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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 AMBASSADOR FREDERICKA GREGORY
778TH MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
29 OCTOBER 2009**

**IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE FOR DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS, AMBASSADOR LENARCIC**

Madame Chairperson,

Canada joins others in welcoming Ambassador Lenarcic back to the Permanent Council, and in thanking him for this comprehensive presentation on the activities of ODIHR and progress on the implementation of relevant Ministerial Council decisions that require the attention of both. We note that these decisions task ODIHR, and OSCE participating States. We would also like to thank him as well for his very valuable contribution to the Corfu Process strategic dialogue this week.

The 2009 Annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw was a success; it had strong NGO participation, the new Obama Administration outlined its Human Dimension priorities and strong engagement; and the Russian Federation concluded that it was one of the best HDIMs in a long time due to its pragmatic business-like focus on key issues. The HDIM is a precious instrument in our OSCE tool box to exercise vigilance in protecting and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in all aspects, and for reviewing our OSCE commitments in this field. This is why we question the efforts of some participating States to reduce the duration and scope of our annual HDIM agenda. This is a unique forum, where NGOs participate with governments on an equal-footing to have “an open hearing”. Through the Corfu Process, we should therefore strengthen, not reduce the HDIM

OSCE Participating States must uphold commitments made in the Human Dimension and the ODIHR Director and his talented team can help us achieve this goal. Safeguarding ODIHR’s autonomy in all areas of its mandate is crucial in maintaining effective implementation and monitoring of OSCE commitments while guaranteeing the highest quality, objectivity and impartiality in ODIHR’s activities.

We must remain vigilant in protecting fundamental rights and freedoms rights and promote greater tolerance in the OSCE region. OSCE commitments must be implemented fully by all participating States, not in an “à la carte” fashion or on voluntary basis.

We applaud in particular the ODIHR's work in the field of tolerance, and especially on hate crimes in the OSCE region, including its valuable reporting activities. In this connection, we would like to thank ODIHR and the Greek Chairperson-in-Office for facilitating the visit to Canada, a few weeks ago (on 15 -16 October, 2009) , of the three OSCE Personal Representatives on Tolerance. This visit was their first to North America, and the first time the three Representatives worked together as a team. We look forward to hearing about their findings, and seeing their assessment report.

Canada also attaches great value to the OSCE's work in election monitoring and assistance. The fact that governments outside of the OSCE region seek the assistance of ODIHR in conducting their own elections is a further indication of the Organization's reputation and expertise in strengthening democratic institutions.

This past year we applaud the fact that the ODIHR provided elections assistance to the recent Presidential elections in Afghanistan and we are pleased to have two Canadians participating in this effort. We are relieved to learn that no one from the OSCE/ODIHR election Support Team (EST) was harmed in the Kabul blast, and encourage you to continue the mission despite highly challenging circumstances. We also look forward to receiving (in the Permanent Council) the Report on the EST's Mission to Afghanistan, and any follow-up that may be required. You can count on Canada's continued support for Afghanistan's capacity-building needs, including good-governance.

We believe that an important priority for the ODIHR is to continue to ensure credible observation and assessment of elections by upholding the independence, impartiality and professionalism for which the ODIHR's election observation missions are internationally recognized.

On **Georgia**, the ODIHR's report on the Human Dimension challenges and needs following the war have had reverberations, and its recommendations need follow-up. We therefore hope, in the not too distant future, that the Director of ODIHR – like the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) – will have an opportunity to visit again all the war affected regions of Georgia

In closing, we would like to assure Ambassador Lenarcic and his dedicated team in Warsaw of Canada's continuous full support, cooperation, and appreciation.

Thank you