

Canadian Delegation to the
Organization for Security & Cooperation
in Europe



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Délégation du Canada auprès de
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération
en Europe

**JOINT INTERVENTION BY THE OSCE DELEGATIONS OF
CANADA, ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN, NORWAY AND SWITZERLAND
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ALEXANDER STUBB
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FINLAND
708TH MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
10 APRIL 2008**

This statement is made on behalf of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Canada.

Like other delegations, we congratulate His Excellency Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb on his new appointment and warmly welcome him to the Permanent Council. We broadly share the goals and priorities he has presented to us this morning.

We whole-heartedly support the Finnish approach, reiterated today, which emphasizes continuity, coherence and co-operation in the future work of the OSCE. In this context, our delegations have been impressed by the energy and effectiveness the Finnish Chairman and the Chairmanship team already have brought to the OSCE in the early part of their tenure.

In particular, we would like to highlight our satisfaction with the Chairman's commitment to seeking a resolution to the protracted conflicts, including through early visits to the affected regions conducted by the former Chairman-in-Office and by Ambassador Heikki Talvitie. We also commend Finland's successful work in brokering consensus on the 2008 Unified Budget.

We would further emphasise our appreciation of the Finnish commitment to support a strong and efficient Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). We welcome the Chairman in Office's efforts to address elections-related issues, including through the nomination of a Special Envoy on this question. We are hopeful that these efforts will lead to a strengthening of OSCE commitments in this area, and of their implementation.

Our delegations also are pleased with the Chairmanship's leadership toward OSCE engagement with Afghanistan in conformity with the Ministerial Decision taken in Madrid. We look forward to the OSCE's commitment to Afghanistan becoming operational.

Mr. Chairman, like other delegations, we recognise the significant challenges and opportunities present in the OSCE region. In this context, it is our view that the Chairman's planned visits to Central Asia are timely and helpful, given its importance for the security of the OSCE region as a whole. Further, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring an effective OSCE presence in Kosovo through OMiK, to contribute to stability in South-Eastern Europe.

Our delegations also reiterate that enhancing the implementation of the OSCE's Gender Action Plan remains a top concern and stress the need to improve the organisation's record in this regard.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we very much value the weekly consultations, here at the OSCE, between the Chairmanship and our Like-Minded Group. This process allows us better to support the work and objectives of the Chairmanship. In closing, we would like to express our best wishes to Minister Stubb as he undertakes his new role and to assure him that our delegations stand ready to continue our close cooperation with the Chairmanship to ensure that our common priorities are fulfilled.