

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2015**  
**Statement by the Delegation of Canada**  
**Tuesday, September 22, 2015**

*Working Session 2 – Freedom Online*

Mister Moderator,

Canada is pleased to see two special HDIM sessions dedicated to the burgeoning issues that affect human rights and fundamental freedoms in light of the digital revolution.

As a member of the Freedom Online Coalition, our position is straight-forward: we believe that human rights are universal, and are committed to the principle that the human rights people have offline also apply online. This includes the rights to freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly as well as privacy-related rights.

We speak today because we recognize the power that a free, open and secure internet has to advance democracy and promote human rights, innovation and economic prosperity. However, the progress achieved so far, and the potential for further progress, face increasing threats from a variety of actors. These range from criminal organisations seeking to expand their fraudulent activities online to repressive governments seeking to harness the latest technologies to consolidate power and quash dissent. “Security concerns” are increasingly used as a pretext for clamping down on human rights, through censorship as well as illicit blocking, filtering and monitoring. Tools for freedom are being exploited as tools for crime and repression.

Canada believes that the best response to these challenges must be based on an inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach that involves the private sector, civil society, the technical community and governments. In our opening statement, we highlighted that a multiplicity of voices is critical to vibrant, healthy and functioning democracies. In this context, the freedom to express diverse views online without risk to personal safety and security is an essential component of public debate and democratic life.

This is why Canada is dedicating significant resources to efforts to maintain and increase digital space for free expression and open political dialogue in places where civil society is under threat, including through the Digital Public Square Project implemented by the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto.

Canada looks forward to continued cooperation with States, the private sector and civil society towards the protection and expansion of free space online.

Canada’s recommendations for this session are for participating States:

- to fully respect their OSCE commitments and international obligations with regards to the rights of freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression, both online and offline;
- to repeal laws that seek to restrict media and stifle opposition voices online;

- to cease backing online propaganda operations aimed at fomenting hate against other States or particular groups or individuals; and

- for OSCE Institutions to fully integrate and reflect an online perspective in their work for the protection and promotion of OSCE Human Dimension commitments.