

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation meeting 2012
Opening Statement of the Canadian Delegation
Ambassador Fredericka Gregory
Permanent Representative to the OSCE
Monday, September 24th, 2012

Mr. Chairperson,

First of all, Canada would like to thank the Chair, the ODIHR team, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and everybody that worked for the organization of this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. And we also thank our Polish hosts for their generosity in hosting this event. Canada values the strong presence and participation of civil society partners at this Meeting and in the OSCE's work, in general.

Canada's strong commitment to the protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law is well known. These are values that Canadians hold dear, and that we continue to fight for around the world, whenever they are challenged.

This Meeting challenges us to do more. How can we better address some of the region's democracy and human rights challenges today? How do we counter the tendency by some within our Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security community to back-slide on key commitments and standards that we have adopted together?

In this connection, my Delegation is concerned by the back-sliding in democracy and human rights standards we are seeing today on "both sides of the Danube", notably the trend of discriminatory legislation and imprisonment of individuals based on sexual orientation, and alleged interference with the role of an independent judiciary.

At this year's HDIM, Canada's priorities include: the growing challenges facing religious freedom and belief; the persisting problem of human trafficking; the importance of promoting tolerance; and the importance of democratic elections.

Looking ahead to the OSCE Ministerial Council in Dublin at year's end, we welcome the Irish OSCE Chair's firm commitment to having a balanced package of decisions and deliverables across all three Security Dimensions. The lack of any outcome at the Vilnius Ministerial on the Human Dimension was unfortunate and a disappointment that should not be repeated in Dublin. Canada looks forward to working closely with partners in reaching solid outcomes at the Dublin Ministerial on Media Freedom, including digital freedom, on religious freedom and on standing up against violence directed at individuals because of their sexual orientation.

We also expect by Dublin we will be able to welcome **Mongolia** as the 57th member of the OSCE, in view of the strong case of this accession bid, and Mongolia's record and commitment to advancing our shared democratic values and OSCE 'acquis'.

A final word, in closing, on our expectations for **Ukraine**, in view of its upcoming 2013 OSCE Chairmanship. This is a major undertaking and responsibility, and we expect Ukraine to use this occasion and its role at the helm of the Organization next year to “model the way” by fully implementing OSCE commitments, and by leading us to achieve further progress in our work across all three OSCE Security Dimensions.

More immediately, Canada looks forward to participating actively in the upcoming OSCE-ODIHR Election Observation Mission for Ukraine at the end of next month, when we’ll be sending a large contingent of Canadians, including Parliamentarians, to observe whether these elections are conducted freely and fairly, in accordance with the OSCE’s high standards.

To sum up, a right achieved is a right in need of protection. We cannot afford to become complacent on fundamental rights and freedoms, and on tolerance issues. We are constantly reminded of the importance of these rights and the struggle to secure and defend them.

And, OSCE commitments must be implemented fully by all participating States, not in an “*à la carte*” fashion as some are doing. For this reason, we all must remain vigilant and renew our efforts to consolidate and implement our OSCE commitments, and to strengthen them, as well as relevant OSCE Institutions in this field. The annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) helps serve this purpose.

Thank you – Merci.