

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2009

**Canadian Statement (As delivered) by
Ambassador Fredericka Gregory**

Working Session 17: Democratic institutions (Warsaw, Thursday, 08 October 2009)

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

Legitimate, effective and participatory democratic institutions and practices allow all citizens to equally and freely express their will and to hold their governments to account. As such, these institutions and practices are necessary for both human security and human development.

Canada is committed to working with our governmental, non-governmental and multilateral partners to support the continued democratic development of the OSCE region. As Ambassador Lebarcic, Director of ODIHR, has noted: this goal is a "work in progress".

The holding of free and fair democratic elections is a core commitment shared by OSCE participating States, but one that has been unevenly applied and interpreted in some parts of the OSCE region. In this regard, Canada attaches great value to the OSCE's in election monitoring and assistance. The fact that governments outside of the OSCE seek the assistance of ODIHR in conducting their own elections is a further indication of the Organization's reputation and expertise in this crucial democratic endeavour.

A case in point this year was ODIHR's assistance - despite challenging circumstances - to the elections in Afghanistan. Canada was pleased to support the ODIHR election support team for the Afghan elections and you can count on us to continue to help with Afghanistan's capacity-building needs.

We believe that an important priority for the ODIHR is to continue to ensure credible observation and assessment of elections by upholding the independence, impartiality and professionalism for which the ODIHR's election observation missions are internationally recognized.

The review of electoral legislation is a core activity where the ODIHR has demonstrated value-added. The same applies to ODIHR's work with and advice to OSCE Field Missions in the field of democracy-building

I have 2 recommendations:

- Continued cooperation on elections between ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is essential. We have seen some progress on this in recent months. Speaking with one voice on election reports helps reinforce the credibility and impact of the OSCE.
- There is a need to address the appropriate staffing of ODIHR to ensure they can provide strong expert support to OSCE Field Missions. This is a shared

responsibility of both ODHIR and participating States (in their secondments to the OSCE).