

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 ON THE SITUATION IN GEORGIA  
726TH MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
14 AUGUST 2008**

Canada would like to begin by welcoming the Chair-in-Office's Special Envoy and would like to thank him for his assessment of the situation on the ground in Georgia. We welcome his suggestions on the broader role the OSCE should play in South Ossetia and on how to redeploy the OSCE Mission back to the zone of conflict.

We agree with his assessment that the OSCE is a well placed international organisation already in Georgia with infrastructure, people and experience. We support the Chair-in-Office's suggestion to increase the number of OSCE observers in South Ossetia.

The Government of Canada strongly condemns the recent violence in Georgia and deplores the resulting deaths, civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure.

Canada strongly condemns the Russian Federation's incursions into Georgian territory, which have occurred far beyond the zone of conflict in South Ossetia, and also Abkhazia. It is imperative that Russia respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. It is also clear to see that regional security and stability in the region have been compromised by the events of the past week.

Canada calls upon Russian and Georgian forces to immediately cease hostilities throughout Georgia. We would like to note that both the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, David Emerson, have stated that "in escalating the conflict through its attacks on Georgian towns and cities outside South Ossetia. Russia has ceased to act as a peacekeeper".

The Prime Minister also noted that "Military force will not resolve this dispute... (as) the only viable long-term solution is international mediation and peacekeeping".

Canada regrets that the Russian Federation's use of force has been disproportionate and unjustifiable. Moreover, the Russian Federation's excessive military actions are also in contradiction with its peacekeeping and mediation role, as well as the principles of peaceful conflict resolution reflected in the OSCE Charter for European Security, the Helsinki Final Act and norms of international law. The Russian Federation is now a party to the conflict.

Canada supports the efforts of the OSCE Chair-in-Office, the French Presidency of the EU and the United Nations Security Council to halt the violence in Georgia and to find a political solution to the conflict. In particular, we strongly urge the Russian Federation to immediately halt all military action (if it has not yet done so) in the sovereign territory, airspace and waters of Georgia, as well as the de-facto naval blockade that is currently in place. All forces must withdraw to positions that they held on 6 August 2008, and all refugees and internally displaced persons should be allowed to return to their homes.

Canada is working with its international partners to bring this conflict to a close as quickly as possible and we stand ready to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by the conflict. However, the first priority for all sides must be to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, and to facilitate full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and medical aid to assist those in need. We call upon both the Russian Federation and Georgia to ensure that the civilian population has the assistance it needs to meet immediate humanitarian assistance needs and call on all parties to ensure access for international relief efforts. For its part, Canada will provide up to \$1 million in humanitarian assistance to assist people affected by the recent fighting in Georgia.