

CANADIAN STATEMENT
Ministerial Conference on Anti-Semitism and other Forms of Intolerance
Cordoba, June 8-9, 2005

Mr. Chairman, Ministers, Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is fitting that we meet here in Cordoba, a city of many cultures, to consolidate some of the notable work that the OSCE and OSCE participating States have undertaken to combat all forms of discrimination and hatred. I thank our Spanish hosts for this opportunity to gather in a city with such a rich history of diversity.

Last April, Canada marked the 20th anniversary of section 15, the anti-discrimination section, of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. To paraphrase Canadian Supreme Court Justice Frank Iacobucci, Section 15 supports the vision of a land in which all persons enjoy equal recognition before the law as human beings and as members of the Canadian society. Our very identity is defined by diversity. Our citizens claim more than 200 ethnic backgrounds. The symbolism of Section 15 is important and Canadians have been able to use this section to overcome discrimination, to tear down barriers, in short, to make our society a better place.

Regrettably, we continue to witness various acts of hatred and discrimination. These attacks reflect forms of hatred which have old roots; the actual expression of this hatred, however, has taken on a new appearance, finding strength in new quarters, and targeting new types of victims. In Canada, we had to confront the reality of attacks on our ethnocultural and ethnoracial communities, including the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and incidents of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hate speech. Collectively, we must reject these kinds of behaviour which, in some instances, could constitute crimes and should be treated as such. It is also our responsibility to ensure that the current strained international political climate, does not undermine the very fabric of our societies nor serve as a pretext for anti-Semitism or any other form of discrimination and hatred.

The Canadian Government has taken decisive steps to address the reality of racism and discrimination, including anti-Semitism, and to reinforce our commitment to eliminating all its forms. Our strong legal framework is complemented by a set of solid policies and programmes that make a difference in the lives of the communities affected by racism. For instance, through a project drawing on the lessons from the Holocaust and from Canada's experiences with Indian Residential Schools, we provide public education workshops to various communities to raise awareness about the Holocaust and contemporary forms of racism. To counter the prejudices and stereotypes faced by the Arab and Muslim communities in Montreal, we supported the work of the Centre Jeunesse Arabe. Finally, our support to the Saskatchewan Jewish Council's project on Holocaust education will also enable students to view an exhibition of art created by a child in a concentration camp in Germany during the Second World War. Canada also recognises that better understanding, respect for and engagement with communities in the Muslim world is an important objective. Therefore, we have created within the Foreign Ministry a departmental working group on relations with Muslim communities which will serve as a

focal point for building our capacity on matters relating to Muslim communities.

In addition, the recently released *A Canada for All: Canada's Action Plan against Racism* is a key component of the Government of Canada's response. Developed through consultations with Canadians and building on Canada's existing legal framework, policies and programs, it is a collaborative effort aimed at eradicating racism in Canada by enhancing actions across federal departments. The Action Plan outlines a significant number of new and continuing commitments to combat racism and allocates \$56 million over five years to these objectives. It incorporates the tools, the funding and the flexibility to generate projects that address the specific needs of the various communities affected by racism. It also recognizes the key role that organizations such as the OSCE can play in the global fight against racism and discrimination. Canada can testify to its implementation of OSCE political commitments: for instance, the Action Plan contributes to the implementation of the Sofia Ministerial Decision 12/04 and the "Berlin Declaration" by enabling the development of projects to combat intolerance through education, data collection, legislation and law enforcement. Therefore, through the Action Plan, we will develop a nationally standardized data-collection strategy on hate-motivated crime and a training and assistance program for police to support collection and reporting.

Canada also actively supports OSCE programs to assist participating States in combating hatred and discrimination, notably the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and more specifically the new Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Programme. We were pleased to have identified this programme within ODIHR as one of the four major recipients of untied, multi-year, program level funding through the Canadian International Development Agency. I am especially proud that a Canadian has been heading this pioneering work in ODIHR. The recent work on law enforcement, in which the Toronto Police Service has played a catalytic role, is a tribute to this. The law enforcement community is leading the way throughout the OSCE region in developing a solid police-to-police training programme based on a model curriculum, embracing best practices, designed to meet the needs across the OSCE region. The final product will be delivered to this Conference in Cordoba and should assist participating States in addressing lacunae in responding to hate crimes.

Let me conclude by emphasising that international and regional organisations have an essential norm-setting role to play in the promotion and the protection of human rights. At the international level, Canada continues to advocate for a comprehensive approach to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It is true that the specific tragedies of each and every communities that have faced racism, including anti-Semitism, are grounded in particular historical, social and economic contexts. However, it is a sad irony that, in too many instances, the global fight against racism has divided, rather than unified, the international community. To deal with the issue of racism, international policies designed to foster tolerance must not become hostage to hierarchies of discrimination, and the greatest efforts have to be made to ensure that discussions remain inclusive and take place on a basis that enjoys wide cross-regional support. States then have the responsibility to ensure that the comprehensive international blue-print is translated into national action incorporating initiatives addressing the needs of the very communities affected by racism.