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**Statement by the
Head of the Delegation of Canada**

**James R. Wright
Political Director and Assistant Deputy Minister
(Global and Security Policy)**

12th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

**7 December, 2004
Sofia, Bulgaria**

Mr Chairman,

Thank you for the warm welcome and the excellent organisation you and your team have extended.

The Foreign Minister of Canada, the Honorable Pierre Pettigrew has asked me to convey to you his regret that he was not able to join you in Sofia today.

It is with pleasure that Canada welcomes Mongolia, our new Partner for Co-operation, to this table.

Canada appreciates the efforts of the OSCE to promote regional security by addressing acute and emerging threats which affect us all.

Over the past thirty years, the OSCE's assistance with respect to confidence building, transparency and co-operation has had an enduring value. It has – is making – a significant contribution in these areas.

Equally, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has a key role to play in achieving these objectives.

The scope of OSCE activities is, indeed, impressive: combating international terrorism, limiting small arms and light weapons, improving border management, addressing environmental and economic issues from a security perspective, protecting freedom of the media, promoting the rule of law and good governance, to name just a few.

We are horrified by the tragedies of Madrid and Beslan. Even yesterday, a deadly terrorist attack took place in Jeddah and bombs went off in Spain.

Canada supports increased engagement by the OSCE in confronting the scourge of terrorism. The OSCE has a concrete role in reinforcing international standards at the regional level.

We recall that we attach great importance to ensuring that measures taken to combat terrorism respect international law, including human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

Mr. Chairman,

Another area which brings credit to the OSCE is the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

From Afghanistan to Belarus, from Kazakhstan to Kosovo to the United States, the ODIHR is to be commended for its vital work in 2004.

The situation in recent weeks in Ukraine has underscored the tremendously valuable role OSCE monitors play in holding states accountable to the standards we have all voluntarily committed to uphold.

We welcome the decision of the Ukrainian Supreme Court to order a repeat of the second round of the presidential election on December 26, and call on all parties to ensure that this vote proceeds without interference.

Canada is sending a robust presence - up to 500 observers, a good number of whom will be under the auspices of the OSCE. This will be Canada's largest delegation ever to a foreign election. In addition, Canadian Senator Jerry Grafstein, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Treasurer, will act as Deputy Head in the Assembly's Observation Mission.

We urge other participating States to also consider increasing their contingent of observers.

Mr. Chairman,

Discrimination and intolerance can tear societies apart, planting the seeds of violence and conflict. In this respect, the past year has been distressing.

Given Canada's efforts to develop a truly multicultural society where people from all ethnicities, races and faiths live in harmony, we are all the more concerned when we see hate crimes and discrimination. We are not immune from these ourselves. Consequently, the Canadian government has committed itself to take measures to strengthen its ability to combat racism, hate speech and hate crime.

We are concerned, however, that multiple mechanisms and mandates and a focus on some forms of discrimination to the exclusion of others may undermine this Organization's approach to intolerance and discrimination, and may risk fostering the very divisions that we seek to bridge.

We are confident that the three Personal Representatives to be appointed will ensure a cooperative and coordinated approach to this issue.

We firmly believe that in order to effectively counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia, we must address them in all their forms, through inclusive broad-based measures.

We have strongly supported the series of three specialized conferences on tolerance-related issues sponsored by the OSCE in 2004. Regarding the initiative of Spain to cap this series with a conference in Cordoba in June 2005, we hope that the agenda for this conference will pursue a holistic and comprehensive approach to tolerance and discrimination.

Mr. Chairman,

Restructuring and reform are also on top of the OSCE's agenda. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of Canada's thoughts on the subject, as reflected in Minister Pettigrew's letter to Minister Passy, which has been made available to you as an OSCE document.

Faced with the changing international security environment, the OSCE needs to find ways to adapt its structures and programs to meet the needs of its participating states.

In making adjustments, however, we must take care not to alter the organization's fundamental character: it is a focused regional forum which takes a comprehensive approach to security in Europe. Reform initiatives should therefore promote an integrated approach to the OSCE's three dimensions.

The South Caucasus and Central Asian states are currently undergoing many important changes which have a direct impact on European security. In principle, Canada supports the proposal that the OSCE devote greater attention to these regions.

Canada welcomes the Ministerial decision on enhancing the effectiveness of the Economic Forum. We have no doubt that the Forum will be improved by the adoption of more strategic objectives and clearer parameters.

By addressing emerging as well as ongoing threats, the OSCE faces the additional challenge that new topics are constantly being added to its agenda. Expansion and innovation should not come at the expense of coherence. We need to ensure that this organization continues to meet our priorities. This will require tough choices.

Effectiveness requires maintaining the right balance between the political responsibilities of OSCE leadership and the need for institutional continuity. We look to the Secretary General and the Secretariat for co-ordination, long-term planning and institutional memory. In this context, we take the opportunity of his last Ministerial Council in his current capacity to thank Ambassador Kubis for his energy and dedication.

Canada welcomes the adoption of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. This document reflects a firm commitment of the OSCE to reach its full potential in terms of human resources by mainstreaming a gender perspective in all three dimensions of its activities.

Although the security architecture of Europe has changed dramatically and positively in recent years, the OSCE continues to have a critical role in building confidence and promoting security. This fact is reflected by ongoing contributions of the Forum for Security Cooperation.

In particular, we welcome the FSC's work on the control of small arms and light weapons, and its decisions establishing principles on brokering, setting standard elements for end-user certificates, and improving export controls for MANPADS. We also welcome the Forum's decision to update information exchange in the area of landmines and explosive remnants of war. Canada believes the OSCE has a distinct role to play in supporting mine action.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that the CFE Treaty remains the corner stone of European security. Russia's Istanbul Commitments on military withdrawal from Moldova and Georgia must be fulfilled before progress is made toward full ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty.

We welcome Slovenia and Croatia as new states party to the Open Skies Treaty and we look forward to the first Open Skies Review Conference in Vienna in February 2005.

Mr. Chairman,

Before closing, a few words about resources. For the past thirty years, Canada has been among the top seven contributors to this Organization, and became the sixth largest budget contributor in 2004.

Despite this, we find ourselves in the impossible position of being asked to do more to compensate for proposed reductions and artificially low ceilings. We are not asking that our share be decreased. We are asking for an equitable and transparent solution.

Canada stands ready to engage in further consultations in order to find a solution acceptable to all. We agree that there is some urgency to resolving this problem to ensure the financial stability of the OSCE over the longer term.

Financial stability is an important condition if the OSCE is to remain an innovative forum to deal with emerging security issues, and a dynamic actor in promoting stability and co-operation in Europe.

We have no doubt that the Slovenian Chairmanship, building on the work of previous chairmanships, will steer the Organization in this direction in 2005, and we offer our full support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.