

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
725TH MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
08 AUGUST 2008**

The Government of Canada strongly condemns the recent violence in Georgia and deplores the resulting deaths and casualties. The military actions undertaken by all sides are cause for great concern and Canada calls for an immediate halt to the violence. We strongly urge all parties involved to display maximum restraint in words and deeds.

We strongly reiterate our call to all parties for a resumption of peaceful dialogue and to resist escalating tensions further with aggressive and provocative actions and call for a flexible, peaceful and negotiated resolution to this conflict in a manner that respects Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Canada calls on the Russian Federation to support the resumption of talks between Georgia and South Ossetia and urges both parties to begin talks, which we note should have taken place today.

In this regard, we are pleased that the Russian Federation has stated that it will continue its efforts to avert further bloodshed and to restore peace in the South Ossetian region of Georgia. However we are dismayed to hear that Russian Prime Minister Putin has threatened Georgia with retaliation for the hostilities that are taking place in South Ossetia. We do not think that such actions are appropriate for a country that is engaged in peacekeeping and mediation activities and call upon the Russian Federation to practice restraint from further actions that could further inflame an already tense situation.

We would also underline that military actions by Russia cannot be justified through unilateral perception on what may reduce tensions and are not in line with Russia's role as a neutral peacekeeper and mediator.

Canada is saddened to hear that a barracks for Russian peacekeepers was hit by artillery fire and that there were fatalities amongst the peacekeepers stationed there. Canada extends its condolences to the Russian Federation for the loss of their personnel.

We deplore the fact that the OSCE Mission's Tskhinvali Field Office has been hit during the fighting and are concerned for the safety of the remaining staff at the office.

We strongly urge all sides to the conflict to allow the Red Cross and other humanitarian organisations access to those requiring humanitarian and medical aid in the zone of conflict.