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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi



# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

• (1705)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 93 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Therefore, members are attending in person in the room, as well as remotely by using the Zoom application.

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

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available. Although this room is equipped with a powerful audio system, feedback events can occur. These can be extremely harmful to the interpreters. The most common cause of sound feedback is an earpiece worn too close to a microphone.

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, the committee will resume its study of Canada's diplomatic capacity.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses. Appearing before us is the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs. She is accompanied by Mr. David Morrison, deputy minister of foreign affairs, and Mr. Antoine Chevrier, assistant deputy minister and chief transformation officer. We are grateful that you are all here.

Minister, I know you are very excited about this particular topic. We are happy to have you here. You will have five minutes for opening remarks, after which we will turn to the members for questions.

Minister, the floor is yours.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is good to see all of you.

[Translation]

I'm pleased to see you all here.

[English]

Canada finds itself in a growing international security crisis. It is undeniable.

Just a few days ago I was in Kyiv, delivering a clear message from our government to Ukrainians that we are not going anywhere and we will be there for as long as it takes. Canada will continue to support Ukraine's fight for freedom through to the end of the war but also beyond. This is why Canada and Ukraine have launched an international coalition to bring Ukrainian children back home. We want to make sure that kids are never used as pawns in wartime.

Even after the war, Ukraine will be next door to a very dangerous neighbour, Russia. We know that in that context, Canada must be able to help Ukraine defend itself and show deterrence in light of danger. That is why I was there, and we have been working on advancing Canada's long-term bilateral security commitments to Ukraine to deter future Russian aggression.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, that's not the only conflict in the world that Canadians are concerned about. We're all deeply troubled by the devastating scenes coming out of the Middle East, whether it be the Hamas terrorist attack against Israel on October 7, which we continue to roundly condemn, or the death toll from the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which we are all extremely concerned about.

Our government continues to support urgent efforts to secure an agreement to free hostages. It will allow for more humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza and it will force Hamas to lay down its arms. We hope that this agreement will eventually lead to a sustainable ceasefire as well as a two-state solution.

[English]

Whether in Khan Yunis, in Kherson or even in Khartoum, the rules-based system that has kept Canadians safe for generations is cracking. We are all facing increasingly complex modern challenges—disinformation and the rise of AI and political polarization, including the rise of extremist and populist movements even here in Canada.

We cannot let bad actors exploit this uncertainty with impunity. In rising to meet these challenges, I have been clear that our government's foreign policy will be guided by two key principles.

The first one is that we absolutely need to defend Canada's sovereignty. Our national interests require it and our national security depends on it. We must stand firm and defend the rules-based system and the institutions that have kept us safe.

The second is pragmatic diplomacy. We need to engage in pragmatic diplomacy to work with countries of different perspectives to prevent an international conflict. I don't believe in the empty chair policy. We will never compromise our values and we will never compromise our national interests.

In what we do on the world stage to make sure that we succeed, we must be present globally with our eyes and ears on the ground. Our diplomats must be diverse, bilingual, healthy and well equipped.

Last fall, we released a detailed plan to transform Global Affairs Canada for the future of diplomacy. It is more important than ever that this plan be implemented, and thank you to Antoine and David for working actively on this.

This plan has four points.

• (1710)

[Translation]

First, there is a need to invest in our people, in “our world” as we say. That includes recruiting a diplomatic corps that is representative of Canada in all its diversity. Francophones must be able to speak their mother tongue and we need to speak more foreign languages and speak them better. We also need to provide greater support to our diplomats and their families abroad.

[English]

Second, we must increase our presence where it matters most. This means expanding our influence in key multilateral institutions, including, of course, the United Nations.

We must also grow our diplomatic footprint in key regions such as eastern Europe, Africa and the Indo-Pacific. This is something our government has already begun doing.

Third, we need to enhance our policy expertise to better anticipate and manage prolonged crises like climate change, as well as the issue of AI and the digital world.

Last but not least, we must have the tools and processes to be efficient and to be better protected from cyber-threats, which are currently top of mind for all of us.

[Translation]

I'm ready to answer your questions.

[English]

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

We now turn to the members for their questions.

The first member up is MP Chong. You have six minutes.

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

Thank you, Minister, for appearing. We appreciate that.

I want to ask you first about the recent revelation that Iran employed someone who hired two members of the Hells Angels to be assassins in North America—to target members of the Persian diaspora here in North America.

As my first question, did the U.S. government inform the Canadian government of this matter before the indictment was unsealed in a U.S. court?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you for that.

Of course, because this is linked to law enforcement work and the work that is done through the Minister of Public Safety, I would refer you to the Minister of Public Safety on this issue.

That said, on the question of any link of foreign interference or foreign criminal action in Canada, you are aware that we're dealing with this issue through the foreign interference public inquiry.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Canada doesn't have diplomatic relations with Iran.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** No, we don't.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Is Italy still our protecting power?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Yes, it is.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Has the Canadian government asked the Italian government to make representations on our behalf to the Islamic Republic of Iran in respect of this case in which Canadians are being hired as assassins?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** There is no question that Iran knows we believe Iran is a state sponsor of terror, that we have the strongest measures against Iran—pretty much in the world—and that we'll continue to make sure that this regime is held accountable in different ways.

I must say that when it comes to any form of these cases, my role as foreign minister is twofold.

The first role is to make sure that if there are any diplomats undertaking any foreign interference, I will be sending them packing. Now, we don't have diplomatic relations with Iran, so there are no diplomats in Canada representing Iran in our bilateral relationship. That's the first.

The second is to make it transparent if we are made aware of any information beforehand, as we did in your case last summer, Michael, when it became clear that China had tried to put pressure on you and your family. We'll continue to do that, because obviously, you and I—and all of us—know that the question of foreign interference is extremely important, and we will never tolerate it.

• (1715)

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you.

Since we're on the future of diplomacy and the machinery of government, I'd like to focus on a machinery issue, which is the recent security breaches at the department.

Last summer, the U.S. government announced that hackers from the People's Republic of China were behind a hack into U.S. State Department emails. Last week, your department announced that it had been subject to a cyber-attack that forced the government to shut down part of the department's computer systems. It's the second major attack since the last one in early 2022.

Can you tell us if these are state or non-state actors behind this attack?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** First and foremost, when it comes to our IT systems, we are investing to make sure that we're protecting them even more, as we know there have been many more cyber-incidents, not only within the Five Eyes but also within the G7. That's why, as you were saying, Michael, the future of diplomacy is important. I hope I can get your support. We need more support and more money to invest in this infrastructure.

Second, when it comes to the latest incident, we took proactive measures to address it. Of course, we made sure that people working within Global Affairs were alerted and well taken care of. At the same time, we were addressing our system and its infrastructure.

What I can say is that the investigation is ongoing, and I can't comment any further.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I'd like to talk about another machinery issue, which is the global security reporting program. The NSIRA report of December 20 last year concluded that there was conflict between CSIS, which is our domestic intelligence-gathering agency, and the global security reporting program, and that there needed to be a deconfliction of that tension between the two entities within the Government of Canada.

Do you agree with that conclusion? If so, what measures are you taking to rectify the situation?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** To be frank, I never heard of any tensions between them, and there was never any representation made to me by CSIS or its directorate about the fact that there was apparently a conflict between them. I read that for the first time in *The Globe and Mail*.

That said, I don't agree that there should be any issues. Fundamentally, this program, which is headed by Global Affairs and abides by the Vienna convention, is extremely important across the world.

When it comes to the allegations that potentially one of the Michaels was linked to it, I profoundly disagree. I will always defend our two Michaels, who were arbitrarily detained by China. This will always be the position of our government. Of course I hope that is the position of all members of this committee and in the House.

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

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

We will now go to MP Chatel. You have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to our committee, Madam Minister. On a more personal note, thank you for showing empathy for the many women, children and civilians killed in Israel and Gaza, and for your efforts to restore peace and dignity in the Middle East.

Our committee is studying Canada's diplomatic capacity. We invited you to appear because you are currently studying the future of diplomacy, an initiative that you introduced, to your credit.

Could you explain to this committee and to Canadians what the future of diplomacy looks like for you and for Global Affairs Canada?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you, Mrs. Chatel.

It's an extremely important exercise, because we live in a new world, a world with more crises, more wars, more new issues such as those related to climate change or artificial intelligence. We must therefore have modern diplomacy that's tailored to the challenges of the 21st century. In that respect, Mr. Morrison, Mr. Chevrier and I have done some monumental work together.

First, we need to invest more in our people. Basically, we offer their expertise and services around the world. I know they have a strong presence in Ottawa and around the world, and I want to thank them for that. Diplomacy work is really a mission, and I know they represent us very well everywhere.

We also need to enhance our presence in the world. It's essential that there be more Canadians at the United Nations and in multilateral organizations, because the rules are currently being tested by autocratic countries. However, new rules are being drafted on emerging issues like artificial intelligence. So, if we aren't present and if we don't invest in these organizations, we won't be able to defend our interests or promote them. That's why our presence is important.

In addition, we must acquire more expertise on climate change and artificial intelligence. Finally, and this is related to my response to Mr. Chong, we need more information technology resources.

• (1720)

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** You're right, it's essential that we invest so that Global Affairs Canada has more people in international organizations, because the conversations and issues are increasingly global in nature.

Over the course of our study, a number of people have told us how important it is to acquire expertise from other departments, which means we need to break down silos.

I believe that's part of your action plan. Could you say a few words about it?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Yes. It's important to understand that the staff at our embassies aren't just diplomats, strictly speaking, meaning people who have diplomatic relations with foreign governments. A number of our diplomats work for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and provide immigration services. Others work in international trade and offer services to entrepreneurs who want to increase their market share or sell more of their products or services. There are also a number of people who work for the Department of National Defence, for example, and who provide support to our allies just about everywhere. So it's very broad.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs, I'm responsible for the diplomatic network, of course, but I also work with my colleagues who have staff all over the world. That's why we have to make sure we work together.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Thank you.

Do I have a little time left, Mr. Chair?

[English]

**The Chair:** You have one minute left.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Minister, you talked about staff earlier. I'd like you to take some time to talk about those who are in places where there are major conflicts. We talked about the need to protect our staff who go to places where there are conflicts and crises.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Mrs. Chatel, I want to tell you how impressed and touched I was by the work of our ambassadors. I'm thinking in particular of Larisa Galadza, who was Canada's ambassador to Ukraine at the time of the invasion, and Natalka Cmoc, the current ambassador. In fact, I was with her last week. They're working in very difficult situations, where there is a constant threat of missiles on Kyiv. Today, about 40 missiles have been launched by Russia on Ukraine, particularly on Kyiv.

I'm also thinking of Philip Lupul, Canada's ambassador in Khartoum, Sudan. He had to manage an extremely difficult situation, as the lives of diplomats and Canadians were in danger. He had to ensure that there was an evacuation from Kenya. David Da Silva, who is in Ramallah, and Lisa Stadelbauer, who is in Tel Aviv, also had to work on evacuations. Every day, their work poses a significant risk to their safety, because Hamas is bombing Israel, and there are bombings in Gaza. We must support and protect Canadians who are in danger.

Since I became Minister of Foreign Affairs, there have been three wars and three evacuations. I saw how Global Affairs Canada staff worked in extremely difficult situations, under enormous pressure, but in a very professional manner.

• (1725)

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry; would you wrap it up in the next 10 seconds? Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Larouche, you now have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Minister, I'll first talk about the use of French at Global Affairs Canada. Your plan for the future of diplomacy states the following:

...senior executives across the department should be held accountable for ensuring an equal use of French and a functionally bilingual environment as well as promoting francophone diplomacy, at headquarters and in the mission network abroad.

As you can imagine, it's a huge task. Just this week, an assistant deputy minister spoke only in English when addressing the committee, even when giving his opening remarks. The Prime Minister, at events abroad or before diplomats in Ottawa, speaks in English and uses French to synthesize his remarks, essentially. The Governor General, who sometimes represents Canada abroad, still doesn't speak French. Finally, some senior officials speak in English and use French simply for the sake of being polite at conferences or diplomatic events held in Ottawa.

Madam Minister, I'd like you to answer five questions about the use of French at Global Affairs Canada.

First, does your transformation policy provide exemptions for certain officials with respect to French, particularly deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers? Will they be reviewed?

Second, will equal use of both official languages, as indicated in your document, even apply in Ottawa, whether for the Prime Minister, for you or for officials who participate in international events?

Third, is the mechanism for attaining senior positions at Global Affairs Canada—Le Devoir has repeatedly documented the discriminatory nature toward francophones when it comes to promotions—ancient history?

Fourth, can you tell us about the strength of French in diplomacy and why it should be an essential component of our strategy?

Finally, on what continents and in what perspectives could French be useful in terms of diplomacy?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you, Ms. Larouche.

We can both agree that the French language must always be protected. Global Affairs Canada is certainly one of my concerns, as former minister of Official Languages, a proud francophone and a proud Quebecker. I had the opportunity to discuss this several times with Mr. Morisson and Mr. Chevrier.

The Official Languages Act applies to all departments, including Global Affairs Canada. The act was strengthened following the white paper I published when I was minister and the bill I introduced that my colleague Ginette Petitpas Taylor was able to bring to fruition. I'd like to thank her very much for that.

However, for too long, the Official Languages Act did not sufficiently address international relations. That's why we wanted to reform the act to rectify this and include recognition of the importance of the international Francophonie.

I agree with you that the fact that we're members of the international francophonie gives us access to dozens of countries with which we can have very constructive diplomatic relations, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, a bit in Asia as well, and certainly within the European Union.

So to answer your question, yes, it's an asset. Is it a strength we need to build on further? Absolutely. Does it make the people at Global Affairs Canada and me, as minister, extremely proud? Absolutely.

• (1730)

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Could you wrap up your answer in 30 seconds?

**Hon. M lanie Joly:** Yes. It's because your question was very long, Ms. Larouche. There were four sub-questions.

You also asked me if there would be exemptions for deputy ministers, but that's absolutely not the case. Deputy ministers must be bilingual and meet the obligations of the Official Languages Act. You and I, like all francophones, know that bilingualism in Ottawa and in the public service must never be taken for granted. We know that we must defend our rights, make our voices heard and ensure that it remains a priority. It's a priority for me and for my department.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Okay, thank you. I know it was a long question. I'll try to ask you a shorter one, but I have a number of questions for you.

I'd now like to talk about partisan appointments, Madam Minister. During the study, we heard from a number of witnesses who expressed concern about what might be called partisan appointments within Canada's foreign representations, sometimes qualifying their remarks by explaining the need for trusted appointments for very specific and strategic positions.

More recently, The Hill Times reported that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ranked third among Canadian prime ministers who appointed the most former cabinet ministers, surpassed only by prime ministers Chr tien and Trudeau Sr. We recently learned that the Prime Minister had offered his former minister of justice a position in Spain, Marc Garneau turned down a position in France, St phane Dion is used for everything imaginable, Bob Rae is at the UN and John McCallum was in China before he resigned. Former Liberal MPs are regularly assigned to be representatives.

Your document explains the following: "Global Affairs Canada needs to promote and reward creativity, achievement and initiative, and create a culture that encourages intelligent risk-taking."

So what strategy do you follow when appointing people from the political world?

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm afraid we're over time, so could you provide a response in 20 seconds? Thank you.

[Translation]

**Hon. M lanie Joly:** We can be proud to have very good ambassadors from our diplomatic network, whether in Washington, Beijing or Brasilia.

We can also be proud to have a very good diplomatic network in general. These are people who have a lot of experience and who are highly respected, whether at the Quai d'Orsay or at the  lys e in Paris, or at 10 Downing Street in Great Britain.

We also have a new ambassador to Denmark, a country with close ties to Greenland. We know that the relationship with the Inuit is a very important issue in Greenland, and Ms. Bennett has a lot of experience in dealing with indigenous communities, including the Inuit community. That's why I think this is a very good appointment.

[English]

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

We now go to MP McPherson. You have six minutes.

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

Thank you very much for being here, Minister.

Thank you to David as well. I just learned that David was a good friend of my husband as a child, so this is a nice reunion for us today.

**Mr. David Morrison (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Just to confirm, her husband's not a child.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I'm going to ask you three questions, Minister, and then I'll have you respond to them at the end and give you some time for that.

I am going to ask some questions about the Middle East, and I'm going to start with our arms sales to Israel. I've asked Order Paper questions and have been given very substandard responses. I know the media are very frustrated. They're getting different answers at different times.

This is the first question. To be clear, has Canada been sending arms, and is Canada sending arms—whether they are military or non-military, whether it is technology, whether it's lethal or non-lethal or dual-use—to Israel?

The reason I'm asking that question is that with the ICJ investigation that says there is a plausible case of genocide happening, Canada could be complicit. I'm concerned that Canada could be complicit in a genocide if we are continuing to sell arms.

The second thing that I wanted to ask you about is this. I think I've been very clear that I was horrified by your government's decision to defund UNRWA—absolutely horrified. We know it is the only organization that can get life-saving support to innocent children in Gaza. That's very clear.

Your decision was made. It's now being reported by the CBC that Canadian officials had no information when they made that decision, and it was simply on the basis of information you received from Israel. I have deep concerns about that. Could you talk a little bit about how you justify that, and when we can expect that pause to be lifted so that the innocent children in Gaza aren't the ones who are suffering from the terrorist actions of Hamas?

That does bring me to Hamas. I have to say—

• (1735)

**The Chair:** If the members could attempt at least to demonstrate that the questions they're asking are somewhat relevant to Canada's diplomatic capacity via the machinery of GAC, that would be much appreciated.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Absolutely.

Yesterday we learned that Hamas was being sanctioned, and of course we're happy that this has happened. Hamas is a terrorist organization. They are responsible for untold suffering for Israeli and Palestinian people.

However, what we didn't see was the same sort of action on some of the very genocidal comments we've heard out of the very far-right Netanyahu government. The Minister of Defense called Palestinians “human animals”. The Minister of Agriculture stated, “We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba.” The Minister of National Security likened Gazan civilians to terrorists, saying that “they should also be destroyed.” The Minister of Heritage argued against providing humanitarian aid to Gaza, saying “there is no such a thing as uninvolved civilians in Gaza.” The Minister of Finance said, “We need to deal a blow that hasn't been seen in 50 years”.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to interrupt. If you could you please try to make it relevant to the topic at hand, it would be appreciated.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** With all due respect, how we respond to other government officials is diplomatic. How we choose to sanction other government officials is a key diplomatic role of this government, and that is a very reasonable question to ask the government.

**The Chair:** MP McPherson, that relevance is an elastic term, but let's try to frame it in the context of the topic at hand.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Yes, absolutely, and I can certainly bring forward some.... I just received a letter from the minister today in response to a letter I wrote to her in October that talks about the fact that diplomacy will help us with arms sales to Saudi Arabia. I can submit that, if you'd like. It is clearly diplomatic. Thank you.

My concern is that when we have people like this making these claims, saying these things about innocent civilians—and absolutely we need to sanction Hamas—when are you going to be sanctioning these government officials?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you.

First, Heather, I know you've been to the region, and I was in the region as well. What is happening in Gaza is absolutely catastrophic. It's the worst place on earth to live right now, and I think Canadians know that. It is a heartbreaking situation, and meanwhile we absolutely believe that when it comes to the ICJ—to answer your question—we respect that the courts and parties need to make sure that they abide by the decision. I—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Minister, that wasn't my question.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I'm sorry, Heather, but I'll continue.

I raised this issue with my counterpart because we all agree more humanitarian aid needs to go into Gaza. We all agree the violence must stop. We all agree we need to get to a hostage deal, which will eventually lead to a sustainable ceasefire, which will eventually lead, we hope, to a two-state solution. This has been Canada's position. I hope that's the case around this table and in the House of Commons among all parties.

Now, with respect to the question of UNRWA, I agree we need to provide humanitarian aid. We all do. There's an important investigation happening right now at the UN. My former colleague, Catherine Colonna, the former minister of foreign affairs in France, has been appointed. This is an important investigation, because the allegations are serious. That said, we absolutely, meanwhile, need to continue to provide humanitarian aid through different organizations. The Minister of International Development is in charge of that.

When it comes to arms, because you asked me that question, we all know about our arms trade system. We have one of the most robust in the world. I can tell you and those who are watching how it works. Canadian companies come to see the government to have export permits granted, so it is not the Canadian government sending weapons: It's actually the companies that come to see us.

What I can tell you is that there have been no weapons sent under my watch in recent years, and none since October 7. However, I—

• (1740)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I'm speaking about non-military....

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I'll just continue. I was going to answer.

**The Chair:** Minister, could I ask that you conclude your response in 20 seconds?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Yes.



We have sent, since October 7, non-lethal equipment, including night vision goggles and protective gear. That was through Canadian companies sending them to Israeli companies.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

We now go to MP Chong.

You have five minutes.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I'll give my time to MP Hoback, Mr. Chair, if you will permit it.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, MP Hoback.

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

Minister, thank you for being here this afternoon.

Michael Spavor alleges that the GSRP bears some responsibility for his wrongful detention. The report from the NSIRA concluded that the global security reporting program operates under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. However, there is no legal guidance, risk assessment, security protocol or sufficient training to ensure the 30-plus GAC officers in the GSRP operate within international law. This report came out in 2020.

Has anything changed in that regard? Is there any accuracy to what this report is saying?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I'll be super-frank. When we talk about Michael Kovrig not abiding by the Vienna convention, we're falling into China's narrative. I'm very mad that you and the Conservative Party would raise this question, because we fought to get the two Michaels back. We got them—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** That's not what I said.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Let me finish.

I'll answer your question, but I refuse the premise of the question. It's not partisan, guys.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** It is.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** No, it's not.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** It comes out of the mechanisms of—

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Randy, these two Canadians were arbitrarily jailed in China, and every single day was a day they shouldn't have been jailed.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** It's not me saying that. It's Michael Spavor saying that. Do you understand that?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I'll get to the GSRP.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Okay.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Really, you can ask me questions about the GSRP. That's no problem, but please don't get into the narrative of China saying that because he was a GSRP officer, he was not abiding by the Vienna convention and they were therefore allowed to jail him. I'm sorry, but this is—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Minister, this is Michael Spavor. He's a victim making the allegations. It's not the Conservative Party.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I'm sorry, but this is going against our national interest and—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I have to ask you, then, why you waited three years to release the report.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** This is a problem when it comes to dealing with arbitrary detention, but the GSRP—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Why did you wait three years to release the report?

**The Chair:** Allow the minister to respond, please.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Yes, we just saw it in December 2023. It was written in 2020, so why, for three years—

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I'm sorry, but Michael Kovrig—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** —did you hold on to this report?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Randy, the issue of the two Michaels was a not partisan issue. We all stood behind them. Michael Kovrig's reputation has been affected by this allegation. That is why I am mad that you're referring to this question, because I know that that must not be your intent. It cannot be your intent. No Canadian would try to have a negative impact on this Canadian hero.

As to the GSRP, the global security reporting program, we believe that there is no issue with it being a GAC program. We do not think that it is a national security problem. We think that this completely abides by the Vienna convention. We think that all our diplomats who are working around the world under this program need to be protected, and that is why we will continue to work on this issue.

Maybe, David, you would want to continue.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Just before we go there, I only have so much time, unfortunately, Minister. I want to be respectful here.

This report was done in 2020. It was released in 2023 and we're into 2024. Can you tell me that in the last three years you've addressed the issues that were raised in this report?

**The Chair:** Once again, I would remind all the members to put their questions in the context of the topic—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** It is in the context of the departments working together and the training of individuals within the department. That talks about it. There's been no legal guidance, no risk assessment, no security process and insufficient training.

Have you addressed those issues that were in the report?

• (1745)

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Yes, I have answered your committee on this.

Maybe, David, do you want to add to it? I know you've been very much involved.

**Mr. David Morrison:** The short answer is yes. We received the report. We acted on it. We accepted the recommendations. If you look at the letter that my predecessor, Marta Morgan, wrote in response to the report, which is in the public domain, you'll see that we took some issue with the characterization of the Vienna convention, but we accepted the recommendations and we have actioned them.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Minister, we're seeing 64 elections happen across the world this year. Those are a lot of changes, possibly changes in government.

One of the complaints I get from diplomats here in Canada is that they don't have an audience with the minister. They can never get an audience with the minister. We did an Order Paper question on that. You've met with only one ambassador here in Canada, and that is the ambassador from the U.S. Why is that? Is it normal protocol for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to not meet with the diplomatic corps from other countries here in Canada?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** That's not the right information. I've met with many ambassadors here.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Again, in the Order Paper question—

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I've met with all of them.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** But have you had individual, one-on-one meetings, with—

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I've had many. I've met with all the Arab League ambassadors. I've met with all the EU ones. I've met many times with the head of the EU. I've also met, of course, with the U.S. ambassador many times, and the Indian ambassador. I've met—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** In what capacity? I'm not going to second-guess you on that.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Not only that, I've gone to so many countries around the world. Usually when I do a bilateral visit, the ambassador from the country goes. For example, the Macedonian ambassador was there—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Explain to me then, minister, why an Order Paper question that asks specifically about that issue came back with these results. Is it a capacity issue with the Global Affairs that they can't get the information?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Listen, Randy, I don't know the specific answer on that. Clearly there is an issue with the answer, so we'll follow up. I must reassure you that we've been in close contact.

I'm not the only one doing that. I know that Rob Oliphant, my parliamentary secretary, has been meeting with so many of them, and also Pam Damoff—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I am repeating what ambassadors have been telling me in my meetings.

**The Chair:** You're out of time, considerably out of time.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Thank you, Minister. I appreciate your time.

**The Chair:** Next we'll go to MP Zuberi. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

There is so much happening in the world today. I know that your job is extremely challenging at this time. I recognize that and appreciate what you're doing in these difficult circumstances.

Top of mind right now is the Middle East. A lot of Canadians are watching what is happening and have loved ones who are there. Some Canadians are still stuck in Gaza and are trying to get out, along with their families. Our government has made a commitment to help families of Canadians come to Canada. A lot of Canadians have come back. They have been able to leave Gaza, which is very positive. You described it as the worst place on Earth right now, and I have no doubt that this is true.

Can you let us know what the challenges are around getting the remaining Canadians and their families out of Gaza? What are the challenges that you are facing? Before—

**The Chair:** MP Zuberi, I would once again remind all members of the significance of relevance. If you could try to put it in a mould that's relevant to the topic the minister is here to discuss, it would be much appreciated.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** I hope I get that time, Mr. Chair, that 20 seconds.

**The Chair:** You most definitely will, but I would ask that you keep your questions relevant.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Excellent.

I was about to get to the question, but I wanted to thank you for the work you did around Mansour Shouman, who is a Canadian citizen and is now not detained. I know your ministry did a lot.

To my question, Mr. Chair, through you, with respect to the challenges that are being faced to get Canadians and their families out, what are they?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I've been losing a lot of sleep on this issue of getting Canadians out of Gaza, usually in different countries we organize consular services so that once Canadians are able to leave, they just leave; they don't necessarily need an authorization, depending on the country. When it comes to Gaza, we need to get approval to get Canadians out, to get anybody out, and that approval needs to come from Israel, through COGAT, which is part of the Ministry of Defense. Also, Canadians getting out of Gaza need to get approval from Egypt. Coordination between these two governments is not always seamless, to say the least.

While the delay has sometimes been frustrating, to be frank, we absolutely need to make sure Canadians who go through the Rafah gate are able to go while it's secure. There's been shelling of the Rafah gate region, which has been making it very difficult to get Canadians to go to the Rafah gate.

From the moment they're at the Rafah gate, the team in Cairo goes to meet them and take care of them. We have an agreement with Egypt that Canadians coming out of Gaza need to leave Egypt 48 hours after they have left Gaza. That's why we also worked with Canadians to make sure they were able to travel to Canada, and if they don't necessarily have the funding for it, we have a loan program that is very efficient we've worked on.

I must say, Sameer, that since I have constituents myself who have family in Gaza, this has been something I've been putting a lot of pressure and energy into. I must thank Julie Sunday, who's the head of our consular affairs and also the hostage negotiation team, because she has been doing fantastic work in a very difficult situation.

• (1750)

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you for that.

In my remaining time, I want to ask you about Canada's presence today over the last eight-plus years with respect to being involved in multilateral organizations like the UN, UNHCR, the G7, the G20, etc., and how that contrasted with the previous governments of the past and the work we're doing to actually be at that stage with other countries at multilateral fora.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** We believe in the UN. I must say that I'm looking at my friends from the Conservative Party and I don't know what their official position is or whether they're in favour of the UN or not, but I know Michael is looking at me right now. Sometimes silence speaks even louder, so I want to make sure my colleagues all agree that the UN is important.

That said, we need more people at the UN. Global Affairs Canada needs more researchers, more diplomats, because the world has changed. It has changed since the Harper government was there and it has changed since when we were in power before the pandemic. That's just the reality of it. I told you at the beginning that we're in an international security crisis, so we need more diplomats at the UN and at the G20, working within the different organizations of the UN, including, for example, in Geneva, at ICAO, etc., because we have many governments that are trying to change the rules of the game, including China. If we are not at the table and if we don't have the capacity, we're not able to defend our interests.

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

We'll go back to MP Larouche. You have five minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** My apologies. You have two and a half minutes, Madame Larouche.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** I understood that.

Madam Minister, I'm going to talk about parliamentary diplomacy, since you make no mention of it in your documents.

I would like to know how Global Affairs Canada could encourage the participation of elected officials who are generally open to

the idea of contributing to a positive image of Canada. Several witnesses mentioned that it would be useful to promote this exercise.

What's your view on parliamentary diplomacy?

We had a bit of an embarrassing situation with Ukraine, where you've just returned from. Unless I'm mistaken, you didn't have any opposition members with you, as you did in your previous travels. In fact, Canada is one of the only G7 countries that didn't send a parliamentary delegation there. However, we pride ourselves on being Ukraine's closest ally on this issue, which goes beyond party division. This committee tried to travel to Ukraine, but it was refused for security reasons, as reported by The Hill Times.

Why is security a prerogative for parliamentarians and not for ministers?

• (1755)

**Hon. M lanie Joly:** Thank you, Ms. Larouche.

We all agree that parliamentary diplomacy is important. It's certainly not within the purview of Global Affairs Canada, as it is the prerogative of Parliament. I think that if we had talked about parliamentary diplomacy, the presence of a conflict between the legislative branch and the executive branch would have been invoked.

That's why we'll continue to support and strengthen the various parliamentary groups, including parliamentary friendship groups. I think we still have to work on that, and we always have to work on that. Indeed, we now know that the better we are at maintaining diplomatic ties at various levels, with various governments, the better. That was the first element.

The second is with respect to Ukraine. MP St phane Bergeron asked me to address this issue. He told me about it again yesterday. I feel like I'm hearing Mr. Bergeron when you speak to me, Ms. Larouche.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** He raised it with me as well.

**Hon. M lanie Joly:** I heard him, and I hear you. However, these matters go through the Parliamentary Protective Service, which then has to pass them on. PPS doesn't necessarily pass them on to Global Affairs Canada, but rather to the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. I think it's a good idea for Canadian parliamentarians to go to Ukraine. I think some of you, including Ms. McPherson, have been there, but in a different way. In any case, we can certainly look into the matter.

Unfortunately, it's not just my responsibility. In fact, it's mainly a matter for the Minister of National Defence and even, before that, for the Speaker of the House.

[English]

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

We now go to MP McPherson. You have two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think I'm going to change the channel a little bit.

It is International Development Week. I understand that you are not the international development minister. However, there is funding that does come through your ministry, in particular for human rights. We are hearing some really disturbing stories from the sector, from representatives of CSOs across Canada, that those who have been doing great work on human rights, particularly with support for women and girls, which should align with our feminist international assistance policy, are waiting enormous amounts of time and things are getting entangled.

In fact, they're telling us that there are funding delays and a lack of information from your office. They're telling me that you're failing to uphold the FIAP and that they fear the cuts made in the past years are going to hurt Canada's work globally.

I'm wondering why the approvals from your office—this is on your side in Global Affairs—and your colleagues' offices are taking so long. Why are there these refusals to fund multiple human rights projects, particularly those looking at women and girls?

Before I pass it over to you, Minister, we have been waiting years now for a feminist foreign policy. We have been told it exists. We have been told that is somewhere in the ether, but we have not seen it. Should we be giving up on this? Is this policy never going to come forward?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Heather, regarding your first point—which is basically that organizations are waiting for funding—it is the first time I'm personally hearing about it. I'll look into this issue. It is unacceptable and we will solve it.

David, please make sure that we work on this.

Second, on the question on the feminist foreign policy, we live it every day. We have had a feminist approach in our foreign policy since we were elected. I've met so many organizations.... Just coming back from Ukraine, I met with survivors of gender-based violence. All the work we've done with women and girls around the world, we'll continue to do that.

I know the minister of trade is working on this issue also, in supporting women entrepreneurs. I know of course the minister of international development, whom you were referring to, has been working on support for women and girls—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** However, without a policy written down, other organizations can't measure how we're doing. We can't see how Canada is doing when we don't have a written policy—

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** No, no. Wait, wait.

We have a women, peace and security ambassador, Jacqueline O'Neill, who is doing great work. We've been following the results on everything we do, so no.

I think our approach when it comes to our feminist foreign policy is data-driven, is results-oriented and will—

• (1800)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** But it doesn't exist, to be fair.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** It exists. We abide by it every day—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** We would need to see it to be able to say it existed.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** —and therefore we will continue to work on it, but Canadians can be reassured that this is our approach and that we will continue to make sure that it is lived every day.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Minister, we are almost exactly at the one-hour mark. There are two more questions remaining.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I feel like I'm around my family right now.

**The Chair:** Okay, that sounds great.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** It's not easy, but hey....

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** We will now proceed with the last two questions.

We first have MP Genuis. You have five minutes.

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

Minister, are there negotiations happening right now between Canada and Turkey regarding the potential lifting of the arms embargo on Turkey?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** We've already lifted the arms embargo, so there's no negotiation.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay.

Are you concerned about the implications of that, the risk of diversion, etc.?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** We believe that there should not be any form of lifting of arms exports between NATO allies. Turkey is a NATO ally. We've had some tough conversations, particularly following the pause on our arms exports to Turkey. I've had very strong and direct conversations with my counterpart from Turkey about Armenia in particular, and—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'm sorry, Minister. I just want to jump in and put a fine point on it—

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I just want to finish. Let me—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** The export of arms to Turkey—

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Garnett—

**The Chair:** Could you allow the minister to respond, please?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I just want to finish my sentence. I'll let you have your time.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'll give it back to you, Minister, but what—

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** No, no, no. Let me just finish my thought.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** In the context of the arms lifting, we've had these negotiations. We've had tough conversations about international security and regional security. If there's any problem in terms of regional security and if there are any facts that would be presented to me that would cause regional security and international security to be at risk, we would be pausing again.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Minister, I'm going to move on to other topics, but we do know that it was Canadian arms that played a decisive role in the outcome of the Armenia-Azerbaijan war, arms that were diverted.

I want to ask you about Iran. We don't have diplomatic relations with Iran, but we know that the IRGC, because it is not a listed terrorist organization, is able to operate here in Canada to recruit, fundraise, promote, etc. Do you believe that the IRGC is a terrorist organization, and why hasn't your government shut down its operations in Canada?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** First and foremost, when it comes to Iran, I'm must say that we're all very supportive and moved by the courage of the Iranian people, particularly the women and girls. We've been.... I've said it before, and you know this, Garnett, but I think it's important for Canadians watching us to know that Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism under the Criminal Code. We have some of the strongest measures against them. We've sanctioned many of the Iranian regimes and IRGC members themselves. We also host and chair every year the UN resolution on Iran.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You know that my time is very tight.

The IRGC terrorist listing—

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I must say that the Prime Minister mentioned recently that we are looking at ways to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** What are the impediments? Why not just do it?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** It's because we're a government that makes decisions that are thoughtful. We are undergoing an international security crisis right now, so when we make decisions, we know that there can be consequences. That is why we—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** However, Iran is at the heart of that security crisis—isn't that right?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I know that many Iranian Canadians—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** It's been six years since you voted in the House to list—

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Garnett, I know that—

**The Chair:** Allow the minister to finish her response, please.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I know that many—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, it's my time. You know that.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** —Iranian Canadians are concerned. We know that the IRGC is involved in terrible activities not only in Iran but also across the region of the Middle East, and we're concerned about Iranian Canadians here. That is why we're looking into the issue. It's very concerning.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Minister.

I would just say that you voted in the House of Commons almost six years ago to list it as a terrorist organization. That's a very long time to be sitting on this.

I have one final question. What do you think are the security implications of the winding down of MONUSCO? What is Canada's position on that?

• (1805)

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Are you talking about Haiti right now? I'm sorry—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** MONUSCO is about the DRC.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Oh. I'm so sorry about that.

First and foremost, we're very concerned about what is going on in the DRC. I've had numerous conversations with ambassadors in the region, and I'm planning to go to Africa in the coming weeks. We've also raised the issue with Rwanda, and we're opening a new embassy in Rwanda—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'm sorry. I'm very tight for time.

What are the security implications of MONUSCO winding down, and what's Canada's position on that? I'd love to know.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** We've raised the issue of peacekeeping. We've always been very supportive of peacekeeping in the DRC and across Africa. Bob Rae has been involved as well.

When it comes to the work we're doing on the defence side, this is a question you'll need to ask much more of the Minister of Defence.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** It's not about the defence side. It's about Canada's position on the winding down.

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

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Could you get back to the committee on that in writing, Minister?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** It would be a pleasure.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** For our last question, we'll go to Dr. Fry.

I should forewarn you, Dr. Fry, there are some connectivity problems, as best as we can tell, on our end. If there is an issue, we're going to have to go to another member, but hopefully it will work.

Dr. Fry, you have five minutes.

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

Minister, before I begin, I want to congratulate you. You were asked so many difficult questions, ranging on issues all around the world [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

**The Chair:** Dr. Fry, I'm afraid, as I assume you can tell, that we're having connectivity problems.

Dr. Fry, we can't hear you. You're frozen. We are having a very hard time understanding what you're saying. I'm terribly sorry about that, Dr. Fry.

We'll now go to MP Oliphant. You have four and a half minutes.

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

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

I agree with Dr. Fry's first comments, but I want to go to a different thing. We often talk about how Global Affairs has a lot of lines of business. I don't tend to think of them as business, but it has a lot of business lines. Many of them don't touch Canadians directly. They touch us indirectly. They touch the issue of Canadians traveling abroad and the issue of Canadians who get into trouble. They may be very simple problems, such as a lost passport or something like that, which can be solved, but some of them are major.

Do you feel that Global Affairs officials are adequately resourced to handle what Canadians need and expect to get when travelling the world? People travel way more than they used to, and I'm just wondering about that.

I'm self-interested, because I travel.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** I used to be the Minister of Tourism, and I learned when I was in charge of tourism that Canada is actually the country where people travel the most per capita. We love going to the U.S. and we love going to different places around the world. However, the world is increasingly complicated to deal with, with many more different pressures and dangers. We need to be able to provide that service to Canadians. That is why we need to have the right processes, with no red tape. We need to cut red tape. That's why the future of diplomacy plan was so important in terms of reforms in our approach.

We also need to have even better IT services. That's how we can also help Canadians when they're abroad to be in touch between the embassy, the consular officer and also Ottawa.

While I've been answering many of your questions and it seems like a Joly family dinner on Sunday nights—sorry, guys, but that's the reality of my life, because we're a very political family—I really hope we can all agree on the fact that we need to invest more in our diplomats. It is important that we have our resources. This work of reforming our department, Global Affairs Canada, has not been done in decades. This is an opportunity for you to say, yes, I believe in the work that Canada does at the international level. I'll be frank: It should not be partisan.

I think it's just about what you were saying, Rob. It's about giving services to Canadians but also protecting our interests. France has just invested massively in their new network, hiring 700 new diplomats. Following the Biden administration's arrival, Secretary Blinken announced a huge reinvestment in the U.S. diplomatic network. That is bearing fruit right now because of so many wars happening and security issues. Germany has also been working on this. We're not the only department in the world doing this. Many of our friends and allies are doing so. We know that many BRICS coun-

tries are doing so as well. They want to increase their influence and they want to have a stronger voice at the international level, so we need to adapt. That's why this study is so important.

• (1810)

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** Thank you.

I want to give you an opportunity to talk about locally engaged staff. We have Canadians who serve abroad who are brilliant and important, but we also have locally engaged staff who are citizens of other countries. More support, more engagement, more training—are those important?

**The Chair:** Be very brief, please, Minister.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Yes.

Something that Canadians don't necessarily know, and that I learned when becoming the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is how much we rely on locally engaged staff around the world. For example, an embassy can have maybe 60 diplomats who are Canadian diplomats but can have 150 locally engaged staff, and they are extremely important. A lot of them do the immigration work. That is so key to so many members of different communities across the country.

That is why we need to make sure that we are able to hire them, and hire the best and the brightest, and be competitive. All embassies in a given capital will try to recruit the best and the brightest. We also need to be able to retain them. As they are so fundamental to our lines of business, as you were saying, we need to be able to protect them even more, particularly when it comes to conflicts and crises. That's why also, for the first time, when it came to Ukraine and when it came to Sudan, we decided to take care of our locally engaged staff and to broaden the diplomatic immunity in our interpretation to make sure to bring them to safety.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

I see that you're well over the one-hour mark. I know that I speak on behalf of all the members when I say thank you for having made yourself available and for staying considerably above and beyond what had previously been agreed to. Thank you.

I will now adjourn the meeting—

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Can I ask for UC, Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Morrice.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** I would like to ask for consent from colleagues to ask a question.

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

Mr. Morrice is here today. He's not a regular member of this committee. Would there be unanimous consent for him to have time for a question or two for the minister?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Mr. Morrice, please proceed.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** First of all, thank you, colleagues. I appreciate it.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** On a point of order, can I ask how long this will take?

**The Chair:** Let's say two questions, so that will be four minutes.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Thank you, Chair.

First of all, Chair, so you're aware, in terms of Canada's diplomatic capacity, my question relates to checking another country's claim before cutting funding to a UN organization, so I think it's within the scope of the study.

Minister, as you know, there are two million people in Gaza who depend on UNRWA. As you've said many times before, Gaza is the worst place in the world to live right now. UNRWA employs 13,000 people there, and they quickly fired 12 individuals as of January 26 under allegations of connections with Hamas.

As MP McPherson shared earlier, CBC is now reporting that the Government of Canada hasn't seen evidence backing up Israel's claim that staff employed by UNRWA colluded with Hamas in any way before we suspended our funding. In light of all of this, are there conversations in your department right now and/or with the Minister of International Development with respect to restoring funding to UNRWA?

• (1815)

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Thank you, Mike.

I know that there is a very important conversation happening about UNRWA, and I know that UNRWA is important to Palestinians. I really get it. That's why we supported UNRWA and why we invested in UNRWA. What happened on October 7 was catastrophic, we know, and the allegations that have been made are very serious, and that is why Canada is not the only country that has paused its funding to UNRWA. At the same time, it is normal that the UN, which I think is doing the right thing, is investigating, because these are serious allegations, and I think, Mike, you can agree with that.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** There's no debate whatsoever about the seriousness of the allegations. The concern I'm raising, and my question, are with respect to whether we received any other information beyond information from Israel with respect to these 12 individuals—12 of 13,000 employees in the organization—who've already been fired.

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** Mike, it's the Minister of International Development who has been in contact, but it was UNRWA itself that raised the issue with Canada. It was they who connected with us to talk about this issue. That is why we took note of what they were

saying, and that is why we worked with other countries on this issue.

I'm confident, and I have total trust in the head of the the investigation. She used to be my colleague. She's a person whom I respect a lot, the former minister of foreign affairs for France, Catherine Colonna. I really hope that the investigation can be, as I mentioned, very thorough, but also rapid, because we need to continue to provide humanitarian aid to Gaza, and UNRWA is fundamental in offering that humanitarian aid.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** To clarify from your comment, did UNRWA request that Canada cut funding?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** What I am telling you is that it's really much more the international aspect. I haven't had conversations with UNRWA. What I know is that UNRWA reached out to us as a government to raise these allegations, and we were not the only one. They did that with all other countries that are funders of UNRWA.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Is there a conversation happening right now in the federal government with respect to responding to what we're understanding from CBC on the extent to which we are validating the claim about these 12 individuals?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly:** That is a question you need to absolutely ask Ahmed Hussen, our colleague.

**The Chair:** Minister, this time I really do mean it. Allow me to thank you again for your generous commitment of time. Thank you for having stayed with us for as long as you did.

At this point I will suspend, and we will resume in a few minutes to ask questions of the officials.

Thank you.

• (1815)

(Pause)

• (1825)

**The Chair:** Welcome back, everyone. We will now resume questioning of officials. It's been agreed that we will have one round, given that there is committee business that we have to attend to as well. Each member will be allowed four minutes.

We'll start off with MP Epp. You have four minutes.

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

In December, Dr. Charles Burton testified. He's with the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. He testified that his U.S. counterparts felt that Canada did not need or was not a part of or did not deserve to be a part of important institutions like the three eyes. That was attributed to a statement of the Prime Minister that we will never meet our 2% NATO target for defence.

Can you respond to that? Was there some other reason that we're not aware of that we were shut out of the three eyes—or the Five Eyes. Sorry.

**Mr. David Morrison:** I'm sorry; do you mean the Five Eyes?

**Mr. Dave Epp:** It's the Five Eyes. I'm sorry. Yes.

**Mr. David Morrison:** I'm not aware that we've ever been shut out of the Five Eyes. Five Eyes is an intelligence-sharing agreement that grew out of U.S.-U.K. collaboration in the Second World War. It was later extended to the three other eyes, those being New Zealand, Australia and Canada, and we're very much a paid-up member.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** My apologies. I misspoke.

Canada was left out of AUKUS in 2021. That's what I was referring to—the defence and security alliance of Australia, the U.S. and the United Kingdom. We were also left out of a seat when Norway organized the talks with the Taliban. We've also turned our neighbours away, our allies away, when they've come looking for LNG.

How do we respond to that? What I'm probing for is not so much.... I guess the first round with the minister dealt more with our relationship with trouble spots around the world. I'm very concerned about our relationship with our own allies. We don't seem to be having.... At least, that is coming from the experts that we hear at committee.

Could you comment about Canada's place in the world? How are we viewed by our allies, given that we're being excluded from some of these important opportunities or arenas?

**Mr. David Morrison:** I challenge the premise of the question that we're being excluded.

AUKUS is a submarine deal among nations with primary security interests in the Pacific. That isn't really where we are focused in terms of submarines. There are additional elements to AUKUS beyond the core submarine arrangement in terms of technology sharing and so on, and we've made it clear, as has New Zealand, that at the appropriate time we may be interested in joining in sharing the technology, but our Five Eyes partners made it very clear to us that AUKUS is effectively a submarine deal.

I will say that I was a G7 sherpa for five cycles and I think we're at almost every table that matters. As Minister Joly said, we could be punching harder. We could have more resources—not necessarily deeper pockets, but we do need to reinvest in the foreign service. That's the whole spirit of the “future of diplomacy” report and the implementation—

• (1830)

**Mr. Dave Epp:** My time is limited. I just want to pick up on a comment you made that submarines are not really where we're at, and I'm paraphrasing how you responded.

Minister Joly in her testimony said that sovereignty was very important and that defending that sovereignty was a very important part of Canada's approach going forward, so when it comes to our north, are you saying that submarines are not an important part of our strategy going forward?

**Mr. David Morrison:** I'm not a defence policy expert. I will simply say that if you unpack how AUKUS started, it began with a very large submarine purchase by Australia, which was committed to purchasing submarines from France and then decided, because of the long lag time, that they would purchase from the United States, and then they brought in the U.K. It's hard to think of three nuclear-powered subs.... I'm not aware that Canada is playing in the Pacific in that way.

We are members of so many clubs that matter. I don't think we should get too upset. There's no question that we would be in an Arctic club. I personally was totally not fussed when AUKUS began, because of the circumstances in which it began, and if it turns into a thing that is beneficial for Canada in terms of sharing, then, as I said, I have every expectation that our partners will invite us in.

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

**The Chair:** Next we go to MP Oliphant. You have four minutes.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** I may not need it all. Thank you.

Deputy, thank you for being here with your officials. I have one easy question and one harder one.

First is the easier question.

Global Affairs Canada counts for about 1.8% of the budget of the federal government. Would more resources be helpful?

**Mr. David Morrison:** Yes.

Was that the easy one?

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** What would your top two or three priorities be, in that case?

**Mr. David Morrison:** The top priority is investing in the foreign service.



Minister Joly gave the statistic. France had a 20% across-the-board budget increase and hired 800 new diplomats. We have allowed our foreign service to atrophy over time, in terms of recruiting, retaining and investing, including in language capacity.

I had a chat with Mr. Hoback before this session. Canada was extraordinarily blessed between the end of the Cold War and February 2022 and the invasion because our security was essentially looked after by our geography.

In my building, in the Global Affairs set-up, the high priests of the organization were the trade negotiators. Our best and brightest raced around the world signing trade agreements, because in that 30-year period, as I said, we were blessed by geography and by globalization, which allowed Canadian companies to sell lots of things and benefit from free trade agreements.

We're now in a very different world and we need diplomats who do a much broader range of things.

Just to drill down on Minister Joly's point about being at multi-lateral tables, there are rules being written right now on 6G. We need to be at those tables, for both prosperity reasons and for national security reasons. We saw what happened when 5G was rolled out: We and the world took too narrow a lens on it.

That requires people at the right tables and in the right organizations, and it costs money.

• (1835)

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** Thank you.

Do I have time for one quick one?

Maybe Mr. Chevrier or you could answer this question. I wanted to get some clarification on the question that Mr. Genuis asked.

My understanding is the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, requested the Security Council of the UN to withdraw the peace-keeping troops earlier than originally planned and that late last year, the UN Security Council acceded to that request to withdraw the MONUSCO troops.

Am I understanding that correctly? We're not on the Security Council. Am I understanding that process appropriately?

**Mr. David Morrison:** I don't know whether you have the sequence right or not. Antoine might know.

**Mr. Antoine Chevrier (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Transformation Officer, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I would need to confirm the sequencing and the exact statement. We can certainly come back with a precise response.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now go to Madam Larouche. You have four minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the officials for being here.

I'll first address the issue of public diplomacy.

In 2022, Daniel Livermore, who was a public servant in international relations for three decades, was concerned that Global Affairs Canada seemed to be ignoring international cultural affairs. He explained that the Senate's 2019 recommendations called for the development of a cultural strategy and that this recommendation went unanswered.

How does Canada see cultural and public diplomacy in its future strategy? Couldn't Canada make more investments in the francophone, particularly to get closer to certain African states that are increasingly turning to China and Russia?

**Mr. David Morrison:** Thank you for your question.

I remember very well the 2019 Senate report on cultural diplomacy. We agreed with almost all of its recommendations.

We value cultural diplomacy. When I was a diplomat in Havana several years ago, we did a lot of it. It's like the parliamentary diplomacy we talked about before.

But it does cost money. It's not free. We need resources to send Les Grands Ballets Canadiens overseas, for example.

At the moment, the department must prioritize the essentials, that is to say invest in staff first.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** It was clearly a recommendation from the Senate; we'll come back to that.

I'd now like to talk about collaboration with the provinces.

Some witnesses recommended that more emphasis be placed on partnerships with provincial representatives. Representatives of Global Affairs Canada offices abroad said that, for a state belonging to a confederation, they had the most developed provincial foreign service in Canada and the world.

What is Global Affairs Canada's strategy for increasing its collaboration with Quebec and provincial field offices?

Could they play a role in developing a cultural strategy or in organizing public diplomacy?

• (1840)

**Mr. David Morrison:** As deputy minister of foreign affairs and former deputy minister of international trade, I would say that there is a great deal of collaboration between federal and provincial offices located around the world. In fact, I've had the opportunity on several occasions to meet with my Quebec counterpart to talk about collaboration.

I think that, in terms of cultural diplomacy, it's a very good idea to share resources and strategies. I'm sure that's happening in embassies around the world right now.

There's no program as such, but in our embassies in China, the United States and throughout Europe, we have a very close working relationship, even with Quebec.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We now go to MP McPherson. You have four minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here today and for staying a little late as well.

Mr. Morrison, I want to echo your comments that Canada is in a different place now.

I was in the sector at the time. I was not a fan of bringing Global Affairs Canada together from CIDA and other departments, from trade. I think diplomacy is important, but I also think development is vitally important. It is one of the legs of the stool, as well as defence, that has to hold up our foreign policy. I think we have dropped the ball on diplomacy and also on development, and we need to do more on defence. I just want to make that clear.

I have a more detailed question for you. This is about the concerns I raised with the minister and the government in the fall about the detonators going through Kyrgyzstan to Russia.

What this does is show a real loophole in our legislation. Those detonators were going to Russia, presumably to be used in the exact same land mines the Canadian government is paying to demine in Ukraine. This committee did a review on sanctions. It recommended that the Government of Canada publish comprehensive data annually on Canadian exports of dual-use goods like these detonators. We see these loopholes in our arms export system. The minister talked about it being "robust", but I think it's clear from many organizations and many examples that it is not as robust as it needs to be.

Will you be making it an immediate priority to publish the data on dual-use goods this year?

**Mr. David Morrison:** I also come from the development side. I was at CIDA when the amalgamation was announced, and it sort of rocked my world for the same reason.

I will maybe differ with you just a little bit to say that 10 years on, I think it really works for Canada. I think having a common team in the country at the embassies really works for Canada. Having spent time on the development side and having been deputy minister of trade and now deputy minister of foreign affairs, I think

it is definitely the right model to have all of those tools in the tool kit at our disposal. I'm happy to debate that.

On your concerns with respect to dual-use technology and detonators, I am not aware of any plan to make it an immediate priority to publish such a list. We can come back to you on that.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** That would be great. I would love to get that information. I'll be raising some of these issues as we go forward, because I do think that our arms regime is not working, similar to our sanctions regime not working.

I will quickly end on the idea that while there may be some benefit in having our trade, diplomacy and development under the same roof, there are challenges when trade trumps all. We heard from the minister the idea of pragmatic diplomacy. At this moment, Canada's reputation is not strong in some circles around the world, because pragmatic diplomacy can't mean that we don't protect our values, that we don't protect human rights or that we don't apply international law equally in all contexts. The rest of the world is watching how Canada is applying those standards very differently in different contexts. It is disastrous for our reputation, which will ultimately have deep implications on our trade relationships.

• (1845)

**The Chair:** All the members have had an opportunity to ask their questions.

Allow me to thank you, Deputy Minister Morrison and Mr. Chevrier, the chief transformation officer. Thank you for being here. It's almost three hours that you've been here.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank the other officials who have joined us. We have, of course, Ms. Shirley Carruthers, the assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer. We have had the pleasure of having Ms. Vera Alexander, the associate assistant deputy minister for people and talent management. Of course, we have also had the pleasure of having Mr. Stéphane Jobin, who is the director general of Canadian Foreign Service Institute. Thank you ever so much for your time and for your expertise.

We will now suspend for a couple of minutes so we can go into committee business.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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