



**CANADIAN INTERVENTION TO THE  
2007 OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING  
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**Working Session 10: Gender aspects of security I  
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*Full version***

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive yet least recognized forms of human rights abuse in the world. On a positive note, we have seen some important progress in increased global awareness and advocacy as well as the development of standards and norms, and further, a number of countries have translated this international progress into national legislations and laws to address this issue. However, regrettably, despite increased attention to women's rights, there has been little progress in reducing violence against women and girls.

The elimination of violence against women is a longstanding Canadian priority, both at the national and international level. The Government of Canada is pursuing a multifaceted, multi-disciplinary approach that builds on a wide range of partnerships with its provinces and territories, women's organizations and other NGOs, as well as other sectors of civil society. This approach to addressing violence against women and girls allows work simultaneously to take place with specific sectors, such as schools, the workplace, and the health, social and criminal justice systems, while helping to implement broader strategies to address root causes of gender-based violence.

One of the challenges to tackling the problem continues to be the lack of comprehensive information on gender-based violence through the systematic collection and analysis of data. Collection of data and information disaggregated by sex, age, and other factors relevant to eliminating violence against women is needed.

In September 2006, Canada released a key document addressing violence against women: *Measuring Violence against Women: Statistical Trends 2006*. This document sheds new light on

the prevalence and manifestations of violence against women and girls in Canada. The report provides new data about criminal harassment, sentencing of perpetrators and the availability of victim services.

The federal government continues to rely on the Family Violence Initiative, launched in 1988, which has fostered an enduring national approach to family violence issues. The Initiative harnesses the efforts of thirteen federal departments and promotes public awareness of the risk factors of family violence and the need for public involvement in responding to it. The federal government also provides funding for community-based projects aimed at addressing health and social problems related to family violence, and for prevention projects in cooperation with community organizations.

While prevention and attention to victims are of prime importance, the deterrent effect of prosecution must not be forgotten. At the federal level, the Criminal Code protects women from all forms of violence, including domestic/family violence, sexual assault and marital sexual assault. Also, a variety of policies and programs ensure the effective implementation of Canada's laws addressing family violence, including: pro-charging policies, which require charges to be laid where there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that an offence has been committed; and, pro-prosecution policies, which require a prosecution where there is a reasonable prospect of conviction and it is in the public interest to prosecute. These policies have been in place in every Canadian jurisdiction since the mid-1980s.

Additionally, most provinces and territories have their own domestic or family violence action plans or strategies, including civil (non-criminal) domestic/family violence legislation. Some have also created Domestic Violence Courts, which provide a range of specialized services, such as advocacy and support for women and children, expedited court processing, enhanced victim cooperation and support and translation services. These help to ensure greater conviction rates and appropriate sentencing, including treatment for abusers.

To conclude our intervention for this session, let us discuss briefly the OSCE 2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality. While we note the somewhat limited progress the OSCE

has made thus far in implementing the action plan, we are hopeful that there will be substantially more progress in the near future. We look forward to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary General's latest annual evaluation report. Notably, we would like to see improvements in the representation of women in senior and policy-making positions and in certain fields of expertise.

We recognize that part of the solution lies within participating States, notably by improving the number of women submitted for seconded positions. We would also recommend the OSCE to examine ways to improve its human resources management policies in order to make them more compatible with family life and obligations.