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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

**DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE  
STATEMENT BY FREDERICKA GREGORY, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES  
IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR JANEZ LENARCIC (ODIHR)  
737<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
30 OCTOBER 2008**

Canada would like to warmly welcome Ambassador Lenarcic to the Permanent Council for the first time since your appointment as Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). We are confident that, under your stewardship, the mandate and activities will continue to make a difference in promoting peace and security in the OSCE region.

I wish to thank you for your comprehensive report on ODIHR's activities in 2008. Whether through combating hate crimes, monitoring elections, or promoting tolerance and human rights, ODIHR continues to set standards to which all other multilateral institutions should aspire. Many of these efforts could not have been achieved without the important work and contributions of civil society organizations. That is why Canada was pleased with the impressive turnout and active engagement of civil society organizations at the recent Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw. We share the view that HDIM was a success. It was a valuable occasion to foster a frank and open dialogue between participating States and civil society on issues of common concern for the OSCE region.

ODIHR's work in the area of election observation is of great importance to Canada. Over the course of the last twelve months, however, Canada has been very concerned by the obstacles faced by ODIHR in trying to accomplish its mandate and duties to independently observe elections in some participating States. We are very disappointed that the decision to provide ODIHR with the funds needed to do contingency planning and prepare and execute an election observation mission in Ukraine has not yet been agreed. We view this current situation, maintained by some States, as a tactic to short-circuit the work of ODIHR which should not be required to wait for an invitation to start planning a mission. All participating States have committed themselves to invite the OSCE to observe their national elections, without any reservations.

We are pleased that in the case of the recent elections in Azerbaijan and Belarus, cooperation with ODIHR was good and that OSCE and international observers were allowed to carry out their mandates without restrictions.

We are also satisfied that ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly have positively collaborated in order to observe these two elections. Canada believes that both the ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly have distinct roles and expertise in election observation. We welcome ODIHR's renewed commitment to work collaboratively with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, especially as it pertains to election observation. Commitments as expressed in the Brussels Ministerial Council Decision 19/06 are positive signals that should be embraced. We were pleased that the Parliamentary Assembly invited Ambassador Lenarcic to their Fall Meeting in Toronto which was an important occasion to discuss current issues, including the ongoing crisis in Georgia.

On Georgia, Canada supports the Chairman-in-Office mandated joint ODIHR/High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) fact-finding mission underway to assess the impact of the conflict on human rights and minorities. We are disturbed by reports of human rights abuses in South Ossetia. We are also seriously concerned by the ODIHR Director's confirmation today that the fact-finding mission did not have free and unrestricted access to the whole of Georgia, particularly the areas affected by the conflict. Full unhindered access is imperative for the mission's success and credibility. We look forward to receiving the report on the outcome of this crucial mission.

Canada shares the Director's and all participating States' concerns over the rise in hate crimes in the OSCE region. Canada would like to reaffirm its commitment to work with all OSCE partners and related institutions to combat these horrific acts of violence. Canada is committed to taking steps to eliminate racism and address issues of discrimination. Canada's multiculturalism policy seeks to foster an inclusive society where differences are valued and a common sense of belonging is shared. Our aim is to build a multicultural, pluralist and democratic society, where equal opportunity is accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual respect and recognition.

Canada shares the views of Ambassador Lenarcic that the important work of the ODIHR can serve as a vehicle to foster dialogue and co-operation among OSCE participating States, particularly in promoting human rights, combating human trafficking and in fighting hate crimes.

To conclude, Canada is encouraged by Ambassador Lenarcic's strong determination to carry out the ODIHR mandate and principles in accordance to the best interests of all OSCE participating States. We have full confidence in ODIHR, in Ambassador Lenarcic and his staff, and wish to assure them of Canada's strong support.