



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE CRITICAL CHALLENGES TO THE OSCE FUNCTIONALITY

As delivered by the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs

1443rd Reinforced Special Meeting of the Permanent Council

26 September 2023

Thank you Mr. Chair,

First of all I would like to personally thank Minister Osmani for all his work and personal commitment in assuming the Chair role. He and I have had numerous conversations about the importance of the OSCE and how North Macedonia is showing leadership in this unprecedented crisis. On behalf of Canada, I would like to thank you.

Monsieur le président,

Merci d'avoir organisé cette importante rencontre.

Depuis près de 30 ans, l'OSCE a offert un forum efficace pour :

instaurer la confiance sur les questions de sécurité,

pour coopérer sur les questions économiques et environnementales, et

pour renforcer les institutions démocratiques et la protection des droits de la personne.

Mais les actions d'un État participant menacent aujourd'hui de paralyser cette organisation – juste au moment où nous en avons pourtant tellement besoin.

En lançant une guerre d'agression contre l'Ukraine, la Russie a choisi non seulement de brutaliser la population civile ukrainienne, mais aussi de mettre en péril la sécurité en Europe, d'arsenaliser la faim dans le monde, et même de ressusciter une menace nucléaire que nous espérons pourtant enterrée pour de bon.

En lançant ses missiles et ses chars d'assaut contre l'Ukraine, la Russie a montré son mépris pour la Charte des Nations Unies et pour le droit international humanitaire et les droits de la personne.

Et à Vienne, la Russie utilise le principe de consensus comme arme pour affaiblir cette organisation créée pour s'attaquer aux problèmes de sécurité.

Pourtant, l'OSCE a tellement à faire. L'agression de l'Ukraine par la Russie est au cœur de la crise de sécurité qui nous affecte tous. Les tensions dans le Caucase sont aussi importantes. Le Canada est très préoccupé par la situation qui prévaut en ce moment au Haut Karabakh. Les pertes de vie sont inacceptables. L'Azerbaïdjan doit cesser ses hostilités et assurer l'accès humanitaire et la protection des civils. Et l'OSCE doit être outillé pour faire son travail dans la région.

Mr Chair,

Over the past 18 months, Russia has blocked consensus repeatedly – on the approval of the Unified Budget, the extension of essential field missions and the holding of mandated meetings. Furthermore, Russia has refused to engage in good faith on the renewal of the four heads of the OSCE institutions or on the confirmation of a 2024 Chair-in-Office.

Let us be clear: the principle of consensus should not be used as a weapon for one state to impose its will on the rest. As participating States, we cannot be held hostage to serve the interest of one country acting contrary to this organization's very raison d'être.

I would like to make clear Canada's position on several key matters.

First, in regard to the Chair-in-Office: Canada is prepared to work with any participating State who will uphold and defend the organization's principles and commitments. Estonia is the only participating State who has indicated its willingness to take on this role at this time. They have consistently demonstrated respect for OSCE principles and therefore Canada fully supports their candidacy.

Second, regarding the "Top 4": The OSCE is at a critical juncture, and it is vitally important that we maintain continuity and strong leadership. The Secretary-General, the Director of ODIHR, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the High Commissioner on National Minorities have fulfilled the mandates, that we, participating States, have given them. Therefore, Canada supports a renewal of the terms of all four heads of institutions, for three years, as a package.

Third, on the OSCE Budget: Very simply, participating States have a responsibility to come to an agreement on a budget so the organization can fulfill its mandate. The CiO's third budget proposal is an imperfect compromise, but it is, at least, a compromise that will allow us to move forward with our important work. Therefore, Canada supports this budget proposal, and asks that we adopt it without delay.

Mr. Chair,

Canada will continue to speak out against Russia's efforts to undermine international peace and security and to undermine effective multilateralism, including in this organization.

We call on all participating States to work together constructively in our collective project to fulfill the promises of the Helsinki Final Act.

We call on Russia to end its obstruction in this organization.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.