

Statement by the Delegation of CANADA

Review Conference on the Implementation of OSCE Commitments
Human Dimension
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EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN AND MEN

Thank you.

Canada believes that gender equality is an essential component to the progress of human rights, democratic development, and sustainable peace and security. Truly sustainable and equitable societies will only develop if women are able to participate as equal partners and decision makers, and beneficiaries of the development of their societies. Canada also recognizes that in order to be effective, efforts to advance gender equality must reflect diversity both between and among women and men, including such various social, economic and demographic variables, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, religion, income, age.

The Government of Canada's promotes gender equality by funding post-secondary education opportunities of both women and men. In the past few decades, Canadian women have made remarkable strides forward in educational attainment, particularly in post-secondary education. The proportion of women aged 25-64 years who have completed post-secondary education has increased from 51% in 1999 to 62% in 2009.

There has also been an increase in women's overall participation in professional fields of work traditionally dominated by men – for example, business, finance, and law. This progress can be attributed, at least in part, to Canada's commitment to achieving equality between men and women and the implementation of effective government policy and programs. To further this, the practice of gender-based analysis is contextualized within an implementation and accountability framework pursuant to the creation and tabling of a new national Gender-Based Analysis Action Plan.

The increased participation of women in the paid work force has been one of the most significant trends in Canada in recent decades, especially among young women, largely due to rising educational attainment. Overall, employment and participation rates for women are the highest among G7 countries and are converging towards those of Canadian men. In 2009, women made up almost half of Canada's labour force at 47% and 82.2% of women ages 25-54 years participated in the labour force.

The Government of Canada is committed to the principle of eliminating gender-based wage inequities within the federally regulated sector. Pay equity helps achieve fairness in the workplace by ensuring that women and men are paid equal wages for work of equal value. An Employment Equity Program also exists with the objective of eliminating employment barriers, as well as improving access and distribution throughout all occupations and at all levels for members of designated groups

identified in the Employment Equity Act, including women. The program also aims to foster a climate of equity in organizations.

One of Canada's human rights priorities is the elimination of violence against women. Internationally, governments have been working together to address this issue in a concerted manner, including through active engagement of national institutions dedicated to the promotion of women's equality, and through partnerships with non-governmental organisations that advocate women's equality. Of course, more work remains to be done.

Canada has been a long time advocate for the integration of a gender perspective, also known as gender mainstreaming, in humanitarian, armed conflict and peace-building areas. We have demonstrated this commitment through our work in the context of the International Criminal Court and the prosecution of gender-based crimes, our tenure on the Security Council and work on the protection of civilians, our more recent role in follow-up to the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and support for robust implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1820 which focuses on sexual violence in conflict.

Canada remains committed to addressing gender-based discrimination and violence in all its forms in Canada and the world. As in many countries, in Canada, NGOs and the voluntary sector have played a crucial role in raising public awareness and combating violence against women and girls.

Mr. Chairperson, we wish to offer the following **recommendations** within the context of this session and particularly on the eve of the Astana Summit:

- We encourage ODIHR to work with participating States to ensure that commitments within the Action Plan, particularly those related to gender mainstreaming, are translated into concrete action through sustained implementation. We further encourage efforts to enhance data collection, monitoring and reporting mechanisms to strengthen the effectiveness of implementation, including the tracking of impacts and outcomes on the population.
- We strongly urge participating States to increase nominations for qualified female candidates for positions within the OSCE;
- We urge participating States to increase the number of female military and police contingent members sent to peacekeeping and peace-building missions or operations.

In conclusion, Canada believes the issues of gender equality and women's human rights require the ongoing attention of the OSCE. Canada is committed to continue working with other partners to advance this agenda.

Merci Monsieur le Président.