

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
CLOSING STATEMENT AT THE 16TH MEETING OF THE OSCE ECONOMIC
AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM “MARITIME AND INLAND WATERWAYS
CO-OPERATION IN THE OSCE AREA: INCREASING SECURITY AND
PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT”, PRAGUE
21 MAY 2008**

It is with interest that our delegation has listened to the presentations over the course of the last three days and read all distributed papers, particularly the food-for-thought paper released by the Office of the Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities.

Our overwhelming impression of this paper and the discussions we have had is the OSCE is attempting to undertake a very wide and ambitious menu of suggestions.

We believe the Economic and Environmental Committee in Vienna must now debate and define very few recommendations on which the OSCE can practically and realistically act.

We have heard from some delegations and presenters that engagement with the arctic and, in particular the Arctic Council is welcome. Canada would be hesitant to expand the OSCE in this area due to the effectiveness of existing mechanisms and limited organizational expertise in this area.

In the past, our delegation has been very outspoken on the need of the OSCE to define priorities, and would highlight our support for the opening statements of the EU and US in this regard.

We have consistently stated that we favour a focus on good governance and environmental security. We would highlight the excellent intervention by the business group from Kazakhstan that called for the OSCE to assist private enterprise by facilitating its efforts to contact other groups with similar interests and work with governments to improve legislation, administrative processes and border management. This is what the OSCE already does well and this is a clear example of good governance promotion in the sphere of transport.

On environmental security, Canada would reiterate its support for the ENVSEC initiative and highlight the \$5.2 million we have given and pledged through March 2009, which amounts to 70 percent of all OSCE funding. It is our view this initiative is a good example of focussed activity and close cooperation with other international organisations.

Our delegation would also like to underline strong reservations about the many recommendations to pursue “partnerships” with other international organisations. We further note that there are personnel and budgetary implications to forging these new relationships.

While we support contact in appropriate cases, there must be a practical aspect to the partnerships the OSCE pursues. The Secretariat should not seek partnerships simply for the sake of partnership. Rather, partnerships should be functional, directed and all parties should benefit as well as have expertise to contribute.

We are not sure that a search for partnerships is the best use of Secretariat resources: its first responsibility is to fulfill our already mandated tasks of providing support to the Field Missions and participating States.

It is our view that lessons could be learned from the ways in which outside contacts are cultivated by the anti-trafficking unit of the Secretariat in terms of coalition building on a few, very specific issues.

Furthermore, Canada strongly believes that this partnership aspect of the OSCE should be debated in Vienna. Formal contracts that establish these partnerships should not be pursued without the positive support of the participating States and we believe that signing agreements is a matter for the participating States and the Chairman in Office to decide.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the incoming Greek Chairmanship for distributing their food-for-thought paper on the theme for the 17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

Canada commends efforts made by the incoming Chair to have continuity in this dimension by selecting a theme that builds on the 2005 Slovenian initiative. We are also pleased there is a focus on good governance.

We will be sending this back to our capital, and in particular to our Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, which has the lead on this file, for comment. We expect to engage fully in the EEC in the coming months on this issue.

However, initially we have two points. First, we would highlight that Canada has benefited greatly from migration and has developed effective policies on its management.

Migration has its challenges, as the Greek paper rightly highlights, but it also has its opportunities and benefits. Any OSCE focus on this issue should include this consideration, as the emphasis on the negative aspects of migration is rather striking in the paper.

Our delegation notes that the number and variety of activities this paper proposes to address in 2009 is very ambitious. As we noted earlier in this statement, it is our view

that the work of the Second Dimension should be focussed and prioritised. We look forward to working with the incoming Chair on whichever theme is chosen to achieve this.

We would like to conclude by taking this opportunity to thank our Czech hosts for their hospitality as well express our appreciation to the Finnish Chair and the OSCE Secretariat for their efforts in organising this event.