

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
DIRECTOR OF ODIHR, AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN STROHAL
716TH MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
12 JUNE 2008**

It is with mixed emotions that Canada welcomes Ambassador Strohal to the Permanent Council, for this, his last presentation as Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. While we are sad to see him leave, we take great satisfaction at the legacy that he leaves behind. Under his leadership, ODIHR's credibility with its partners, and the broader international community, has reached new heights. ODIHR delivers tangible benefits to the populations of the OSCE region, contributing in large part to the OSCE's continuing relevance.

Ambassador Strohal has brought tremendous energy, professionalism, integrity and vision to his work at ODIHR. Allow me to highlight a few aspects that, from Canada's perspective, were particularly important.

Ambassador Strohal has rightly put human rights, including gender equality, at the heart of his institution's work. Under the Ambassador's guidance, ODIHR has remained at the forefront of human rights developments. The plight of human rights defenders has received increased attention, and the establishment of a focal point to address this issue is commendable. We also appreciate the pro-active stance adopted by ODIHR in monitoring and reporting on human rights issues, and in developing instruments, such as manuals and handbooks dealing with particularly current and complex areas. These publications are first-quality tools, which will be of use even beyond the OSCE community.

We also have been impressed at how Ambassador Strohal and his team have addressed hate crime and manifestations of intolerance and discrimination. The TANDIS website and the annual hate crime reports have proven to be an invaluable tools for dissemination of information and best practices and highlight the imperative of preventing and combating these crimes. We appreciate also the support that ODIHR has provided to the 3 Personal Representatives of the CiO on tolerance and non-discrimination.

ODIHR's excellence in the area of elections is widely recognized. Its methods and practices, developed through mission experience acquired in more than 2/3 of the participating States, including Canada, have been honed throughout the years. Elections observation methodology can be adapted to fulfill the primary purpose of these efforts, namely to help foster transparent, fair and free elections, and to assist host countries to implement their OSCE commitments in the field of elections. In this context, ODIHR's response to taskings given at Brussels, in widening the geographical composition of missions, increasing transparency of recruitment and training international observers, among other measures, can only be commended. In Canada's view, our attention should focus now on how participating States implement their elections-related commitments, and how they take advantage of, and respond to, the assistance and recommendations provided by ODIHR.

We believe that ODIHR has done a sterling job in organizing Human Dimension events, fostering a healthy debate among participating States and between them and civil society. We participating States must ensure that optimal use is made of these events by ensuring as broad a participation as possible.

As Ambassador Strohal notes, another milestone of his tenure was the Common Responsibility report. This was an important stock taking exercise. Again, participating States must answer the call to action to address the challenges raised in the report.

Mr. Chairman,

The introduction of multi-year, long-term programming at ODIHR also was a welcome development for Canada. We have supported this approach by offering our extra-budgetary funding through a multi-year Master Arrangement, in part due to the leadership shown by Ambassador Strohal, and we encourage other participating States to consider following a similar approach. Our Master Arrangement and its facilitation of funding has enabled Canada to become the largest extra-budgetary contributor to ODIHR project work.

Mr. Chairman,

Canada believes ODIHR is one of the OSCE's success story. Ambassador Strohal, with the support of an outstanding team, has played a key role in making it so. His principled approach to the issues, his leadership, his availability, his willingness to listen and to develop close partnerships with a broad array of players, have stood him in good stead.

We wish to express our gratitude to Ambassador Strohal for the outstanding work he has performed and for the achievements he has presided over during his 5 years at the helm. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours, and his continued diplomatic work in the Human Rights field.