

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Sessions 17
Promotion of tolerance, non-discrimination, and mutual respect and
understanding
October 12, 2006

Canada is pleased that the issue of promoting non-discrimination, mutual respect and understanding has once again been made a specifically selected topic for the 2006 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. World events over the past year have demonstrated the need to foster understanding of diversity by reaching across the lines of culture, religion, race and ethnicity.

Canada views the role of national governments as paramount in addressing acts of intolerance, and in developing programs and policies that fulfill the commitments of past OSCE conferences, including those in Berlin, Vienna and Cordoba, and the Ministerial Councils of Sofia, Maastricht and Ljubljana as paramount. For its part, Canada is continuing its efforts on hate crime data collection, law enforcement and education. For example, the department responsible for statistics – Statistics Canada is working to enhance the collection of data related to crimes and incidents motivated by hate. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics has developed a nationally standardized data-collection strategy on hate-motivated crime, as well as a training program for police to support data collection and reporting. This training has already begun across the country.

Canada also remains committed to supporting and contributing to OSCE efforts to combat discrimination and promote understanding. The work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) under its Tolerance and Non-Discrimination program should be applauded and supported by all participating States, particularly its most recent report, “Challenges and responses to Hate-Motivated Incidents in the OSCE Region”. The report demonstrates the tangible results of the ODIHR program.

We are pleased to see that this afternoon’s session is addressing the issue of youth – both as perpetrators and victims of hate-crime. Canadian youth form the most racially and culturally diverse age group in Canada, and we have long recognized the importance of engaging this group in our anti-racism and social cohesion strategies.

Canada has developed programs and policies to create opportunities for young people to gain a better understanding of their country, to connect with one another and to experience the diversity of our country’s communities.

One such initiative is the annual *Racism. Stop It!* National Video Competition, which is celebrated each year on March 21 to coincide with the International Day for the

Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Competition is aimed specifically at enhancing awareness among youth (aged 12 to 18) to combat racism and affect change in Canadian society through creative expression.

Another annual initiative is the Mathieu Da Costa Challenge, which invites youth (aged 9 to 18) to submit an original piece of writing and artwork that celebrates the contributions of Aboriginal, African and other Canadians of diverse racial and ethnic origins, to the building of Canada.

The Government of Canada also funds community-based initiatives to foster cross-cultural understanding among Canadian youth and to promote activities to eliminate racism and discrimination. The Government is currently supporting a project by the United Nations Association in Canada that is facilitating the implementation of community action plans in nine communities across Canada, to promote diversity and combat racism.

Furthermore, Canada is continuing to build upon the foundation of our Multiculturalism Policy with priorities for action such as cross-cultural understanding, civic participation, and developing institutions that reflect Canada's diversity.

Both nationally and internationally, we are fully committed to the fight against all forms of intolerance and hate. We encourage all participating States to honour their OSCE commitments. We also encourage participating States to foster and continue the debate within their countries on individual and collective responsibilities to combat hatred.

We are encouraged by what has been accomplished to date, but we know our work is far from over. Canada remains steadfast in its efforts to foster an inclusive society built on mutual respect and understanding of cultural differences, and we will continue to share our experiences – both our successes and our challenges – with other participating and partner States, as well as with international civil society. This sharing is vital to our efforts, and can be achieved in both formal and informal ways. As in the past, Canada is open to sharing best practices with states and institutions, and will continue to do so in a manner that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness.

Combating racism and intolerance requires many tools – information, education, legislation – but most importantly, it requires perseverance. We must be unrelenting in our efforts to build capacity, educate and to break down barriers to ensure that every human being feels respected and included. Through continued dialogue and concrete action, participating States and civil society can create a better world, rooted firmly in our common search for mutual respect and equality.