

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2016
Working Session 1 – Democratic Institutions; Monday, September 19, 2016
Statement by the Delegation of Canada, delivered by Ambassador Natasha Cayer,
Permanent Representative of Canada to the OSCE

Madam Moderator,

Let me begin by thanking Director Link for his opening remarks for this session. I would also like to welcome Ambassador Maria Leissner, Secretary General of the Community of Democracies, and to thank her for her keynote address and for her tireless efforts to advance democracy. The sharing of experiences and good practices between the OSCE and other organizations such as the Community of Democracies can only be of benefit to our common endeavours.

Having chaired the Community's Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society, Canada believes that democracy and democratic institutions must be nurtured and strengthened through respect for human rights, notably the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and that participating States should undertake concrete actions, in law and in practice, to enable and protect a free and vibrant civil society.

Director Link,

As you have said countless times, all 57 OSCE participating States have committed to build democratic institutions and to hold free, fair and inclusive elections. We have also mandated ODIHR to support us in the implementation of these commitments, notably through the observation of national elections on the basis of a well-known and respected methodology.

In this context, Canada was pleased to welcome an ODIHR Election Assessment Mission for our parliamentary elections, and we appreciate the report produced by ODIHR, both in its highlighting of Canada's democratic strengths and in the identification of areas where improvements could further reinforce our democracy. In this context, we look forward to continuing the follow-up dialogue with ODIHR.

Madame Moderator,

Canada's five recommendations for this session are:

- For ODIHR, to continue strengthening and updating its election observation activities and methodology to ensure it remains a global leader in this field.
- Also for ODIHR, to work in close cooperation with other governmental and civil society organizations to support efforts where civil society space and democratic principles are most threatened in the OSCE region.
- For both ODIHR and OSCE Field Operations, to continue their efforts to strengthen democratic institutions through the provision of advice, legislative review and training.
- For participating States, to consider appropriate measures to support ODIHR financially and to engage in genuine dialogue for strengthening, not weakening, ODIHR's election observation activities.
- And finally, for participating States, to recommit to the core values of the OSCE and to reverse actions that undermine democratic institutions and the holding of free, fair, and inclusive elections.

Thank you.