

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation meeting 2014
Statement by the Delegation of Canada
Working Session 13: Tolerance and non-discrimination II
30 September, 2014

Mr. Moderator,

Canada is committed to pluralism and believes that in the respect and promotion of human rights, there is no hierarchy between various forms of intolerance and discrimination. We must equally denounce hate and violence, be it on the basis of race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

Last year, Canada decried the fact that, while there is a strong consensus among participating States on responding to acts of intimidation and violence on the basis of race, religion or sex, the same does not hold true when it comes to sexual orientation.

Canada remains deeply concerned that there are individuals in the OSCE region who experience high levels of violence for their perceived or actual sexual orientation. While very few participating States still criminalize homosexuality, more insidious laws such as Russia's "law on propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors" seek to use the thin veil of "family values" to breed prejudice and limit the rights of individuals based on their sexual orientation. Conspicuously absent also are laws that would protect individuals from discrimination and harassment on the basis on sexual orientation, creating a toxic combination that breeds intolerance and emboldens violent homophobic groups.

Mr. Moderator,

While Canada remains frustrated with the lack of progress on this issue at the OSCE, there have been positive developments nonetheless. On May 22 at the OSCE Permanent Council, the Delegation of Canada had the honor to deliver a statement on behalf of 43 of the 57 OSCE participating States. In this statement, we all recognized that human rights and fundamental freedoms belong to every human being, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and that OSCE participating States, without exception, have an obligation under international human rights law to protect the rights of individuals, regardless of sexual orientation.

This was a unifying moment and a testimony to the desire of those 43 participating States to do better in their fight against hate, in true conformity with the spirit of our OSCE commitments. We sincerely hope that more participating States will join us in delivering a positive message on this issue.

Canada's recommendations for this session are:

-For participating States to better implement their OSCE commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination and to unequivocally condemn hate and violence against persons on the basis of race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

-For participating States to continue their cooperation with ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Program.

-For participating States to make specific efforts to confront violence towards persons based on their sexual orientation by providing meaningful responses to such violations.

-For the OSCE and all its participating States to take a clear stand against violence targeting sexual minorities and to reflect this explicitly in the body of OSCE commitments.