



Delegation of Canada  
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada  
auprès de l'OSCE

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017  
Closing Session – Statement by the Delegation of Canada  
Friday, September 22, 2017**

Madam Chair,

It has been a long, but very productive, two weeks here in Warsaw. We would like to firstly thank ODIHR, the OSCE Secretariat, the Austrian Chairmanship, and the staff at the Narodowy Stadium for hosting the event in a professional and efficient manner. We would also like to thank the numerous introducers who attended the working sessions to share their expertise. We have valued the interventions by numerous civil society organizations, who raised awareness and shared their views on human dimension issues of importance to us all. We believe that this HDIM has once again proven its value as a forum for participating States to review the implementation of our joint OSCE commitments in conjunction with civil society. Canada reaffirms its view that HDIM presents a critical opportunity for civil society to voice their concerns directly to participating States regarding situations in the OSCE area and, importantly, to offer constructive criticism of, and recommendations on, areas where participating States can, and must, improve.

In addition to the working sessions themselves, our delegation was able to co-sponsor and attend numerous side events this year, which once again expanded on a range of important, specific issues raised during the working sessions. Canada places great importance and value on the ability of CSOs and delegations to host, often in conjunction, such side events, and we were thoroughly impressed with the substantive and constructive discussions that resulted from them.

The value of HDIM will only be fully realized, however, if members of the civil society are free to attend this meeting without fear of intimidation or retaliatory actions against them or their families. We note with serious concern that we have heard again this year reports of such persecution of HDIM participants and their families. We applaud the courage of these individuals and groups who choose to speak at HDIM. We deplore the retaliatory actions against them and their families and encourage all participating States to condemn such acts.

Madam Chair,

The greatest benefits of HDIM are achieved when all legitimate participants are able to speak, and when all delegations are here to listen. In this regard, we deeply regret that some participating States decided not to participate in HDIM this year. We do not believe that this was a productive decision. Canada believes it is necessary to hear all criticism, even if it is something we dispute or do not want to hear. The observations of the civil society are especially important since credible external review lends legitimacy to our commitments and their implementation. Participating States that choose not to be here are unable to respond to such observations, be it to accept criticism, explain their position, or dispute information presented. We hope that those delegations that chose not to attend HDIM this year will reassess their decision and participate in next year's event.

While Canada strongly supports the inclusion of all civil society organizations at HDIM, we are firmly opposed to the inappropriate and disingenuous usage of space reserved for civil society by some participating States as a tool to launch attacks on other participating States. These so-called “GONGOs” not only take up valuable time during the sessions that could be used by credible civil society speakers, but they also contribute nothing productive to this exercise and are fully transparent to all other participants. Unfortunately, their use seems to be an expanding practice of a few select participating States. These states fail to recognize that their use of GONGOs at HDIM is, in fact, detrimental to their positions and serves only to underline their lack of respect for the OSCE and our joint commitments. We call on them to cease this practice moving forward.

Finally, Madam Chair, we must recognize, regrettably, that this HDIM was used by some organizations to convey and promote bigoted and hateful positions towards Muslims and Islam. As was noted during the sessions, these intolerant and discriminatory views contradict OSCE commitments made by all participating States, and we categorically reject them. Their appearance here at HDIM is yet further reinforcement of the importance of this gathering to ensure that we are all working, in line with OSCE commitments, toward replacing such views in our societies with ones of acceptance and inclusion.

Though not unexpected, the common theme of many of the side events that our delegation attended was the sobering fact that the human rights of many remain in a precarious state, or are being clearly threatened or violated. We must all push back against such threats and violations wherever they occur. It is for that reason that we reaffirm, once again, our steadfast belief in the need to embrace inclusion and respect for diversity, and the protection and promotion of all human rights for our collective security.

Throughout the coming year we intend to continuing discussing and improving our implementation of our Human Dimension commitments through the regular activities of the OSCE and ODIHR; and we look forward to renewing this important exchange at HDIM next year.

Lastly, in response to the statement by the Russian Federation, we find it extremely ironic that the Russian Federation seeks to blame Western countries for the current difficult state of affairs and mistrust in the OSCE, when the international community has clearly recognized Russia as the responsible party. We remind participating States that we are discussing this issue once again, and have done so in almost every working session here at HDIM, because of Russia’s violation of Ukrainian sovereignty with its illegal annexation of Crimea, and direct involvement in the conflict in the Donbas. Canada reiterates that we do not and will not recognize this illegal annexation attempt, and fully support Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.

I thank you very much.