



**STATEMENT BY MS. COLLEEN SWORDS,
ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY BRANCH,
AND POLITICAL DIRECTOR
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF CANADA
TO THE 16TH OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
HELSINKI, DECEMBER 4-5, 2008**

Mr. Chairman,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you in Helsinki. Sincere thanks to our Finnish hosts for their warm welcome.

Our accomplishments this year would not have been possible without strong leadership, and we salute the current Chairmanship, led by Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, for an excellent job. We welcome, in particular, his efforts to renew the spirit of Helsinki 1975 through a Ministerial Declaration.

Over lunch today, we had a frank exchange of views on European Security Architecture. However, in thinking about new ideas, we must not lose sight of our fundamental principles. Existing institutions and arrangements underpinning Euro-Atlantic security – NATO, the OSCE and the European Union – have worked well for us. What we need is to renew and strengthen respect for our existing commitments.

I would like to begin with comments on three aspects of the OSCE's work.

Supporting freedom and democracy is a top priority for the Government of Canada, because healthy democracies are essential for long-term stability, prosperity and security.

Our first priority here in Helsinki is thus to reaffirm our collective commitment to the OSCE and its shared values and fundamental principles, which are enshrined in the *Helsinki Final Act*.

In recognition of the 60th Anniversary of the signing of the *UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights*, we should focus on the human dimension of the OSCE's work. We strongly support the work of the OSCE in promoting and sustaining democracy, particularly the Organization's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Canada will not accept any restrictions on ODIHR's mandate and activities.

The Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on the Freedom of the Media are also fundamental to realizing the OSCE's mandate.

We also offer our support to the maintenance of the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination.

Second, the OSCE has developed an ambitious set of action plans, norms and decisions to address new challenges and threats, such as terrorism and human trafficking. Let us strive to implement those plans.

Third, Afghanistan remains a top Canadian foreign policy priority and we are pleased with the OSCE's proposed programme of activities aimed at building regional and Afghan capacity in border security, customs and counter-narcotics. We believe that the OSCE's work can be most effective if carried out in Afghanistan in coordination with other international organizations. And, of course, it must remain responsive to the needs of the Afghan people and government.

We need to ensure that the OSCE's valuable expertise in election assistance and monitoring work contributes to the success of the Afghan elections envisioned for 2009.

Mr. Chairman,

This year has been a sombre reminder of how unresolved conflicts continue to pose a serious threat to security and stability in the OSCE area. The OSCE continues to play a critical role in maintaining peace and security, including through confidence building measures such as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE).

We call on all nations to abide by their CFE commitments, particularly those agreed to in Istanbul. We continue to look forward to entry-into-force of the Adapted CFE Treaty when the right conditions are in place.

We must continue to search for lasting solutions to on-going "frozen conflicts."

Le Canada s'est réjoui de l'action rapide de l'OSCE face à la crise en Géorgie, incluant le déploiement rapide d'observateurs militaires de l'OSCE, au lendemain immédiat du conflit survenu en août.

Nous demeurons vivement préoccupés par la violation, par la Russie, des principes fondamentaux consacrés par l'Acte final d'Helsinki, notamment l'engagement à respecter l'intégrité territoriale des États participants. Nous avons condamné la reconnaissance par la Russie de l'Ossétie du Sud et de l'Abkhazie.

À cet égard, nous tenons à réaffirmer le ferme attachement du Canada à la souveraineté et à l'intégrité territoriale de la Géorgie et notre soutien aux aspirations Euro-atlantique de la Géorgie.

Canada firmly supports the continuation of the current mandate for the OSCE's Mission in Georgia, and reiterates our call for the full implementation of the Six Point Peace Plan. We reinforce the call for the full and unimpeded access of the OSCE, its institutions and its monitors throughout Georgia, including South Ossetia. We are pleased that some progress has been made in the Geneva process, led by the UN and the OSCE.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, I would like to extend our full support to the incoming Greek Chairmanship. We have full confidence in their ability to lead and strengthen the OSCE.