

Special Debate

why not Bosnia, and if Bosnia, why not Kurdistan, and if Kurdistan, why not Haiti?"

• (2010)

We listened this morning in the Liberal caucus to very dreadful stories that parallel those occurring in Somalia, but they are occurring in former Yugoslavia on this very day.

We must respond as well to the human misery there. We must try new ways to bring humanitarian assistance to the people who are being so violently deprived in that area of the world. We need an opportunity to discuss and debate what it is the government is setting as it takes these new paths.

What are our principles and is the Canadian action now limited as it is to peacemaking only? What is, in fact, in the best interests not just of Canada but particularly in the best interests of the Somalians we are trying to help? Helping them today, disarming today, then abandoning them to allow those with power through guns to re-arm tomorrow is really not helping Somalia.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for External Relations and Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise you that I will share my time with the hon. member for Rosedale.

I rise in this House as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for External Relations and International Development.

The subject that we are debating today is extremely important and historically significant. Indeed, the role that Canada will be called upon to play in Somalia, together with other member countries of the United Nations, goes beyond the roles of humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping that we have traditionally played in the international community.

That is why I consider it essential to examine the reasons for firm intervention by the international forces in Somalia and also the impact of the Somali crisis on countries in the Horn of Africa and the whole African continent.

The Canadian government's decision to participate in this operation goes much further than the additional measures announced by the Prime Minister on August 21 to support the comprehensive security and humanitarian aid initiative taken by the United Nations in Somalia.

It goes much further because there is no alternative: every effort made so far and all the money spent by the international community to send relief to the sick and starving people of Somalia have not been enough to achieve the objectives.

This year alone, Canada has provided Somalia with food and humanitarian aid totalling more than \$22 million, including the emergency aid for Somalian refugees in Djibouti, Kenya and Yemen.

It goes much further because the stability of the whole Horn of Africa is threatened. Although the civil war in southern Sudan continues, some countries are now on the road to recovery and reform. Ethiopia has also begun economic and democratic reforms that give hope. Kenya, which will hold elections on December 29, is moving toward democracy. Canada has given substantial support to the efforts of these last two countries.

The Somali crisis and the massive movements of refugees in the countries of the region endanger this whole process. The growing insecurity and the drought afflicting the country have forced some 700,000 Somalis to seek refuge in neighboring countries, while 300,000 others are exiled in Europe, North America, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and other regions. Kenya alone has more than 300,000 Somali refugees. Canada will closely monitor these refugee movements and support UN operations in this regard.

We have used every international channel available to get humanitarian relief to various parts of Somalia. Several agencies in the UN network, such as the World Food Programme and UNICEF as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross, take part in the relief operations. A number of Canadian non governmental organizations supported by CIDA are also on location: CARE, Médecins sans frontières, Oxfam-Québec, Hope International.

During the 22 months since the overthrow of the Somali President, the situation has been constantly deteriorating in most parts of the country. Over four million Somalis are suffering from severe malnutrition and malnutrition-related diseases. The death toll since