

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

**DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE  
STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY THE  
HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES  
AMBASSADOR KNUT VOLLEBAEK  
718<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
26 JUNE 2008**

Canada warmly welcomes the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Ambassador Knut Vollebaek back to the Permanent Council. We thank him for the detailed report of his activities and that of his office since his appearance before us last November.

Canada believes that the role of the High Commissioner, in promoting and protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, and in conflict prevention, early warning and quiet diplomacy, is of crucial importance in pursuing our Organization's goal of a secure region.

Canada fully supports the work of the HCNM and is pleased to contribute significant extra-budgetary resources to assist the High Commissioner implement his programming.

We support the efforts of the HCNM in providing recommendations on legislation, institutions, policies and practices that promote good inter-communal and inter-confessional relations.

In this context, we take note with interest that, consistent with his mandate related to conflict prevention, the High Commissioner has elaborated Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations. We believe that recommendations issued by the HCNM are indeed a useful way to stimulate debate on the current state of the law and practice in respect of certain questions related to minorities, and to encourage participating States and other actors to think creatively about addressing these issues. We thank him for these, and look forward to studying the contents of the Recommendations.

The High Commissioner and his office have been active in various parts of the OSCE region. His continued attention to minorities in South-Eastern Europe is more than warranted, as harmonious relations between the different communities is an important underpinning of long-term stability and security in that region.

Canada is pleased that the HCNM also has lived up to his commitment to place greater emphasis on Central Asia, and that a fruitful dialogue has been established with participating States of that region.

The High Commissioner's visit to Georgia and his efforts to help address national minority issues not only in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli regions but also in the conflict zone of Abkhazia, Georgia, are timely. We are grateful for the HCNM's leadership in addressing unlawful and divisive measures adopted by the de facto Abkhaz authorities, which add to tensions in the area: this is the sort of intervention we expect from the HCNM in the performance of his mandate, and we commend him for this.

In closing, Canada assures the High Commissioner of our support for his important work and wish him well as he continues to carry out his mandate.