

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2013**  
**Opening Statement of the Canadian Delegation**  
**Ambassador Isabelle Poupart**  
**Permanent Representative to the OSCE**  
**Monday, September 23, 2013**

Mr. Chairman,

As Canada's new Permanent Representative to the OSCE, I am very pleased to be taking part in this important event on the OSCE's annual calendar.

I would first like to thank the Chairmanship, as well as Ambassador Lenarčič and his ODIHR team, for organizing this meeting. I am delighted that we are joined today by the new High Commissioner on National Minorities, Astrid Thors, and I applaud the renewal of the term of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović.

The OSCE's three autonomous institutions make a direct contribution to strengthening democratic societies that are based on respecting human rights and the rule of law.

For Canada, that key role of promoting the fundamental values that we hold dear is intimately linked with human dignity—the dignity to live freely and peacefully.

From that perspective, fighting intolerance, discrimination and hate crimes, especially against the LGBT community, is a clear priority for Canada. Combatting violence against women and girls, making headway in the fight against human trafficking, and continuing to support democratic institutions are also primary concerns for us.

One issue that Canada will focus more on this year is freedom of religion. As many of you already know, in February 2013, the Canadian government created a new Office of Religious Freedom, led by Ambassador Andrew Bennett. We are pleased that Ambassador Bennett accepted the ODIHR's invitation to participate in session 6 on freedom of religion.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE region still faces many challenges in terms of fully respecting and implementing our collective commitments. These challenges cannot be met unless we once again find the willingness to act together to promote human dignity in the spirit of Helsinki.

Thank you.