

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2018
Working Session 3 – Statement by the Delegation of Canada, delivered by Ambassador
Natasha Cayer, Permanent Representative of Canada to the OSCE, Tuesday, September 17,
2019

Moderator,

It is critical that OSCE participating States respect their OSCE commitments to democratic principles and pursue policies and programs that support civic space and democratic institutions, both domestically and internationally. We also, therefore, put forward the following three recommendations:

- 1) That OSCE participating States and ODIHR take into account the seriousness of foreign actors' efforts to undermine democracy and the ways in which we can collectively address such foreign interference in democratic processes, and to work closely with the office of the Representative of Freedom of the Media in this regard.
- 2) That ODIHR take into account technological threats to democracy as they emerge, and engage in developing a compendium of best practices to counteract such threats.
- 3) That the OSCE and ODIHR continue to seek opportunities, wherever possible, to support civic space and democratic institutions, ensuring the broadest participation of NGOs and other civil society representatives from across the OSCE in all events they organize.

Moderator,

Democratic values, processes, and institutions are under threat throughout the OSCE region due to efforts by malign state and non-state actors to undermine democratic governance. Advancing democracy and championing the values of inclusive and accountable governance are key commitments for Canada. Our position is clear; democracy has demonstrated itself as the best system to ensure long-term peace, economic growth, and stability, and it must be protected.

As has been amply pointed out, democracy is more than just the holding of elections, however. It encompasses a multitude of components, including ensuring the development of peaceful pluralism, gender equality, a robust civil society, as well as respect for diversity, human rights, and the rule of law, including the right to a fair trial. Yet in many parts of the OSCE region, there is a troubling narrative that

posits that holding relatively free elections permits the dismissal of the other necessary attributes of a healthy democracy. Even worse, in some cases we witness the active undermining of the pillars of democracy, both east and west of Vienna. This only proves that democracy is a process and that we must not be complacent in its defence of democracy, but continuously work to strengthen it.

Canada is committed to countering the threats to democracy and reinforcing societal resilience. Building on the 2018 G7 Charlevoix Summit, and the recent Global Conference for Media Freedom in London, Canada continues to galvanize efforts aimed at protecting democratic values, processes, and institutions.

An evolving challenge to democratic elections is the threat of foreign interference, intent on disruption. Canada is fully aware of this risk, including to our upcoming 2019 federal election, and has taken steps to address it. Canada has launched a broad, cross-sectoral plan to defend Canadian democracy from threats. We have implemented the *G7 Charlevoix Commitment on Defending Democracy from Foreign Threats*, by establishing and leading the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism to strengthen our coordination in identifying and responding to diverse and evolving threats to our democracies. We have also undertaken important steps to update and modernize legislation regarding Canada's electoral processes.

Thank you.