

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation meeting 2014
Statement by the Delegation of Canada
Working Session 1: Democratic Institutions
Monday, 22 September 2014

Madam Moderator,

The preservation and advancement of democratic institutions across the OSCE region is imperative to the region's stability and security. Nowhere is this truer than in Ukraine.

The OSCE and its participating States can play a crucial role in helping Ukrainians secure a stable, democratic and united future by supporting transparent elections through election observation, providing advice on legislative reform and training officials to ensure transparency, accountability and the rule of law. At a time when Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity are undermined by threats and disinformation from its neighbor, the OSCE and ODIHR can and must play a key role in support of peace, stability and democracy in Ukraine.

Canada is proud to have contributed to these efforts so far and is sponsoring, in cooperation with Solidarity Fund PL and the European Endowment for Democracy, a side event this Thursday on best practices in support of democracy and media freedom in Ukraine.

Madam Moderator,

While democracy extends to much more than elections, elections nevertheless play a central role in the democratic process and Canada attaches great importance to the role of ODIHR and of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in providing OSCE participating States with a sound platform for the deployment of election observers in the OSCE region.

ODIHR's methodology remains a reference for other organizations around the world and we appreciate the constant efforts being made to update it in light of evolving challenges and new technologies. While Canada believes ODIHR must remain open to constructive criticism, we deplore that some participating States, under the false premise of the need for more balance, are in fact advocating for the weakening of ODIHR's election observation activities.

We also note that one of the participating States calling for a so-called "reform" of ODIHR's methodology demonstrated all too clearly the complete disregard it has for genuine democracy when it supported the hastily organized referenda that took place under the threat of arms in Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine.

Canada's recommendations for this session are:

-For ODIHR to continue strengthening and improving its election observation activities and methodology to ensure it remains a global leader in this field;

-For ODIHR to work in close cooperation with other governmental and non-governmental organizations, such as the European Endowment for Democracy, to support efforts where democracy is most deeply threatened by subversive foreign forces in Eastern Europe;

-For ODIHR and OSCE Field Operations to continue their efforts to strengthen democratic institutions through the provision of advice, legislative review and training;

-For participating States to consider appropriate measures to support ODIHR financially and to engage in genuine dialogue for improving, not weakening, ODIHR's election observation activities.