



**Statement by the Honourable Jason Kenney,
Secretary of State, Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity,
To the High-Level Conference on Combating Discrimination and promoting Mutual
Respect and Understanding
Bucharest, Romania
June 7, 2007**

Like many countries around the world, Canada must address the challenges of integrating an increasingly diverse population, made up of people of many origins, many beliefs, and many cultures.

Canada has developed an evolving approach to citizenship based on shared core values, rights and responsibilities, anchored in a robust legislative and policy framework. Canada's goal is to ensure that there is a place for every citizen – regardless of background, race or ethnicity – and that we eliminate all barriers to social participation and economic opportunity.

The Government of Canada is continuing to marshal its efforts to fight unjust discrimination and promote mutual respect and understanding at all levels.

Our Constitution entrenches equality and fundamental freedoms for all, regardless of race, national origin, or religion.

In addition, our federal and provincial legislation contains specific measures which prohibit unjust discrimination in employment, and provision of service and accommodation.

For example, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* acknowledges multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society. It seeks to assist in preserving culture, eliminating unjust discrimination and enhancing cultural awareness and understanding.

Furthermore, the *Criminal Code*, *Canadian Human Rights Act*, *Broadcasting Act* and provincial legislation operate in concert to prohibit the publication or communication of hate speech in Canada, both in traditional media and over the Internet.

Nevertheless, Canada is not immune to anti-Semitism, racism, and hatred directed at religious and cultural minorities. For instance, an annual survey of anti-Semitic incidents produced by B'Nai Brith Canada reported an all-time high of such incidents last year.

An example of this phenomenon was the participation of a professor from a prominent Canadian university at President Ahmadinejad's holocaust denial conference last year in Tehran. This conference should remind us all of the confluence of anti-semitism, anti-zionism and holocaust denial.

In 2005, the Government of Canada took a decisive step to address the reality of racism and anti-semitism through the announcement of Canada's *Action Plan Against Racism*. This plan is a significant step in addressing racial discrimination in a coordinated manner across federal government institutions. A key objective of the Action Plan is to strengthen social cohesion.

Through the Action Plan, Canada is developing a nationally standardized data-collection strategy on hate-motivated crime and building a network with an infrastructure that connects police officers so they can share best practices, establish links in the community and conduct research.

Recognizing that governments cannot combat these issues alone, Canada is working together with civil society, other levels of government, and individuals to fight discrimination, racism and religious intolerance, including anti-Semitism.

Canada is also working with vulnerable communities on the development of a security fund to help protect installations such as synagogues and mosques, and Jewish and Muslim schools, from acts of hate-motivated violence.

We recently funded a B'nai Brith Canada initiative called the *Third International Symposium on Hate on the Internet*, which aimed at increasing knowledge and awareness of the dangers of web-based hate and extremism. And, we are also currently funding a project of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women aimed at increasing civic participation of Muslim women across the country.

We are proud that the Toronto Metropolitan Police actively contributes to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights's *Law Enforcement Officer Programme on Combating Hate*. We are pleased to support it and we applaud the excellent work of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination program over the last four years.

International events have demonstrated a greater need to reach across the divides of culture, religion, race and ethnicity to foster understanding of diversity and respect. The Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security, a key commitment of Canada's National Security Policy, engages ethno-cultural communities in an ongoing dialogue on national security in a diverse and pluralistic society to ensure that national security is a complementary component to our Canadian values of individual rights and freedoms.

Mr. Chairman, it is through these types of concrete efforts that Canada meets its OSCE commitments to promote mutual respect and understanding and combat unjust discrimination.

We believe that our approach has served us very well and that Canada is, in many respects, a leader in creating an inclusive society built on inter-cultural understanding and citizen participation.

Over the next days, Canada looks forward to learning more from OSCE participating States on how they are addressing these important issues and implement their commitments.

I would like to emphasize that international developments remind us that anti-semitism is a particularly pernicious and durable form of hatred. Recognition of this fact should in no way derogate from combating other forms of hatred and intolerance. Canada believes that the OSCE should maintain a focus on combating anti-semitism, in part by maintaining the three personal representatives of the Chairman-in-office, particularly the representative on anti-semitism

In conclusion, we would like to applaud yesterday's civil society participation and thank our Canadian representatives for their contribution. We would also like to express our appreciation to the organisers of this conference for all their work.

Thank you.