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Foreign Affairs
Canada

Affaires étrangères
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**Closing 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,

Canada thanks the Chair, Foreign Minister Passy, for all his efforts.

We welcome the decisions just adopted which represent important steps forward in a number of areas and chart a course for the next year.

We express our great regret, at the inability, once again, of participating States to find a common ground on the joint Political Declaration.

At a time when this group of nations should be building bridges to address common challenges, some seem more focused on finding divides.

What most of us see as the strength and backbone of this organization, namely election monitoring, governance, rule of law and human rights, others see as a problem.

Our frozen regional conflicts remain frozen. We call again on Russia to meet its Istanbul Commitments.

We deeply regret that it was not possible to have a separate Sofia Ministerial Statement on Ukraine.

This is a serious missed opportunity, especially given that this initiative came from Ukraine.

This outcome diminishes our collective resolve to engage in an area of core activity for the OSCE.

Canada will assist ODIHR with observing the December 26th election in Ukraine to help ensure that the will of the Ukrainian people is respected.

Mr. Chairman,

Canada asks that this statement be added to the official documents for this OSCE conference.