

Statement by the Delegation of CANADA

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Review Conference on the Implementation of OSCE Commitments

Human Dimension

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### **PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

Thank you.

Please allow me to congratulate the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Vollebaek, for the extension of his mandate. We believe that his role is a pillar in our security tool kit and that Ambassador Vollebaek and his very capable team greatly contribute towards OSCE efforts in protecting and promoting the rights of national minorities.

We concur with Ambassador Vollebaek that Europe's security cannot be increased without addressing national minority issues, especially those that contribute to inter-state friction and protracted conflicts. The current situation in Kyrgyzstan is an important reminder of the violence that can result in tension with national minority groups.

We believe that the HCNM's June 2008 Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations are valuable and unique. They provide OSCE participating States with a set of principles and good practices in inter-state relations when questions concerning national minorities arise, for example, a national minority's relations with "kin-states". These Recommendations have been field-tested, they also draw on lessons-learned, and focus on what works.

We hope the 2010 OSCE Summit will bring more attention to the HCNM's vital work in conflict prevention and that the Summit can serve to bring more attention to the Bolzano/Bolzen Recommendations. We support the proposal for OSCE participating States to consider giving their political endorsement to this set of good practice Recommendations on inter-state minority issues.

Now, let me turn to the issue of discrimination against Roma and Sinti in the OSCE region. Canada is gravely concerned by the treatment that the Roma and other national minorities are experiencing in Europe. We call on all OSCE participating States to implement the commitments made in fighting racism and discrimination and on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area, as well as on the field missions, to pay particular attention to acts of violence and mistreatment of all minorities and to do their utmost to ensure their security.

Canada would like to make the following recommendation to OSCE participating States.

The High Commissioner for National Minorities paid a visit to Canada in 2009 during which he participated in a program presenting Canadian integration and citizenship policies, practices and community-based projects. Canada encourages other OSCE participating States to welcome similar visits by the HCNM.

Canada remains committed to achieving an equitable and inclusive society and we encourage all OSCE participating States to support initiatives that address social challenges faced by minority groups and help enable minorities to participate fully in public and political life.

Thank you very much.