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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
INTERVENTION IN RESPONSE TO PRESENTATION BY
AMBASSADOR URSTAD, HEAD OF OSCE MISSION TO SERBIA
703RD MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
28 FEBRUARY 2008**

Canada welcomes Ambassador Urstad back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his useful report on the Mission's activities.

As Ambassador Urstad points out, he is addressing us at a time of momentous political circumstances, and indeed a difficult period for Serbia, and for Serbians.

Nevertheless what strikes us from the report are the overall positive developments that have taken place in Serbia over the last few years. We note in particular the progress mentioned in the report in the areas of democratization, strengthening of institutions, the rule of law and accountability for war crimes.

We also welcome the positive role played by the mission in Southern Serbia and in the Sandzak/Raska area to further integrate the minority population and to ease intra-ethnic tensions.

To be sure, there are remaining challenges in such areas as integration of minorities, law enforcement and dealing with the refugee and IDP issues as per the Sarajevo Declaration Process.

Canada also joins its voice to that of the Chairman-in-Office who expressed his serious concern over the acts of violence perpetrated last week against diplomatic missions and foreign property in Belgrade during demonstrations against the declaration of independence by the authorities in Kosovo. We take note of the Serbian authorities' condemnation of these violent acts and take comfort from their commitment to prosecute the perpetrators and ensure the necessary protection to diplomatic missions. Those bent on violence must not be emboldened by the silence or tacit endorsement of political leaders.

An area of particular concern has been the pattern of attacks on media representatives, including during these recent demonstrations. We fully support the press release issued by Ambassador Urstad on 25 February condemning attacks on journalists and urge the Serbian authorities to do their utmost to avoid the repetition of such attempts on the freedom of expression and of the media, and to punish those responsible.

Mr. Chairman, the OSCE Mission is playing a role that is yielding positive results and enjoys the support and cooperation of the Serbian authorities and the Serbian population: the Ambassador's report makes this abundantly clear. We express the hope that the momentum toward reform and greater integration of Serbia into Euro-Atlantic institutions will be maintained.

We wish Ambassador Urstad and his dedicated team in the Mission continued success in their work.