

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

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**DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR FREDERICKA GREGORY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ADDRESS BY VICE PRIME MINISTER OF
GEORGIA, H.E. MR. TIMUR YAKOBASHVILI
799TH SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
19 MARCH 2010**

Mister Chairperson:

- Canada would like to join others in welcoming Vice Prime Minister and State Minister for Reintegration Mr. Yakobashvili to the Permanent Council; the senior most representative from the Government of Georgia that the Council has heard since the August 2008 war.
- Canada's strong support for **Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders** remains steadfast. We urge all parties to the conflict to redouble efforts at finding a peaceful and lasting solution.
- We also believe that the OSCE and its Institutions – notably ODIHR and HCNM - should be allowed to return to Georgia and continue the valuable conflict prevention and capacity-building work of our organization, and in all war effected regions.
- We are thankful for Vice Prime Minister Yakobashvili's presentation today on Georgia's ambitious strategy. We welcome this proactive initiative to engage the populations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in important areas of both economic and social benefit.
- We note that the strategy makes a number of crucial points, chief amongst them is the **rejection of a military solution** and we strongly applaud Georgia for rejecting this option.
- We are convinced that Georgia's focus on cooperation and particularly on **engagement** is a constructive approach in terms of reaching out to the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and for finding a way forward.

- We note the absence in the strategy of the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and would recommend that Georgia engage with them, despite the difficulties inherent in doing so. After all, we must not forget that the de facto authorities are also part of the "target populations" of these regions cited in your strategy.
- We would also encourage Georgia to include a reference to the **Geneva Talks** in the strategy, as these international talks are currently the only means of engagement between Georgia, the de facto authorities, and Russian officials.
- A sustained and constructive engagement by Georgia and all parties in the Geneva Process is necessary in order to achieve real progress.
- We take careful note of references in the strategy to the freedom to exercise religious rights and the value of religious diversity. We urge Georgia to formally recognize **religious minority groups belonging to non-traditional religious communities** and to promote full respect for the right to freedom of religion.
- Concerning the unfortunate **March 13th, 2010 incident of the Imedi television's fictitious broadcast**, this was not an example of responsible media behavior, and was counter-productive to the goals of constructive engagement that Georgia's strategy aims to achieve.
- We therefore join the OSCE's Freedom of the Media Representative, Ms. Dunja Mijatovic, in expressing concern over this incident. We welcome the swift condemnation by Georgia's National Communications Commission and urge that incidents such as this will be avoided in the future.

My Delegation has the following questions concerning the Georgian Vice-Prime Minister's presentation:

- Could Vice Prime Minister Yakobashvili tell us what the **expected timelines** are for the full implementation of the strategy and Government action plan?
- What role does Georgia envisage for the OSCE in the implementation of the strategy? Would OSCE be part of the proposed Implementation Conference with stakeholders, for example?
- We heard your reaffirmation that Georgia is supportive of the re-opening of the OSCE Field Mission closed last year. How best can an OSCE's presence be re-established in Georgia to support the status-neutral programs and projects that the strategy wants to achieve?

I would be most grateful, Mr. Chairperson, if this statement could be attached to the Journal of the day. Thank you, merci, Rahmet!