

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation meeting 2009

**Canadian Statement for the Working Session 7:
Tolerance and non-discrimination II
Equality of opportunity for women and men**

Thursday, 1 October 2009

Thank you Madame Moderator,

Canada believes that gender equality is an essential component of progress of human rights, democratic development, and sustainable peace and security. Truly sustainable and equitable societies will only be achieved if women are able to participate as equal partners and decision makers, and beneficiaries of the development of their societies. Canada also recognizes that in order to be effective, efforts to advance gender equality must reflect diversity both between and among women and men, including race, ethnicity, religion, and age.

The increased participation of women in the paid work force has been one of the most significant trends in Canada in recent decades. There has also been an increase in women's participation in post-secondary education and professional fields of work traditionally dominated by men – for example, business, finance, and law – and women now represent the majority of new doctors, dentists and lawyers.

This progress can be attributed, at least in part, to Canada's commitment to achieving equality between men and women and the implementation of effective government policy and programs.

The government of Canada is committed to the principle of eliminating gender-based wage inequities within the federally regulated sector. Pay equity helps achieve fairness in the workplace by ensuring that women and men are paid equal wages for work of equal value. An Employment Equity Program also exists with the objectives of eliminating employment barriers as well as improving access and distribution throughout all occupations and at all levels for members of designated groups identified in the Employment Equity Act, including women. The program also aims to foster a climate of equity in organizations.

One of Canada's foreign policy priorities is the elimination of violence against women. Internationally, governments have been working together to address this issue in a concerted manner, including through active engagement of national institutions dedicated to the promotion of women's equality, and through partnerships with non-governmental organisations who advocate women's equality. More work remains to be done in this area.

Canada has been a long time advocate for the integration of a gender perspective, also known as gender mainstreaming in humanitarian, armed conflict and peace-building areas. We have demonstrated this commitment through our work in the context of the

International Criminal Court and the prosecution of gender-based crimes, our tenure on the Security Council and work on the protection of civilians, our more recent role in follow-up to the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and support for robust implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1820 which focuses on sexual violence in conflict.

Canada remains committed to addressing gender-based discrimination and violence in all its forms in Canada and the world. As in many countries, in Canada, the NGOs and the voluntary sector have played a crucial role in raising public awareness and combating violence against women and girls.

Madame Moderator, we wish to offer the following recommendations within the context of this session:

- We encourage ODIHR to work with participating States to ensure that commitments within the Secretary General's Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality, particularly those related to gender mainstreaming, are translated into concrete action through sustained implementation. We further encourage efforts to enhance data collection, monitoring and reporting mechanisms to strengthen the effectiveness of implementation.
- We strongly urge participating States to increase nominations for qualified female candidates for positions within the OSCE.
- We urge participating states to increase the number of female military and police contingent members sent to peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions or operations.

In conclusion, Canada believes the issues of gender equality and women's human rights require to ongoing attention in all parts of the OSCE. Canada is committed to continue working with others to advance this agenda.

Merci Madame la Modératrice.