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Canadian Delegation to the  
Organization for Security & Cooperation  
in Europe



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

**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE  
INTERVENTION ON RUSSIA'S ACTIONS AGAINST THE BRITISH COUNCIL  
697<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
24 JANUARY 2008**

**INTERVENTION ON RUSSIA'S ACTIONS AGAINST THE BRITISH COUNCIL**

Canada would like to express its deep regret over Russia's decision to seek the closure of the British Council offices in St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg and offer our support to the UK. As a G8 partner to both countries, we are following the course of events closely.

We have already expressed our concerns to the Russian Foreign Ministry and encouraged the authorities of the Russian Federation to adhere to their commitments under existing agreements. We again emphasize the importance of addressing the British Council status issue on its own merits.

We were deeply troubled by Russia's harassment of British Council staff and regret the unfortunate situation that this has created. We call on Russian authorities to allow the British Council to resume its valuable work in its

regional offices and to ensure its staff can operate in a safe and effective manner.

Through the Helsinki Final Act, all OSCE participating States have committed themselves to exchange information, to encourage contacts and exchanges and to cooperate in the fields of culture and education.

Canadians benefit greatly from the presence of and opportunities afforded by the British Council offices in Canada. The forced closure of such offices in Russia is to the disadvantage of the thousands of Russian citizens who also benefit from British Council services. Programs that facilitate people-to-people exchanges can ultimately serve to ensure strong bilateral relations for the future.

We encourage a continuation of UK-Russia bilateral discussions to ensure a positive resolution of the issue.