

15 June 2007

ENGLISH only

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
Response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia,
H.E. Mr. Gela Bezhuashvili
670th Meeting of the Permanent Council
14 June 2007

Canada joins others in warmly welcoming H.E. Foreign Minister Bezhuashvili back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive presentation. We appreciate the Georgian Government's willingness to engage the OSCE on these issues.

We note with satisfaction the continued strides Georgia is making in reforming its political and economic systems. There have been significant changes in these areas, particularly in the area of democratic elections.

Canada has also seen sustained effort in promoting local government and engaging minorities with a view to establishing a state with a firm basis on pluralism.

We are pleased to contribute significant extrabudgetary resources to assist Georgia achieve this goal through programmes in Samske-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli implemented by the High Commissioner for National Minorities. We encourage the Government of Georgia to consider greater efforts engaging all of its citizens.

The OSCE has been active in assisting Georgia with local governance and minority integration and it is our hope that these programmes can be expanded through greater citizen outreach and the establishment of more regional offices.

A year and a half ago Canada expressed its concern at the state of Georgia's judiciary and penitentiary system. Improvements have been made, yet significant work remains ahead. We encourage the Government of Georgia to pursue its efforts with determination and reinforce its cooperation with the OSCE in this area.

We also note the significant impact OSCE programming has had on improving the border guard service and we look forward to the continuation of this core OSCE activity.

Canada remains concerned at the tensions resulting from the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We appreciate the OSCE's support to the United Nations in addressing the situation in Abkhazia and urge deeper cooperation in this regard.

The OSCE leads in trying to resolve the conflict in South Ossetia. In that regard, it is our view that it is critical to maintain a close partnership between Georgia and the OSCE Mission. We also recommend that greater efforts be deployed by the Organisation to build trust in the region.

To this end, Canada supports additional military monitors in South Ossetia with full access to the entire zone of conflict, which has been denied until now. In addition, we also see value in establishing checkpoints in Didi Gupta and at the Roki Tunnel to ensure armament restrictions are respected.

Canada reiterates our point of principle with respect to the conflicts in Georgia: these situations can only be resolved through increased confidence-building measures and peaceful negotiations which respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia.