

*Routine Proceedings*

I would hope that the minister, now that she has made this initial step in the House of Commons to share with us her ideas and plans, might be prepared in the very near future to broaden them. I hope that she might bring into this Chamber a full, comprehensive statement on what are our future peacekeeping requirements and commitments and where we should be going with them. That would then be the cause of a very serious debate.

**Mr. John Brewin (Victoria):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to welcome the key elements of the statement made by the minister this afternoon.

We fully support the additional humanitarian relief dollars that she announced on Friday for victims of rape and sexual assault. Earlier this year we pressed the government to do just that. We are pleased that she has responded.

We are also pleased in the government's general support for the Vance-Owen process. I am sure all members of the House join her in hoping that this will produce peace in the region. Finally we support, of course, her strong statement of support for our women and men in the area who serve Canada, the United Nations and humanity there. It is a very risky and dangerous project in which they are engaged. It is a very important one. They have the support of the people of Canada in that. Canada has the third largest contingent in the Bosnia area after France and the U.K. and we are glad to have their support.

• (1525)

I might take the opportunity however to raise some concerns. First, we are all concerned at the persistent violation of rights by the Serbian forces that have generally been supported by the government of Serbia, the crackdown on moderate political forces in Serbia, the failure to act against forces which have been involved in rape, sexual assault and other crimes against humanity, and the persistent interference with humanitarian relief.

The most graphic example of the latter has been the now confirmed reports of 20,000 Bosnian Muslim victims of sexual assault, rape and other violence at the hands of Serbian forces. These actions on the part of the Serbians

must not only be condemned and stopped but must be the subject of the war crimes tribunal.

On that we also have a concern and I would ask the minister to try to specifically address this if she has not already done so. The panel appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations of course consists all of men and I say that seems to be too often the tradition of the United Nations.

In this case, where one of the serious allegations is of rape and sexual assault, it is entirely inappropriate that the panel consists entirely of men. This is reinforced, I may say, by statements attributed to the chairman of the commission, Mr. Frits Kalshoven of Holland, who is quoted as saying that the rape allegations are going to be a very difficult aspect of the investigation. He said: "It is very difficult for a woman to admit that she has been raped. At the same time it is also very easy for a woman to tell the story that she has been raped when it is untrue". That is a totally unacceptable statement coming from anyone, but most importantly from the chair of the panel that is looking into these allegations.

I may add that the Canadian military lawyer who has been assigned to the panel, Commodore William Fenrick, has also noted the difficulties they are going to face in reviewing these particular charges. I would hope the government would intervene to see there are changes in this.

Two other quick points. We call on the government again to expand the Canadian definition of convention refugee and to get the United Nations to expand the Geneva Convention on Refugees to include those who are refugees from sexual assault. We say that sexual abuse, rape and sexual assault should be added to the definition of war crimes.

I join with the member for Winnipeg South Centre in saying to the government that it should come forward with proposals for a Canadian role in the future, assuming the Vance-Owen discussions are successful.

Let me mention two other points. We call on the government to move quickly to recognize the government of Croatia. The government has delayed and delayed this most important step. There is no legal impediment as to why the government of Croatia should not now be recognized. It has been recognized by other governments. I would ask the Secretary of State for