



STATEMENT

**OSCE High-level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination
Dr. Alice Wong, MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Astana Kazakhstan, June 29, 2010
SESSION 2 – Combating Anti-Semitism**

Mr. Chairman,

Canada would like to thank OSCE Personal Representative Rabbi Baker for his excellent work in the fight against anti-Semitism and in promoting tolerance in the OSCE.

Canada's policy of multiculturalism promotes acceptance of religious and ethnic diversity, and the protection of minority rights. But Canada is not immune to anti-Semitism. Research demonstrates the sad reality of prejudice against and hatred of Jews in Canada. Data gathered under the Government of Canada's Nationally Standardized Hate Crime Data Initiative indicates that Jews are the most likely religious group to be targeted for hate crimes, comprising 16% of all such crimes recorded in Canada in 2008, even though Jews constitute less than 1% of the Canadian population.

The Government of Canada works with civil society, other levels of government, and individuals to fight unjust discrimination, racism and religious intolerance, including Anti-Semitism. We encourage all OSCE participating States to do the same.

In 2009, the Government of Canada became a full member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research (ITF). The Government of Canada also funds, through its Community Historical Recognition Program, initiatives designed to commemorate and educate Canadians about restrictions on Jewish immigration before and during the Second World War, which were in part motivated by Anti-Semitic sentiments.

To help protect vulnerable communities against violent threats, we have created the Security Infrastructure Pilot Project to assist such institutions as synagogues and Hebrew schools in up-grading their security systems.

Our government condemns Anti-Semitism whether it occurs in Canada or throughout the world. As Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said, “most people...recognize Anti-Semitism for what it is, a pernicious evil that must be exposed, confronted and repudiated whenever and where ever it appears, an evil so profound that it is ultimately a threat to us all.”

We also recognize the scourge of the new Anti-Semitism which often disguises itself as Anti-Zionism, the sometimes violent movement that rejects the right of the Jewish people alone to a homeland. Prime Minister Harper has clearly condemned this phenomenon, saying:

“Unfortunately in some countries hatred of the Jews is still preached from religious pulpits and still proclaimed from political podiums. There are still people who would perpetrate another Holocaust if they could. That’s why we must resist the error of viewing the Holocaust as a strictly historical event. It’s not good enough for politicians to stand before you and say they remember and mourn what happened over six decades ago. They must stand up to those who advocate the destruction of Israel and its people today. And they must be unequivocal in their condemnation of anti-Semitic despots, terrorists and fanatics. That is the only way to honour the memory of those who were consumed by the Holocaust.”

That is why our government was the first to withdraw from the United Nations’ Durban Review Conference, due to our profound concerns about the manifestations of Anti-Semitism at the first Durban Conference, and the participation of such overtly Anti-Semitic regimes as the Islamic Republic of Iran in the planning of Durban Two.

Canadian parliamentarians have also been active in combating Anti-Semitism. They created the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition on Combating Anti-Semitism and have also participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism (ICCA) conference. In November 2010, Canadian parliamentarians will be hosting the next conference in Ottawa. This initiative builds upon progress made by the ICCA as well as the OSCE, European Union, national parliaments, and individual parliamentarians who have acknowledged that Anti-Semitism constitutes a real danger to society.

While continuing the general focus on combating all forms of hatred, the Government of Canada also recognizes that hatred can be manifest in specific ways and may require specific responses, as in the case of Anti-Semitism. We also recognize that Anti-Semitism constitutes a uniquely durable and pernicious form of hatred.

Canada

Mr. Chairman, My government would like to offer the following recommendations to the OSCE;

We encourage all governments to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to Anti-Semitism. Our government has done so by de-funding and refusing to meet with organizations that promote hatred of Jews, or apologize for terrorism. As my Minister, the Honourable Jason Kenney has said, such organizations “should not expect to receive resources... or any other form of official respect from the organs of the state. And I would encourage all other governments to take a similar approach to groups that either excuse violence against Jews or express essentially anti-Semitic sentiments.”

Canada encourages participating States to further develop data collection systems on hate-crime, which will contribute to identifying the groups being targeted and assist authorities to address violence against identifiable groups, including the Jewish community.

We recommend that all participating States sign onto the London Declaration on Combating Anti-Semitism and invite parliamentarians from OSCE countries to attend the International Parliamentary Coalition on Combating Anti-Semitism Conference in November this year;

We urge all participating States to uphold the Stockholm Declaration on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research and participate in or cooperate with the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.