

2010 Review Conference for the Astana OSCE Summit – Warsaw Part:
Implementation of OSCE Commitments in the
Human Dimension

Statement by the Delegation of CANADA
(October 1, 2010 –Warsaw)

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

Democracy development and support is a key foreign policy priority for Canada. We pursue this in our efforts to deepen standards of democratic governance at the regional and global levels, and through our support in assisting others in achieving these standards of democracy-building.

In this connection, Canada would like to thank **ODIHR** (The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) for its vital regional role in providing **elections observation and support** to OSCE participating States and Partners for Cooperation (i.e. based on the OSCE's 1990 Copenhagen Document commitments). The ODIHR has earned international recognition as "*the golden standard*" on elections thanks to its high standards, impartiality, independence, and professionalism

We also value the ODIHR's work on reviewing electoral legislation in the OSCE region and your democracy-building work in partnership with OSCE Field Missions, and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

On **Afghanistan**, Canada continues to encourage further ODIHR elections support work in the country, despite challenging circumstances, and was pleased to lend its financial support and experts to two recent ODIHR election missions there (in 2009 and 2010). The same applies to Canada's active engagement and support for OSCE-led election observation missions in Ukraine and Central Asia,

We look forward to ODIHR's assessment of two upcoming elections this fall: the parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan, (on October 10th) and the presidential elections in Belarus (in December). These are opportunities for both countries to demonstrate their adherence to OSCE commitments and standards in democracy development. to adhering to OSCE democratic election standards.

With respect to **regional trends in democracy development**, Canada joins others in voicing concerns about the disturbing trends we are seeing in some OSCE participating States today that are violating OSCE election-related commitments, such as: the misuse of state administrative resources by incumbents, the lack of sufficient voter-registration guidelines, and attempts to limit the competition between political parties and candidates in elections. Clearly, there has been stagnation and even some back-sliding on the democracy front for our OSCE region in recent years.

Without free and fair elections, we cannot hope to have a stable and sustainable democracy, or real security for our people and region. Legitimate, effective and participatory democratic institutions and practices allow all citizens to equally and freely express their will and to hold their governments to account. As such, democratic institutions and practices are a *sine qua non* for human security and human development. Canada remains committed to working actively with our governmental, non-governmental and multilateral partners in support of furthering democratic development in the OSCE region.

In closing, Canada would like to make the following four recommendations concerning our Democratic Institutions agenda, as we prepare for the Astana OSCE Summit:

- We urge all OSCE participating States to keep a standing invitation to ODIHR to conduct election observation and support on their respective territories (i.e. in line with Copenhagen Document commitments, 1990).
 - (For example: Canada invited ODIHR to observe our 2006 parliamentary elections, and we have since implemented many of ODIHRs election recommendations).
- We urge more systematic follow-up by OSCE participating States on reporting on and implementing the recommendations outlined in ODIHR election observation reports on their respective elections, support the suggestion that participating States should respond, in writing, within a reasonable period of time, to the reports of election monitoring missions organized by ODIHR.
 - (For example: Norway has done such follow-up reporting on recent Norwegian elections observed by ODIHR, and has set an example to emulate).
- We urge continued cooperation and a smooth partnership on elections monitoring and assessments between ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. It is essential – for the credibility and effectiveness of the OSCE – that we speaking with one voice on our election reports.
- We urge greater attention by participating States in addressing the appropriate staffing needs of ODIHR, and especially in ensuring that it can provide strong expert support to OSCE Field Missions on Human Dimension capacity-building programs. This is a shared responsibility of both ODIHR and participating States in their secondments to the OSCE.

Clearly, democracy-building is a ‘work in progress’ for all of us; no OSCE participating State is perfect; all can benefit from implementing best-practices and learning from our experts at ODIHR.

Thank you/Merci/Rahmet.