increased international development, but we saw in the budget a 15% cut to ODA. At a time when we have a climate crisis and people around the world are suffering disproportionately, when we have a hunger crisis, when conflict is causing massive challenges and we have a feminist international assistance policy, this country— even though we are already 16 out of

30 of donor countries and so far below where Pearson wanted us to be and below the ambitions that Canadians have for this country— has cut international development assistance by 15%.

Your job as the international development minister is to advocate for international development, to make sure that the caucus understands why international development is so important.

What have you been doing to do that? How have you been advocating for the sector when what we see right now is a 15% cut to ODA?

• (1135)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair and the member of the committee, I would like to explain.

The actual baseline of our budget has been systematically increasing, and when crises come up, Canada does need to step up as well. When it came to the COVID crisis, just like we had to increase funding inside Canada, we've also increased our COVID support internationally as well, plus with the Ukraine crisis....

If you were to take those two funding streams out, our baseline funding for international development has steadily increased. We will continue to—

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm sorry to interrupt, but you can't take those out. That's like saying if you take out the hunger crisis, that doesn't count. You can't take that out. That's the reality of the world we're living in.

We are not done with COVID in many parts of the world, as I'm sure you know. The hunger crisis is escalating, not reducing. The conflict in Ukraine may not be over for a decade. Goodness knows, I certainly hope it is over very quickly for the people, and I hope we do everything we can for Ukraine.

But realistically, to say don't worry, it would have been the same if these things hadn't happened, doesn't matter. They did happen. This is the reality of the world. We have a 15% cut from last year, and this is at a time when we have increasing needs. Canada is not there.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, will you give me the opportunity to explain?

The numbers that are being evaluated are from the end of the year. The budget we're asking for now is for the beginning of the year. Just as in previous years, especially last year, additional funding was provided based on the crisis that required it. As you stated, yes, we do need to support Ukraine. The need, during COVID, to enhance health systems around the world does continue. We do need also to look at the food security crisis. Throughout the year, as in previous years, we will look at where we need to step up. What I would encourage members is that we have a conversation at the end of the year in terms of where our actual funding will be.

Currently our baseline budget year after year has increased.

Ms. Heather McPherson: No, your baseline budget has to incorporate all of the things that happen in the world. That's what international development is. This is an example of how you're not meeting the needs of the sector. You're not meeting the needs of people around the world.

Bill C-41 is another perfect example, Minister. You were responsible for making sure that Public Safety and Justice understood how humanitarian action actually occurs. In fact, what happened with Bill C-41 is that we weaponized, we criminalized, international development and humanitarian aid.

Everyone in the sector asked for a humanitarian carve-out. They didn't get that. When I listened to the experts from Public Safety and from Finance, it was almost as though they had never even heard about what humanitarian aid was. This was deeply flawed legislation.

What are you going to do to fix that?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, to answer your previous question regarding stepping up, when it comes to, for example, the climate change fight, we've allocated an additional \$350 million that was also not in the budget.

My point, Mr. Chair—

Ms. Heather McPherson: But I was asking about the total amount and that percentage of ODA. Of course, we know that has been reduced by 15%.

The question I would like you to answer right now, if you don't mind, is on Bill C-41.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Okay, but you asked multiple questions before, and I was trying to answer those. I can move to Bill C-41 if you like.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Let's move to Bill C-41 now.

I'm going to run out of time. I'm sorry, sir.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: For Bill C-41, this is something we knew we needed to change. The legislation previously in place did make that a challenge. We had to work with our colleagues to make sure we had the right balance. I actually commend the committee for its work on this. That's what committee work is for, to make the legislation better. I look forward to the results on that.

Ms. Heather McPherson: But, honestly, it took 18 months for this government to bring forward legislation. It was not what the sector or anyone with anything to do with international humanitarian law asked for. It was in fact weaponizing and criminalizing the international development, which is the opposite of what the Government of Canada should be doing.

You were the minister responsible for making sure that didn't happen. I don't know that you succeeded in doing that very well, Minister.

• (1140)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we did consult a lot of different organizations. I would say that when it comes to the work that is being done now, the legislation, we look forward to what the results will be—

Ms. Heather McPherson: Don't you think that as a government you should have brought forward legislation that didn't need so much work done at committee? Wouldn't it have been a better scenario if, when you brought forward the legislation, everybody would have said, yes, this is exactly what the sector has asked for, and thank you for bringing it forward?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: The thing is this is what we have. Our committees system is in place to make our legislation better when things need to be changed and to have that opportunity. Otherwise, why bother having these committees?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Often legislation doesn't need this much fixing.

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

We now proceed to the second round.

First we go with MP Epp.

You have four minutes, sir.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

In your opening comments you stated that the department has exceeded its goals. The recent Auditor General's report says otherwise.

Over the last few years \$3.5 billion was spent on a gender lens, a feminist focus, billions of dollars of taxpayer funds spent without any recognizable achievements.

How do you account for that?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, we have exceeded some portions of our goals. On certain measurements, we are still working towards that.

Also, I would like to emphasize that when it comes to the work we were doing, because of the different crises, whether COVID or Ukraine, and the work that we have to do, it is difficult to put a G3 level in. I'd be happy if our deputy minister would come in to explain—

Mr. Dave Epp: If I could, you said in some areas you have exceeded, but the Auditor General's report refers to 24 of 26 indicators for which outcomes were not able to be measured.

Are you disagreeing with the Auditor General there?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I had a really good discussion with the Auditor General on where we could improve. There are areas in which we are actually having a significant impact. When it comes to the reporting of the results on where we actually need to focus our improvement, I'm going to have the deputy minister provide greater details if you like.

Mr. Christopher MacLennan (Deputy Minister, International Development, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Very simply, what the Auditor General found was that we are able to demonstrate that we have results at the project level. However, where we have difficulty is translating across 1,500 individual projects to roll those results up into a single set of indicators.

Mr. Dave Epp: When did the department discover this? It's been five years since 2017, when this focus was crafted.

Was it the Auditor General's report that brought it to your attention? Was there no earlier indication?

Mr. Christopher MacLennan: We've struggled at times with telling the larger result story without having to focus on individual elements—such as global health, global food security and the various other ways in which we provide development assistance—to be able to have a single set of indicators that are small enough to be understandable.

Mr. Dave Epp: How would I explain to my constituents...? All of us around the table have a heart for international development, but these are taxpayers' dollars. There's a lot of competition, obviously, in the government for taxpayers' dollars, yet we have an Auditor General report that does not back up that story.

What would you say to the residents of Canada on this AG report?

Mr. Christopher MacLennan: What I would say, very simply, is that if you look at individual projects—and we can go through them one by one—we can demonstrate the great results that are being achieved. The difficulty has been in reporting in a succinct, global way across all of those individual projects.

However, at a project level, we can demonstrate the results clearly.

Mr. Dave Epp: Minister, when will the changes based on the Auditor General's recommendations be completed?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, the work has already started when it comes, for example, to the reporting system and having an interim database put in place. The deputy minister and the team have already put a plan in place. The exact timeline—

Mr. Dave Epp: When will that be completed?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We can't give you a timeline just yet, but once we have the plan in place, we'll work with the Auditor General's office on this, and I'll be happy to report back on it.

Mr. Dave Epp: Okay.

On the farm where I come from, we work from an outcome to start and then work backward to the crops that we're going to grow. My bank manager doesn't accept project reports along the way that don't lead to a positive outcome.

I look at the funding splits. It's 80%, 15% and only 5% for infrastructure. Wouldn't you start with the goals that you're trying to achieve with our international assistance and work backward from there to the project level, etc., rather than announce funding?

How do you determine those funding splits when you don't have an outcomes-based approach?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I do have a farming background. I was raised on a farm. However, profits are not one of the things we're focused on; we're focused on feeding people.

Having said that, you raise a really good point. What we need to do, and that's exactly what the deputy minister was trying to say... At the project level, we have the results. What we need to focus on is how we now bring this data together to be able to demonstrate those results on a larger scale, and that's what we're working on now.

• (1145)

Mr. Dave Epp: With the question—

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Epp, I'm afraid you're out of time.

We will now go to Dr. Fry. You have four minutes.

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

I thought I had five minutes, but there you go.

Thank you, Minister, for coming. You've been doing an extraordinary amount of work in a very difficult time with conflicts and crises, food insecurity and crises of health. You have really been trying to keep up with a lot of things, so I want to thank you for coming and spending some time with us.

I want to specifically ask you a question. As you well know, the government has talked about donating half of the \$1.4-billion funding to SRHR in areas that have been neglected. You know those areas of neglect are postabortion care, comprehensive sexual education, access to safe abortions and reproductive health and rights.

How are you getting that done? What are the challenges you're facing? That's one question.

Because I only have four minutes, I'm going to throw my three questions at you.

The second one is based on this issue. As you mentioned in your presentation, you know that in Ukraine, access to abortion... Countries that are receiving Ukrainian migrants, like Poland and Hungary, offer very little access to sexual reproductive health care and rights, even though rape has been announced as being one of the tactics of war, and Ukrainian women are being raped.

How are you dealing with that barrier that you're receiving from those countries?

Finally, if you can, tell me about vaccines we need to prepare for the next pandemic, not after it happens, but before it happens. What are we doing with WHO to deal with access to health and access to vaccine supplies for a future pandemic?

Thank you.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Thank you very much for—

Hon. Hedy Fry: I'm sorry for throwing three questions in.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: No, that's quite all right.

The neglected areas of SRHR are a significant concern to me and to our government. In fact, we are currently working on a plan to increase our support to the neglected areas because even in countries where abortion is illegal, that doesn't mean it stops abortion. They still need post-abortion support, so these are the areas we will be increasing. I don't have the plan finalized just yet, but when it is, I look forward to making the announcement.

With regard to Ukraine, when it comes to situations of war and the increased violence and rape that have taken place, it is absolutely horrible. When I was in the region, I made sure, in talking to our team, to give them the go-ahead to be creative in finding ways to provide support to them even if a certain country doesn't, whether it's having them find support in a different country, up to and including even if we had to have them come to Canada.... I know that the teams were focused on this.

When it comes to the vaccine, this is one area that I do want to emphasize because we sadly have been jumping from crisis to crisis, and we can't forget about the previous crisis we had on our hands. When it comes to the vaccine, I've had very good discussions and monitoring.

The reinforcing of the health system is continuing. Some of the funding we have currently put into place, for example, some of the research work that's going into South Africa as a potential vaccine hub.... The goal of this is to look not just at having more vaccine created but at how we make sure that we have regional hubs where there are good systems in place so that if a pandemic were to come back, we're not dealing with the same issues. We have a cold supply chain system in place with people who are trained up to be able to provide those. We have the PPE in place and, more importantly, the vaccine hubs that can actually deliver.

It is something that we are monitoring very closely and working with our multilateral organizations on.

• (1150)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Chair, do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have approximately 13 seconds left, Dr. Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Okay, well then, I was going to ask the minister something about women and peace and security, the United Nations resolution 1325. I'm hoping that sometime along the way he can answer that question.

I want to say, Minister, that it is really important for people to note that asking you and international development to fund every single thing means that people don't understand how budgets work. We only have so much money, as a country, and we have to divide it in priorities. Thank you for prioritizing so well.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Fry.

We will now go to Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Bergeron, you have two minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

It is a shame that Ms. Fry used the last seconds of her speaking time to make such an editorial comment. I do understand that our resources are limited, but we have committed to bulking up our official development assistance to 0.7% of our gross domestic product. This means that our resources, as limited as they are, should be increased so that we can contribute to global efforts in the fight against poverty.

I agree with Ms. McPherson's grave concerns about the food crisis and I know that there is no improvement in sight. I understand that other funds are being used in the fight against hunger, but I am concerned that despite everything, our overall contribution is reduced.

We have also reduced funding for developing countries to help them adapt to climate change. The amount of \$433.2 million will be progressively reduced until 2025-26, even though the brutal impact of climate change in Pakistan has been obvious over the past few months. We have spoken about this already, Minister. Are we doing the right thing when we know that very often it is the developing countries that are proportionally hit harder by climate change than developed countries?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, climate change is one of the existential crises that we have. It's one of the reasons that the Prime Minister authorized a doubling of our climate adaptation funding to \$5.3 billion. Certain programs are currently taking place. Some might be expiring, but let's not also forget that most recently our government has announced \$350 million for biodiversity as well. We are playing our role. We're also encouraging others to play their part.

I'm happy to say that we're working closely with the Minister of the Environment on how we look at the work we do in the environment but at the same time tackle some of the food security crises. In some places, what we're doing is making sure that when we're looking at climate adaptation or biodiversity, how do we protect agricultural fields at the same time? That also impacts food security.

Some good work is taking place. What I'm actually very impressed with is that, more importantly, a lot of other nations are stepping up to come up with their own plans. Rather than us telling them what needs to be done, nations are coming up with their own plans. I will be going to the African Union to discuss with them the national plans they're putting forward. Canada can't do it all, obviously, but we are looking at where we can have key areas of focus when it comes to food security. Some of it's also going to be thinking about things like fertilizer.

We're taking a multi-faceted approach in looking at the climate work, trying to link it with food security and to bring things together so that we can maximize our support. We're not just looking at one fund. We're looking at how we're doing food security here and layering on the funding support so that we can have an even bigger impact on the ground.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We now go to MP McPherson for two minutes.

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

Thank you again, Minister.

Minister, I want to ask you a couple of questions about FinDev, if I could. How do you determine where the funds go within FinDev? How do we know what the end use results are with FinDev? Where is that information located so that people like parliamentarians can access it?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'll ask the DM if he will take that question. He can explain it in far greater detail than I can.

Mr. Christopher MacLennan: Sure.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm giving you only about 30 seconds, just so you know.

Mr. Christopher MacLennan: Okay.

FinDev is a subsidiary of EDC. It reports annually through the EDC. Every year it has a strategic plan that identifies its top priorities. Right now it functions largely in the Americas and sub-Saharan Africa.

Ms. Heather McPherson: So \$1.3 billion has gone to FinDev since 2018. Can you tell me if we know whether there have been any results? From my understanding, the money goes out the door, and very little information comes back to us on what's been achieved.

Mr. Christopher MacLennan: I don't know if Drew has.... I don't have the statistics in front of me right now, but only a small portion of—

Ms. Heather McPherson: Can you provide those statistics to this committee in writing, please?

Mr. Christopher MacLennan: Yes.

In terms of the number, for example, of the \$1.3 billion that you've noted—

Ms. Heather McPherson: And can you provide what's been achieved?

Mr. Christopher MacLennan: Absolutely—but not very much of it has actually been loaned out yet.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Wait for people to answer.

• (1155)

Ms. Heather McPherson: I feel like \$1.3 billion has gone out. Is that not accurate?

Mr. Christopher MacLennan: No. It's been allocated to FinDev.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Okay. Thank you.

Minister, we've heard about the Africa strategy. Has it been downgraded to an African framework now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'm sorry. What do you mean by Africa strategy?

Ms. Heather McPherson: My understanding is that the government was engaging in the creation of an Africa strategy. At this point, we've been informed that it's been downgraded to an African framework.

I'd like some clarification on whether that has happened and why.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, I wasn't working on the Africa strategy. This is an area of focus that we've had for a very long time. I know that when it comes to the work we do, this is an area where we have actually increased and integrated our work. For example—

Ms. Heather McPherson: So there's no Africa strategy being created by the Government of Canada.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I think I know what you're talking about. In terms of the work that's being done, it's a little bit more.... I won't be able to explain it here in the short period that we have, but I can assure you—

Ms. Heather McPherson: Could you provide a written explanation for us?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I could probably take it off-line and explain it to you.

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

We will now go to Mr. Genuis for four minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

Maybe the Africa strategy was in an email somewhere.

Minister, I think we're having some challenges around seeing results, to be blunt about it. The Auditor General says you're not measuring results when it comes to improving the lives of women and girls. Bill C-41 is deeply flawed. The budget reverses various aid commitments. We have the whole issue of emails being checked during a crisis. That's beyond many of the other issues we've had at the Department of Defence.

I think the challenge from this committee to you is that we want to see results. We want to see outcomes. We don't just want to see good intentions. We want to see positive results.

I want to zero in first on a follow-up to my colleague's questions on the Auditor General. It's not clear to me if you fully accept and agree with the conclusions of the Auditor General in what was a very damning report. I want to hear from you, the minister: Do you accept and fully agree with the conclusions of the Auditor General?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Not only did we accept all the recommendations, in fact, I had direct discussions with the Auditor General—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's great that you had a discussion. Just a “yes” would be wonderful.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes. Okay. That's fantastic.

Does that mean you're committed to actually measuring outcomes going forward and revising the things you're measuring? Right now, you're measuring indicators but not outcomes at an overall level. Are you committed to fully measuring outcomes going forward?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Yes, we are.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay, and when do you think that change will be fully implemented?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: The plan is being put together right now. We had a good briefing on it. Actually, the work has already started on this.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: At what point will the Auditor General be able to come back and say, “Here's a check mark—it's done”?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: In fact, we'll actually be working with the Auditor General in terms of the plan we have, making sure that it actually meets their expectations so that there's no mistaken interpretation on the recommendations.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: What's the timeline, though?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I can't give you a timeline just yet because we're working on the plan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

Generally if you're making a plan and you're trying to achieve results, you have a timeline: We're going to try to achieve it by “this point”. So as that becomes available—

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I would say that it's not only just as soon as possible, but what we want to do is a phased plan. It's not going to wait until a longer term. We want to look at short-term, medium- and long-term objectives.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sure, but the bottom line is the structure you have. With great fanfare, it talks about improving the lives of women and girls, but it's not actually measuring outcomes in terms of improvements to the lives of women and girls. I think it's not too much to ask, what is the timeline for when we'll start measuring outcomes? It will take a while to realize those outcomes in various ways, of course, but that's what we're suggesting, I think.

I wanted to ask a follow-up question about the issue of the illegal documents as well.

I'd like to know when you first found out about that. You said that you weren't checking your emails at the time. At what point in time did you find out that your chief of staff had sent a template,

that illegal documents were issued and so forth...? When did you first become aware of these facts?

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Ms. Vandenbeld has a point of order.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Once again, I believe that this line of questioning is not on the main estimates.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On that point—

The Chair: If I could ask members to—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —I think it relates to his competence and work as minister, and it just.... This is the last question on this: When did you become aware of it, Minister?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I need to be able to explain this in the full context if you'd allow me the time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: When did you first become aware of it, Minister?

The Chair: Yes, Minister, please do proceed.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: But he keeps interrupting—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'll tell you what. You answer the question and then you can have the rest of the time to talk about whatever you want.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I actually would prefer to provide the full context so that there's a better—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Just first—because I'm almost out of time—when did you first become aware of this?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: You asked another question. I just want to make sure that I can answer it properly. I want to make sure that you're not going to keep interrupting me, so that I can give the full context rather than giving you the opportunity so you can get a sound bite out of it.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Proceed.

● (1200)

The Chair: Minister, if we could now ask you to respond...?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Thank you.

When I was made aware of an issue with the facilitation letters...back when the emergency was taking place, it was identified that the facilitation letters were required. Once that was done, I knew there was a process taking place on facilitation letters. However, when an issue with facilitation letters with Senator McPhe-dran...I only realized this, I think it was when the...I think it was in the news mostly—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You only found out about it through media reports.

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

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That's what you said—

The Chair: The minister—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes. The minister said yes—

The Chair: You're out of time—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is that right? You only found out through media reports.

Thank you, Minister. That's striking.

The Chair: We will now go to the last question for the minister.

We go to MP Vandenberg.

You have four minutes.

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

Thank you very much for being here, Minister.

I'd like to go back to some of the lines of questioning from earlier from some of the opposition members, with that claim that ODA has been cut.

In fact, in your answer, you explained that it has gone up, in fact, I believe by 49% since 2015, and then it was mentioned that when something happens—like Ukraine or COVID—that is an exceptional thing, a crisis in the world, there then is an exceptional off-cycle ask and that is funded.

Does this mean that in the future we would still be able to do these exceptional off-cycle asks if there are emergencies like those that continue? In essence, nothing has changed other than the fact that we keep on increasing ODA to 2030...?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Absolutely.

In fact, as I've explained in previous years, because emergencies do pop up, we need to respond. Regrettably, this is a pattern we're going to have to continue to repeat. The numbers we're talking about are analyzed at the end of the year, and we're starting out a budget at the beginning of the year. The baseline budget has systematically increased. Even in this budget, we're asking for over \$100 million above the previous baseline budget as well.

What I would encourage members to do is this: Look at where the line has been going. At the same time, we need to step up when crises come up, which we have done, whether it's Ukraine.... Sadly, it was COVID. It might be something else. I'll remind people we had to do a \$250-million budget request. This does not include some of the other challenges we have had. Our government is absolutely committed to increasing our development assistance. We have shown the pattern and the graphs on this. I can show members.

I also want to make a point here on the work that's done. I take the opportunity to visit many projects. We have a lot of work to do when it comes to putting all that information together, project by project. I encourage this committee, if they ever have an opportunity, to go visit those projects. Not only are people in Global Affairs doing absolutely amazing work on the ground, so are our partners. Go see the impact they're having.

I can give you one example. Since the Sudan crisis.... When I was visiting South Sudan, thinking it's an area I needed to visit because the peace agreement was expiring, I went to one place where they had a women entrepreneurship program on farming. They were growing things they weren't able to grow before. It's a small area. I'm originally from a small village. They're able to feed their village and sell the excess food. That excess food is the difference

between, sometimes, their children getting medical support or being able to go to school. This is just one micro-example of having an impact on people's lives...or medical clinics in the slums in Bangladesh. The list goes on.

I encourage members to go and visit some of those projects.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: On results.... There was a question about the Auditor General's report earlier. I don't want people to get the wrong impression. I think we all know that, certainly, our feminist international assistance policy is having real results on the ground. What the Auditor General was saying is, we're not capturing that information, aggregating it and telling our story properly.

Could you perhaps clarify that, as well?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: That's the thing. We have the results. We have to get better at being able to pull it together so that, once we aggregate it, we can make even better decisions on this.

I also want to emphasize this, on the feminist approach: One of the key things I'm seeing—and I want the research to demonstrate this—is that, when people ask why we have a feminist assistance policy, it's the right thing to do. We need to send a very strong message. If you want to achieve your results faster, you take the feminist approach.

This is why Germany has now launched their own. Other nations, even though they haven't launched their policies, are taking our example, as well, because it's having an impact. Research has shown that, if you give funding support to women in certain areas, they will have a much bigger impact than if, as done traditionally, it was given to men.

• (1205)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Didn't you just make a big announcement on the women's voice and leadership program?

The Chair: MP Vandenberg, I'm afraid you're out of time.

It now being past noon, I'll thank the minister for having once again appeared before our committee.

Of course, this was for members to ask you questions about the main estimates for 2023-24, but, of course, you answered a host of disparate and different types of questions, as well. We're very grateful.

We will now provide you, Minister, with a few minutes to depart.

I will suspend for two minutes to allow the officials to assume their positions.

Thank you.

• (1205) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1210)

The Chair: We will now proceed to the second part of today's session: questions for officials on the main estimates for 2023-24. I'm advised the officials will be remaining with us until 12:45 p.m.

The first question is from Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Genuis, you have five minutes.

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

I want to follow up with the officials on Bill C-41. I know it's a Public Safety or Justice lead, and not you guys directly, but I'm hoping you're part of the process. Obviously, you deal with international development organizations and you'll be providing advice on the implementation of aspects of this. It's working its way to the justice committee. There are a lot of concerns about how it works.

I wonder whether you could tell us in which parts of the world, right now, development organizations need to make applications, other than Afghanistan? There has been a lot of discussion about Afghanistan, but the bill would apply in other places. Where would you advise international development organizations they need to make an application, other than Afghanistan?

Mr. Peter MacDougall (Assistant Deputy Minister, Global Issues and Development, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You're suggesting that if there's another entity listed in the Criminal Code and operating in a certain country where Canadian organizations have to make an application—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: The bill doesn't just apply to listed entities. I think you know that.

Mr. Peter MacDougall: Yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It applies to any terrorist organization. The problem is that development organizations are expected to know where they need to apply and where they don't, depending on what control looks like and what might be determined as a terrorist organization, even if it's not a listed entity.

I'm looking for what advice you would give to them if this bill passes in its current form. For what places would they need to make applications prior to operating?

Mr. Peter MacDougall: I think until the law is in place, I'm not in a position to make that judgment.

We have a very specific situation in Afghanistan with a listed entity that's become a barrier to humanitarian development organizations working there. In the context of humanitarian organizations, which I work with most closely, we've made arrangements so that they can operate there in the current situation.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Right. To your original comment, though, that you're not in a position to answer the question, I think you are and you should be, because we're deciding as legislators how to treat this bill. I think it's not some abstract hypothetical.

There's the question of...if this bill, as it's written by your government, were law today and humanitarian or other development orga-

nizations were asking where they needed to apply and with whom—if they're dealing with them—they should make an application, you'd need to be able to answer that question. At the least, they'd need to be able to answer that question in order to avoid prosecution.

What are those places?

• (1215)

Mr. Peter MacDougall: As I said, Mr. Chair, I'm not currently in a position to answer that question, because the law is not on the books—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Why does it matter if the law is not on the books?

Mr. Peter MacDougall: Because that is the moment at which an organization would have to make an application.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Let's say the bill was law. Let's say we agreed to pass the bill really quickly. Hypothetically, we just said there was unanimous consent. It's in the House and the Senate. It's done tomorrow.

Where would people have to apply? For what regions?

Mr. Peter MacDougall: Again, Mr. Chair, until the law is on the books.... If the law is on the books as it's currently amended, organizations will be able to come forward to make an application, and at that point, the government will be able to provide them with advice. Work is ongoing on that, but I'm not in a position to identify specific countries at this time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. I don't really think that's a reasonable answer, respectfully.

Clearly, you've given it and you're not going to move past it, but the reality is that organizations have to make these decisions about whether or not to make an application, and we as legislators have to make decisions about where this bill would and would not apply as written. For you to say we won't know until the bill becomes law where it would apply, it puts us in a bit of an impossible situation in deciding whether or not the bill as it's written works well or not.

Also on Bill C-41, do you plan to provide advice to organizations prior to making an application? Let's say someone comes to you and says, "We would like to know if we need to apply in order to operate in a particular place or deal with a particular organization."

Would you answer those questions?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Sarai, go ahead.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): I'm curious how Bill C-41 and how it would be implemented has anything to do with the main estimates.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's about international development.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Asking our officials about something that is presumptuous and has not been cleared...they would have no answer. It has nothing to do with what we're here for today.

The Chair: I'll ask all the members to keep their questions within the scope and on the main estimates.

Mr. Genuis, I stopped the clock. The floor is yours.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: This is obviously in scope. It's such a ridiculous objection, it's not even worth really dignifying it with a response. This is about the work of the international development department and its advice to organizations.

If you could proceed to answer the question, would you provide that advice to organizations in advance of an application?

Mr. Peter MacDougall: Mr. Chair, as you said at the outset of your question, this is really within the scope of Public Safety and Justice. They will be the ones operating the regime. However, it looks like, once the law is passed—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: To put a fine point on it, folks will be coming to you for advice. You're the folks responsible for international development. You deal with humanitarian organizations. They will come to you and ask, "Do we need to make an application in this particular case?"

Mr. Peter MacDougall: That advice will be based on consultations with the—

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

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Chair, how much time was I supposed to have?

The Chair: You're over. You were supposed to have five minutes.

I'll ask the official to respond very briefly, please.

Mr. Peter MacDougall: I will just say that if an organization comes to us when the bill is law, we would be working in consultation with Public Safety and Justice to provide advice to that organization. It's not solely the responsibility of Global Affairs.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to MP Bendayan.

You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here with us today.

I would like to talk about Canada's feminist international assistance policy. Could the minister provide us with examples of concrete results in the field? Witnesses could give us examples to help Canadians who follow our work understand what the government is doing and where it is targeting its efforts. I see that almost \$200 million has been invested in a program called women's voice and leadership. Could we hear more about the work that is being done under these programs?

Ms. Patricia Peña (Assistant Deputy Minister, Partnerships for Development Innovation, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you.

[*English*]

We have been operating within a policy framework of the feminist international assistance policy for the last five years. Within that we have really been looking at how can we address some of the underlying issues that are at the core of some of the development challenges.

One of the signature initiatives within this is Women's Voice and Leadership. Equally with that we have funding to the Equality Fund. What these have in common is a commitment to try to give resources directly to those organizations, to those people working locally in their communities.

That is based on the recognition that they are best placed to know what the needs of their communities are and to be able to make decisions that will benefit those communities.

As part of that work we have really had a chance to see what that impact is. For instance, by giving relatively small amounts of resources to organizations like women's rights organizations in countries, they have been able to directly advocate for laws—for instance, civil society laws, to ensure that they have, first of all, rights in place and are able to address issues around human rights and to have access to property, for instance, to titles.

Every day they are working in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa and globally to advocate for their needs as individuals, as women and girls, but also for their communities.

It's the kind of work that is around empowering them. Underlying all of this is that they are changing the dynamics in their country and very much leading the change.

● (1220)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I understand that time constraints do not allow you to go into any detail. Could you send the committee a list of organizations that receive funding from the federal government to build this awareness and, if I understand correctly, fight for women's rights? You mentioned Africa and other areas. Please send those examples after the meeting.

Ms. Patricia Peña: Of course, it is always possible to provide examples.

I would say that a good chunk of our projects are focused on issues of equity and direct support to women and girls, which are central to our priorities. If I seem a bit hesitant, it is because we currently have 1,500 projects underway. That's a lot. We are trying to promote these projects and share information, and our website contains a great deal of information. I do have examples of such projects; if time allows, I would be ready to talk about them here.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I would love to hear about it, if time allows, but we are talking about 1,500 projects. It is very important that we receive that information and I do encourage you to send what you can. I will, however, give you a bit of time to provide a few examples.

I would also like to know more about the work we are doing. There is a lot happening in Uganda, such as the bill that was recently passed to restrict the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. Can you tell us what Canada is doing in this area?

[English]

Ms. Patricia Peña: What's happening in Uganda is very concerning to us. We have many of our Canadian partners that have been working with people on the ground to help them as they face a backlash on their rights and restrictive laws. We are working in tandem with them now to see how we can still provide support.

This is development working in context with other aspects of our foreign policy, for instance, ensuring that our advocacy on the ground through our embassies, our missions abroad, also supports that work, and to ensure that for those people who are being targeted, we can provide the necessary support, because of the belief in support for civil society and the importance of reinforcing the rights of all persons.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to MP Bergeron for five minutes.

MP Bergeron, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

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

I would firstly like to offer a rebuttal to comments made by Ms. Vandenberg. I think numbers can be interpreted in quite a few ways.

I believe that the NGOs working in the field of international cooperation had expressed their desire that the government not use the crisis as an excuse to reduce its contribution but rather increase it. However, despite this, the government uses the crisis as an excuse. The crisis isn't finished yet, as our colleague was saying: the health crisis isn't over, the food crisis isn't over, and the climate crisis wages on. However, the government has cited the supposed end of these crises to reduce its contribution to international development assistance. I will just say that it is most unfortunate that the government has made this political choice that it will have to live with.

I now have a question for the witnesses. First of all, thank you for being here with us. I didn't get the chance to say it before. I know that you probably have many other things to do that are just as important, but you made the time and we are grateful.

A bit earlier, Ms. McPherson asked the minister about the Africa strategy. He seemed a bit surprised by the question, not quite understanding what she meant. I have before me an article from The Hill Times which indicates that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, our colleague Mr. Robert Oliphant, said in July 2022 that he hoped to get this strategy to cabinet before December 2022. However, this article, dated December 7, 2022, states that the strategy doesn't seem to have been provided at that point in time. It is now April 2023: where is the government at with its African strategy?

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Smith (Director General, International Assistance Policy, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd say that we will have to get back to you in with an update on, I believe it's, the Africa economic strategy.

Certainly from the context of international development, sub-Saharan Africa is a priority of the government, with the feminist international assistance policy priority given to our programming in sub-Saharan Africa. That is I think a foundational element of our international assistance.

Having said that, the relationship between trade and development and the importance of economic development is something that is well understood within the international development context. Linkages between trade and development in the context of an African economic strategy will be important, and I would imagine will be fleshed out through the course of that strategy.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: So you will send us the information in writing after the meeting.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Smith: We can certainly come back to you with an update on where that strategy is.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you so much.

We can see that Canada's international development assistance essentially targets a handful of countries. In 2021 and 2022, those countries were Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria. In the case of Afghanistan and Ukraine, it is obvious why the government has made those two countries priorities. However, in certain other cases, it is not so obvious. I am thinking about Ethiopia, which is the prime beneficiary of Canada's international development assistance, and where for months on end, the Ethiopian government waged a dirty war against the Tigray.

My question is very simple: Why choose Ethiopia, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria rather than other countries with which we have closer ties in terms of culture, for example? Haiti comes to mind.

• (1230)

Mr. Peter MacDougall: Thank you for the question.

[English]

I'll respond and just distinguish between humanitarian assistance and development assistance.

In the list of countries that you cited, we have very large investments, predominantly in humanitarian assistance. Ukraine is obviously much broader than that.

Humanitarian assistance is always neutral. It's always impartial. It operates in contexts, as you said, that are very difficult to stomach at times, with actors that are very difficult to stomach. The underlying principle of it is that we will deliver life-saving assistance to people in need. That is why you see elevated levels of assistance in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and the DRC, as well as some of the other countries you mentioned.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I do understand what you are saying but—

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron. I'm afraid you're considerably over time. Thank you.

We next go to MP McPherson.

You have five minutes.

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

Thank you for being here and sharing your expertise with us today, witnesses.

I just want to respond very quickly to what you said, Mr. Smith, about trade's being an important part. I would suggest that our government has promoted trade over development, over diplomacy and over peacekeeping. Frankly, when you have trade without development, diplomacy and peacekeeping, it is not trade; it's exploitation. I would flag that for the group.

When I was within the sector, I was actually sitting on the TaFIE task force, namely, the task force for improving effectiveness at Global Affairs Canada. Many of the concerns that we raised within that task force have not been addressed by Global Affairs. They are still outstanding. One of them is the time it takes for a proposal to go from proposal to completion.

I'm going to raise an issue right now about the initiative for small and medium organizations. Right now, we have this initiative, which asked for proposals in September 2021. Eighteen organizations were asked to complete a full proposal in May 2022. They have still not received a result. Basically, we have a situation where 18 proposals cannot be evaluated by Global Affairs Canada in a year—which is appalling, of course, especially because of the impact, as I'm sure you all know, that it has on organizations. My understanding is that it takes up to 17 different sign-offs for a proposal to be approved.

I have two questions.

First of all, is this acceptable? Does this meet the standards that Global Affairs Canada has in terms of time frames?

Also, if this is the case, how on earth can we expect that Bill C-41 would work in a humanitarian crisis when we require Global Affairs to be able to respond?

Ms. Patricia Peña: To answer directly, no, it's not acceptable, and we recognize it, but we're working very hard at it. We have a huge volume of grants and contributions. We know that our systems are cumbersome. We have multiple old systems that don't fit well

together. This simply doesn't meet our current and future business needs. When I say “our”, I mean ourselves and also our partners.

We have aging technology, and we know that there's a need to modernize how we do our work. All of these are factors that have influenced our commitment to move forward with a transformation of grants and contributions. This is something that we identified early with the Auditor General's team when it was doing its work. We know that our information management systems are simply not up to the task.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm sorry to interrupt, ma'am—and thank you very much for that—but can I ask if you are understaffed? Is Global Affairs Canada an understaffed department within this government?

Ms. Patricia Peña: With regard to the issues that you raised, there are multiple factors that influence what is affecting, for instance, our ability to look at not only projects that we received and capabilities of our staff but also some of our systems that we're looking at.

For the grants and contributions, we'll look at that whole piece and not just one part of it. There's a fundamental IT part of it. We will be rethinking our business processes and looking at where we actually need to streamline—use new technologies, for instance, artificial intelligence—where, let's say, something no longer needs to have somebody do a paper form. It would hopefully lighten the burden for our partners.

What I really like about this process is that our partners are in the tent and involved with us. You mentioned TaFIE. That's now being rolled in as a committee that's part of a partner forum within the grants and contributions—

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm sorry, I'm going to interrupt. I'm just so short of time.

I sat on the TaFIE in 2017, and those things were identified then. It feels very much like nothing has changed since then. I don't doubt very much that the staff at Global Affairs works very hard. I know that first-hand. However, I do wonder why nothing has changed in the five years since then.

The Canadian International Development Agency was brought into DFATD and then Global Affairs Canada. Do you believe that was the right decision to make? Do you think Canada's development has gotten better now that we no longer have a Canadian International Development Agency?

● (1235)

Ms. Patricia Peña: On the first part of your question, the grants and contributions transformation project just got under way this year. I understand that these are issues that have been identified for some time. We have a clear commitment to move forward now and to roll up all of those issues with a plan over the next five years to look at addressing all of those issues.

I don't have an opinion on the latter part of the question.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Very quickly then, could you also provide the committee with written information about the breakdown of development dollars that go to multilateral, bilateral and Canadian organizations, please?

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, MP McPherson.

We next go to MP Epp.

MP Epp, you have five minutes.

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

Thanks to the officials for being here.

I want to continue the questioning by my colleague, specifically on the information system, which was flagged by the Auditor General, as you've acknowledged. There were delays. Of the 60 projects reviewed, nine projects had partial information and one had none.

I'm going to ask you to sharpen your answer a little. Is this an information system? From my colleague, I understand that these issues existed five years ago. Is it staffing? Is it COVID? Is it a work location?

When it's flagged by the Auditor General in a report, it gets my attention anyway, so I'm going to ask you to respond.

Ms. Patricia Peña: Thank you, Chair, for the question.

When the Auditor General's team met with us, we identified proactively with that team that we were looking to address information management challenges. We proactively raised the issue.

Regarding the request for information from the Auditor General's team, we recognize that there were delays in getting them the information they wanted, but all of the information that was requested was submitted to that team—albeit not within the initial.... First, we were given five days to submit the information. We acknowledge that we weren't able to do that within the five days that we were given to provide it, but did eventually.

Mr. Dave Epp: All 60 projects were reported to the AG, but just not within the five days. Is that correct?

Ms. Patricia Peña: There was one project related to Ukraine for which the documents were in Ukraine; therefore, we were not able to provide the information to that one project.

Mr. Dave Epp: Are the Auditor General's conclusions regarding not having outcome-based reporting available tied to your information system shortfalls, or is that more of an internal process shortfall?

Ms. Patricia Peña: It is a separate area.

We look at our results reporting on multiple levels. We have projects that have fulsome results frameworks. They have particular indicators that look at activities, but for each project, we are able to look at the actual outcomes of that project. The challenge, as the deputy minister mentioned before, is being able to aggregate some of those, but for individual projects, we are able to look at those outcomes.

We do have, on a sectoral level, some indicators that help us to describe the changes over time, and those are linked to our departmental reporting. The challenge we have is in trying to link the project-level results and to do a better telling of the story as we roll it up. That's something that is a work-in-progress.

Mr. Dave Epp: I'm going to ask you, or whoever, to comment perhaps on the direction of planning. Three commitments were made in 2017 for three areas of spending, with 15% of the spending targeted toward gender-targeted, 80% toward gender-integrated and then 5% for infrastructure.

Without the lack of outcomes as driving those spending splits and with the information systems, can you comment on the direction of the thought process? Or, am I getting this all wrong and the splits—the 15%, the 80% and the 5%—weren't the drivers of the projects? Were they the outcome of projects and targets? Do you understand my question? Is it going in this direction and we didn't have outcomes, or did we start with our goals and work backwards to what money we spent?

I note that the Auditor General.... Only two of the three pillars of the spending were met. I'm not saying that we spend money for spending money's sake, but we're after outcomes here.

● (1240)

Mr. Andrew Smith: I'd be happy to respond to that, Mr. Chair.

What I would say is that the targets that are included in the policy are about allocation, so it's allocating the resources to certain types of programming—as you note, the gender-targeted and the gender-integrated. I have to say that I'm not aware of the 5% for infrastructure, so there may be just some confusion there.

However, in terms of allocating resources, that would drive the project choices that we're making, so the projects my colleague has been highlighting in terms of the outcomes and result statements that are developed are framed around the allocation choices we're making.

In answer to your question, the allocation of resources to specific kinds of gender-equality programming determines the broad nature of the projects that are ultimately implemented.

Mr. Dave Epp: The minister, in his remarks earlier, talked about hopefully using the Auditor General's report to get to better decision-making, etc. I note that my colleague, Mr. Bergeron, touched on this, where a lot of the spending has occurred historically outside of the surprises—if we want to call them that—with Ukraine.

We've been in Ethiopia a long time. My own history goes back to the beginnings of that. We're after outcomes. I understand Afghanistan, but why have we been so long in Ethiopia, seemingly without...? Are there results to show for that?

Mr. Andrew Smith: I would say that there are countries in which we can achieve better results in shorter periods. There are countries where the results we achieve are focused more on crisis response and humanitarian assistance.

So, the answer to the question of whether we are achieving results really does depend on the nature of the investments we're making. In a country like Ethiopia, over a period of decades, there would be results achieved in different ways under different contexts. We've seen Ethiopia undergo some significant humanitarian and conflict issues, and we would achieve results in that context—as we would have done previously—with longer-term development investments.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

If I could get one more question in...

The Chair: No, I'm afraid you can't, Mr. Epp.

Mr. Dave Epp: I didn't think so.

The Chair: You are considerably over time.

For the last question, we will now go to MP Sarai.

You have five minutes, and the floor is yours, MP Sarai.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we've noticed, climate change is a big factor in the world. How is Canada helping countries that are facing natural disasters and suffering the severe impacts of climate change? Can you tell us what Canada is doing, with respect to its work at Global Affairs, in order to fight climate change?

Mr. Peter MacDougall: In 2021, the government renewed its commitment to climate finance, doubling it from \$2.65 billion to \$5.3 billion. We're now in year three of those investments.

The first round of climate finance from 2012 to 2020 resulted in significant mitigation, offsetting 228 megatonnes of greenhouse gases.

In our current portfolio, 60% of the portfolio is focused on climate mitigation, and 40% is focused on climate adaptation. We're delivering that funding, which is a combination of loans and grants, through large multilateral investments. There's a coal transition piece of work that we're doing with Climate Investment Funds at the World Bank. We're also working with smaller organizations to deliver adaptation outcomes to help small farmers and small communities adapt to climate change, and we work with both Canadian and international NGOs, as well as with, as I said, UN institutions and the international financial institutions.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

Can you share with the committee the progress to deliver on Canada's commitment to helping developing countries transition from low-carbon economies to building resilience to the effects of climate change?

Mr. Peter MacDougall: Certainly. I mentioned the coal transition initiative that we invested \$1 billion into with the World Bank. We're also working with other members of the G7 on just energy transition partnerships, with countries like South Africa, Indonesia, to help them transition from coal burning to a greener future.

• (1245)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: How is Canada's climate financing supporting women and girls, indigenous people and the poorest and the most vulnerable?

Mr. Peter MacDougall: One of the targets I did not mention when I talked about the mitigation-adaptation split is that 80% of our work in the climate finance portfolio targets gender equality. We have already exceeded that target at year three of the new five-year investment.

That informs all of our investments. It's something we consider upfront. It plays out in terms of how we work with large institutional investments. We're driving the gender-equality investment lens perspective with some of the larger institutions that we deal with. We also work with smaller organizations that either bring that perspective or work with a range of partners that can deliver these results on the ground.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: To transition to a different point, how is Canada's global aid distributed continentally: Africa versus Asia, Polynesian countries, eastern Europe, etc.?

Mr. Peter MacDougall: Thank you. I'm going to answer a question that's actually related to that. It was asked earlier, but I didn't get a chance to answer it. About 25% of our international assistance is delivered by the multilateral channel and 75% is delivered bilaterally. There was a question on Canadian organizations, and I believe that 25% of our overall envelope goes to Canadian organizations.

I'd have to get back to you on the breakdown. I should say that we do have a target that 50% of our international assistance should be delivered in sub-Saharan Africa. As for how the rest of the world breaks down, I'd have to return to you.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: There used to be a program under CIDA a long time ago for adopting a village. People from Canada would raise a certain percentage of the funds—sometimes the World Bank, sometimes others—and then CIDA would put in the other half. It would almost double up, kind of like a donor policy.

Is there any such program that already exists or is in the works anywhere in the world that Global Affairs is running?

Ms. Patricia Peña: Thank you for the question, Chair.

We are always evolving the projects that we do. We do that both in response to the countries we're working with, making sure we're responding to their needs and what they're looking for, and also, particularly in the cases where we work with Canadian partners, the ideas they have and the relationships they have with their counterparts in developing countries.

We don't have a project exactly like that, but there are initiatives that involve, for instance, bringing in Canadian expertise.

I'll maybe link to a question that was asked earlier. There's a partnering for climate initiative that is currently under way. We did a call for proposals that involves Canadian indigenous organizations. The idea is for them to be able to share their knowledge and expertise and then partner with those communities in countries so that there can be shared learning.

This is part of those evolving projects. Something like that maybe didn't exist before but is very much responsive to the issues that those countries and communities have identified.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sarai.

Its now being 12:45, I'm afraid that will conclude our session of questions with officials.

Allow me at this opportunity to thank Peter MacDougall, Anick Ouellette, Patricia Peña, Annie Boyer and Andrew Smith for being with us and answering all of the questions posed by the members.

I'll remind the members that at our next meeting on Thursday, May 4, there will be an appearance by Minister Mélanie Joly.

We will suspend briefly to allow our witnesses to depart and will continue with the last portion of our meeting, which will be in camera.

Members who are attending via Zoom, please use the other hyperlink and connection information that was sent by the clerk.

We will resume in camera in a few minutes. Thank you.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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