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Canadian Delegation to the
Organization for Security & Cooperation
in Europe



Délégation du Canada auprès de
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération
en Europe

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
ON THE AUGUST 18TH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
IN KAZAKHSTAN
679TH MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 6TH, 2007**

Canada followed the 18 August Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan with great interest. We were pleased to send a number of short-term and long-term observers to assist the extensive OSCE Election Observation Mission.

There was also a Canadian presence in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's observation mission. Senator Consiglio Di Nino was the head of PA's observing efforts and was designated by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator to lead the OSCE short-term observers.

On a positive note, the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) reported some improvements in the conduct of these elections over the 2004 Parliamentary and 2005 Presidential votes. Improved access to media for all political parties, greater transparency from election officials and inclusive candidate registration lists were all cited as steps forward.

However, Canada notes with serious concern that according to both ODIHR and the OSCE PA, this election did not meet international and OSCE standards.

It is our view that at least one level of parliament should be filled entirely with popularly elected representatives, party and election officials should be separate, party registration processes should be reasonable and the threshold for inclusion into parliament should be low enough to ensure opposition parties have a real chance to sit in the legislature.

Canada is also deeply concerned about the widespread lack of transparency and systemic problems related to the vote count. This shortcoming alone undermines the fairness and legitimacy of elections.

The conduct of free and fair elections is a central OSCE principle and commitment.

As we have stated on numerous occasions, leadership in the OSCE should be assessed based on concrete actions, not words. While we welcome leadership from all participating States, we reiterate the importance of displaying tangible characteristics of democracy and the substantial implementation of the commitments that are set out in our agreed documents.

We encourage Kazakhstan to work closely with the ODIHR and the OSCE Centre in Astana to implement concrete democratic reforms to further transparency and fairness, including in the electoral process.