

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation meeting 2011

**Canadian Statement for the Working Sessions 13:
Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II:
Review of the implementation of commitments on promotion of mutual respect and
understanding**

Tuesday, 4 October 2011

Thank you.

Canada welcomes the efforts of the OSCE in combating intolerance and discrimination and encourages participating States to combat all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of culture and religion.

As within OSCE member states, Canada's society continues to evolve, with increasing cultural and religious diversity. It is imperative that our efforts to build a stronger, more cohesive Canada reflect the changing needs of Canadians.

We are concerned by all acts of intolerance, incitement, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief.

As part of efforts to foster an integrated society, the Government of Canada seeks to help individuals and communities overcome barriers, and we fund many innovative programs to promote equitable participation, regardless of origin or belief.

We support intercultural and interfaith dialogue among groups; we help federal and public institutions to become more responsive to the needs of Canada's diverse population; and we are engaging in international discussions on multiculturalism and diversity.

Canada continues to be concerned about the plight of minorities, including the Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities, in the OSCE region. Canada encourages participating States to continue to move forward with the implementation of existing commitments to combat all forms of discrimination.

I am pleased to report that Canada will be creating an Office of Religious Freedom to be housed in the Department of Foreign Affairs. The office will promote freedom of religion and belief in support of religious minorities.

Canada takes the issue of hate crime very seriously. In Canada, the Criminal Code has specific legislation to address crimes motivated by hate. Our hate crime initiative promotes and increases standardized reporting and monitoring of hate crimes by Canada's police services. Its activities include: supplemental data collection of hate crimes; police training to improve data consistency;

verification to ensure the accuracy of the data; annual reporting of the data collected; and participation in national and international forums.

The availability of this data raises community and police awareness and improves police understanding of the nature and extent of hate-motivated crime within their jurisdictions and compared to other jurisdictions. This information also enables monitoring of the impact of procedural, societal and legislative changes on this type of crime. The development of this initiative has made Canada a world leader in designing and maintaining a data collection system on hate crimes.

The Government of Canada has additionally established the Communities at Risk: Security Infrastructure Program to help enhance the security infrastructure of communities targeted by hate-motivated crime. The program responds to security concerns raised by communities and strives for better understanding of the links between security measures and the prevention of hate-motivated crime. Funding is available to not-for-profit organizations linked to a community with a demonstrated history of hate-motivated crime. The funds help defray the costs of security infrastructure for places of worship, provincially/territorially recognized educational institutions, and community centres.

On the issue of anti-Semitism, Canada is an active member in the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research. In November 2010, Canada hosted the second Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Anti-Semitism Conference in Ottawa, where parliamentarians from around the world came together to develop mechanisms to combat this unique form of hatred.

We would like to commend the OSCE for its excellent work in promoting tolerance and understanding, and we would like to assure participating States of Canada's commitment to furthering progress in this area.

Thank you.