

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation meeting 2014
Statement by the Delegation of Canada
Working Session 9: Violence Against Women
(violence against women belonging to vulnerable groups)
26 September, 2014

Madam Moderator,

The promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls is a priority for the Government of Canada. As we stated during yesterday's discussions, discrimination against women and girls is one of the main barriers to the realization of their basic human rights, to achieve sustainable development, and is a structural driver of violence against women and girls.

In addition to being a strong supporter of UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security, including through our own 2010 National Action Plan on this issue, Canada has led on the Violence Against Women resolution at the UN Human Rights Council for the past two decades. The 2014 VAW resolution at HRC 26 focused on violence against women as a barrier to women's political and economic empowerment. The long-term stability and development of a society is directly tied to the empowerment of women.

Women and girls are often targeted because they are among the most vulnerable members of their community. Among many other aspects, the resolution recognizes that, marginalized in their own communities, "indigenous women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, older women, migrants and minorities often experience multiple forms of discrimination, which may increase their vulnerability to all forms of violence and limit their ability to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political autonomy."

Canada also uses the opportunity afforded by the Universal Periodic Review at the HRC to voice our concerns and make our recommendations when it comes to preventing violence against women and girls and promoting their rights.

Canada, like all other OSCE participating States, is not immune to the serious challenges posed by violence and discrimination against women belonging to vulnerable groups. Last week, the Government of Canada released an Action Plan on Family Violence and Violent Crimes against Aboriginal Women and Girls. The plan is putting to work the \$25 million the government announced in 2014 and is part of the \$200 million investment in a range of measures to address violence against Aboriginal women and girls. The Plan sets out concrete action to prevent violence, support Aboriginal victims, and protect Aboriginal women and girls from violence.

Internationally, Canada has played a leadership role in raising awareness of, and taking action toward ending child, early and forced marriage. Together with Zambia and a core group of countries, we will introduce a resolution on the issue at the UN General Assembly again this year, and we call on all OSCE participating States to join us with their support. The OSCE is a regional security organization and Canada believes it must play an important role in supporting and implementing relevant UN resolutions, in advancing our joint OSCE commitments and in leading by example when it comes to tackling violence and

discrimination against women. Last year's addendum to the Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings must also give renewed impetus to our efforts to combat a crime that disproportionately affects women and girls.

OSCE participating States must speak out against violence against women, including sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and emergency situations, regardless of whether this crime takes place within or outside the OSCE region. Canada was honoured to participate in the June Global Summit to end Sexual Violence in London and to contribute to the fight against this grievous affront to human dignity.

Madam Moderator,

Since we did not take the floor during the morning session on combating domestic violence, we also take this opportunity to state that there should be no doubt as to the commitment of the Government of Canada and of Canadians to end domestic violence. We are tackling this problem through long-standing national and regional initiatives to stop family violence and through grass-root initiatives such as the now global White Ribbon Campaign to help men educate boys and promote healthy and equal relationships between women and men, girls and boys.

Canada's recommendations for this session are:

-For OSCE participating States to unequivocally condemn violence and discrimination against women in all its forms, notably violence against women belonging to vulnerable groups.

-For OSCE participating States to fully recognize the relevance and benefits to our collective security of implementing the most fundamental elements of the UN resolutions on women, peace, and security, and to reflect this in relevant OSCE decisions and ensure that women are not only in the room, but at the head table of all decision-making processes.

-For the OSCE and its Institutions, including field operations, to assist participating States in developing policies, programmes and training to address the issue of violence and discrimination against women in all its forms.