



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

MC.DEL/8/07
29 November 2007

ENGLISH
Original: ENGLISH
FRENCH

CANADIAN STATEMENT BY
MS. COLLEEN SWORDS
ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER,
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY BRANCH,
AND
POLITICAL DIRECTOR

15TH OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
MADRID, NOVEMBER 29-30, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for your warm welcome to Madrid and leadership of the OSCE over the past year. It is an honour to represent Canada at this Ministerial Council.

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law are the cornerstones of the Organization's mandate and provide the foundation for stability, security and prosperity within the OSCE region. Canada is resolved to uphold these values at home and abroad.

We observe with deep concern that not all countries in the region are free, open pluralist societies. Canada believes in action not rhetoric and we are not fooled by cosmetic democratic reforms.

We call on all participating States to act on their democratic commitments to the fullest extent. For instance, no participating State should hinder or unduly limit international observation of their national elections.

Canada highly values the work of Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) for its capability, expertise and professionalism in assisting all OSCE states in fulfilling their commitments and in reporting on the state of human rights and democracy across the OSCE region.

We particularly appreciate the Office's work in several fields of importance to Canada, including democratization and elections; women, peace and security; trafficking in human beings; tolerance and non-discrimination; and Freedom of Assembly and Association.

Other OSCE institutions such as the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on the Freedom of the Media are also fundamental to the realization of the OSCE's mandate.

We also offer our support to the maintenance, next year, of the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination.

Mr. Chairman,

A commitment to action also means making common cause with those defending the values we uphold. The courageous work of human rights defenders remains imperative in order to expose, address and combat human rights violations committed throughout the world.

Canada recognizes the OSCE's noteworthy ability to adapt to new threats to security, in large part due to its highly effective field missions.

In recent years, the OSCE has worked with its participating States and other organisations to address the threat of terrorism through a unique approach that draws upon all three dimensions. Our further success in meeting this challenge rests on a continued respect for human rights and rule of law.

Mr Chairman,

The democratic and community policing foundations of the OSCE's police reform activities continue to have a positive impact in South East Europe. The expansion of these programmes in Central Asia will do much to further stability in this region.

Canada believes that the OSCE should continue to adapt in order to address priority issues. Border management is a proven strength of the OSCE and these capabilities should be employed to their fullest extent in Central Asia.

Canada's engagement in Afghanistan reflects our commitment to support international efforts to build security in this region.

We are pleased that the OSCE is looking to further its cooperation with this country. The investment the Organisation makes in Afghanistan can only enhance the OSCE region's stability through developing secure borders and curbing the Afghan drug trade.

We need to coordinate our work in this area with other international organizations in order to avoid duplication, always ensuring that our efforts are responsive to Afghan priorities.

Mr. Chairman,

While addressing new threats, the OSCE must also continue to fulfill its mandate in tackling traditional security challenges, such as conventional arms control.

The Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) plays an important role in maintaining peace and security in Europe. All States Parties need to demonstrate their commitment to the CFE regime by continuing to engage constructively in ongoing discussions. We continue to look forward to entry-into-force of the Adapted CFE Treaty when the right conditions are in place, including fulfillment of the Istanbul Commitments.

Canada also reiterates its call for all parties involved in the "frozen conflicts" to work for negotiated solutions that respect the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Kosovo's status remains uncertain at this moment. Whatever the outcome of discussions in the coming weeks, it is our view that the OSCE will continue to play an important role in promoting human and minority rights.

On institutional issues, we welcome the conclusion of the work on a draft Convention on the OSCE's Legal Personality. We support the prompt adoption of the draft Convention in Madrid so it can be opened for signature.

Before closing, we would like to communicate our expectations for the leadership of the OSCE. Leadership is an honour that brings obligations. We look to States to lead by example. To us, this means adhering to both the letter and the spirit of OSCE standards and commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, I would like to offer our full support to the incoming Finnish Chairmanship. We have every confidence that their efforts will continue to strengthen the OSCE.