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Canadian Delegation to the
Organization for Security & Cooperation
in Europe



ENGLISH only
Délégation du Canada auprès de
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération
en Europe

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
603RD PLENARY PERMANENT COUNCIL
30 MARCH 2006**

CURRENT ISSUES: RECENT ELECTIONS IN BELARUS

Mr Chairman,

Canada joins others today in expressing its serious concern at events following the recent elections in Belarus.

Canada profoundly regrets the harassment, intimidation and detention of opposition workers and peaceful demonstrators by the authorities following peaceful demonstrations after the elections. The arrest of several hundred peaceful protestors, along with a number of journalists, both domestic and foreign, regrettably including a Canadian citizen, calls further into question Belarus' OSCE commitments.

On Monday of this week, Canadian Foreign Minister Peter MacKay called in the Ambassador of Belarus to Canada. Minister MacKay informed the Ambassador that Canada regarded the Belarus elections as an affront to democratic principles.

With respect to the events occurring in the aftermath of the elections, Minister MacKay reminded the Ambassador that the Government of Belarus had a duty to respect the rights of its citizens to protest peacefully.

Mr. Chairman,

Effective immediately, the Government of Canada will limit its official relations with Belarusian authorities to the areas of consular relations, human rights and democratic development and activities aimed at improving international security.

As Minister MacKay noted to the Belarusian Ambassador, Canada will continue to work with those who believe in, and act to promote, human rights and democratic development in Belarus including within the OSCE context. We will be carefully watching developments in Belarus in the coming days and will be consulting with those who share these values on the way forward in view of the results of the election.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.