

ENGLISH only

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

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF GEORGIA,
H.E. MR. ZURAB NOGAIDELI
601ST (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
27 MARCH 2006**

Mr. Chairman,

Canada joins others in welcoming the Prime Minister of Georgia, H.E. Zurab Noghaidei, back to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his informative presentation this morning.

Much has happened in Georgia since the Prime Minister's October 2005 visit to the Permanent Council, some positive and some negative. In spite of notable successes, such as the Statement on Georgia adopted at the Ljubljana Ministerial, Canada remains concerned about the continued tensions in South Ossetia.

We urge all parties involved to work together toward agreeing a negotiated settlement. It is imperative that all parties ensure that respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia remains central to all discussions regarding the future of the region.

Although we are troubled by reports that both sides continue to undertake activities that raise suspicion in the other party, Canada commends the recent unilateral measures taken by the Georgia Government to demilitarize, in part, the region. We call on South Ossetian authorities to take similar steps to build confidence on both sides.

We are pleased that the Joint Control Commission (JCC) is now meeting in Vladikavkaz, and we hope that this can also contribute to confidence building.

Canada notes that the peace proposals put forward by both sides last year contained numerous similarities. We hope this common ground could form a basis for progress at the JCC meeting. We look forward to updates on the progress of these talks.

We welcome the Prime Minister's offer for high-level political contacts and his stated commitment to a peaceful settlement.

We welcome the recent completion of the Economic Needs Assessment Study in South Ossetia and look forward to the upcoming report. Economic development that has a positive impact on all parties is an important factor in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict.

We were interested to hear from the Prime Minister directly about Georgia's economic progress more generally.

Although Georgia has made great strides in respect for democratic values, the rule of law and human rights, Canada urges the Georgian Government to continue these efforts. We appreciated hearing from the Prime Minister this morning of the state of the reform of the Georgian judicial system. With regard to that judicial reform, we note that a lack of competent judges and extensive pre-detention periods are areas that require careful attention.

Canada also urges Georgia to continue efforts to assist its regions, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli in particular, in achieving fuller participation in national political affairs. To help achieve this goal, Canada has provided to date a total of \$2.5 million to the High Commissioner on National Minorities for his Conflict Prevention and Integration Programme in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

We wish to thank again His Excellency the Prime Minister for keeping the Permanent Council informed of his Government's efforts to achieve peace and stability in his country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.