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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

**STATEMENT OF CANADA IN RESPONSE TO THE
ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ILKKA KANERVA
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FINLAND
695TH (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
10 JANUARY 2008**

Canada joins others in warmly welcoming His Excellency Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his address highlighting the Finnish Chairmanship's priorities for 2008. We are pleased to offer our support and we look forward to collaborating closely with the entire Chairmanship team.

Finland enjoys a high reputation for its leadership in supporting multilateral solutions for global issues, dating back to the historic summits of the CSCE hosted by Finland in Helsinki in 1975 and 1992.

We are grateful that the Finnish priorities complement areas in which the OSCE currently works, rather than spreading resources thin by undertaking new programmes where the OSCE's expertise and value added is more limited.

Canada has long called for consolidation of activities and increased focus in implementing existing commitments. The OSCE will maintain its effectiveness through applying these values and commitments to which all participating States have agreed. Comprehensive change to this acquis will undermine the Organisation's capacity to promote security.

Mr. Chairman, Canada has consistently worked closely with Finland on key issues that we believe strengthen both the participating States of the OSCE and the Organisation itself. Our Delegation notes with satisfaction that the programme of activity outlined by Minister Kanerva stresses several Canadian priorities.

We are particularly glad that the fight against intolerance and the trafficking in persons remains at the top of the Organisation's priorities.

It is our view that continued efforts to strengthen the OSCE's, and particularly ODIHR's, capacity to observe elections and promote democratisation as well as freedom of association, assembly and expression, notably by supporting human rights defenders, will result in tangible benefits to security and stability in our region.

In addition, the Canadian Delegation has long spoken strongly for enhancing the implementation of the OSCE's Gender Action Plan and looks forward to Finnish efforts in this area.

Finland is well placed to promote the gender agenda, in view of having been the first country in the world to grant full political rights to men and women without distinction in 1906.

Canada also welcomes Finland's intention to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights, a document which was largely drafted by John Humphrey, a Canadian. We look forward to contributing to this event.

Like Finland, Canada recognises the importance of keeping the OSCE dynamic and utilising our strengths in addressing new challenges in our region.

To this end, we are pleased with the continued efforts made by our Organisation at strengthening border management, particularly in Central Asia, and seeking deeper engagement with Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairman, Canada shares the concerns of other delegations regarding the uncertainty surrounding the status of Kosovo. It is our strong hope that the Organisation's presence in Kosovo will be maintained until its mandate is completely fulfilled.

Our Delegation also underscores the pivotal role of the OSCE in assisting the resolution of the protracted conflicts. We look forward to Finnish-led initiatives in this area.

Canada would like to reiterate our strong support for the CFE treaty, which plays an important role in maintaining peace and security for all CFE States Parties. We urge all states to demonstrate their commitment to the CFE regime by continuing to engage constructively in ongoing discussions to ensure the maintenance of this treaty.

While there is clearly important work to be undertaken in the OSCE, the financial uncertainty due to the unwillingness of some participating States to join consensus on a budget remains concerning.

We ask all delegations to avoid attempts to politicise the discussion by seeking significant structural and institutional changes to the financial processes of the OSCE.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we would like to express our gratitude to the outgoing Spanish Chairmanship for all its efforts in 2007 and our best wishes to Minister Kanerva and his team in meeting their objectives for a successful Chairmanship in 2008.