



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BARBARA GIBSON
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF CANADA
TO THE 13TH OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
Ljubljana, December 5, 2005**

Mr. Chairman,

I am honoured to represent Canada at the 13th OSCE Ministerial Council here in Ljubljana on behalf of the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pierre Pettigrew.

Allow me to join others in thanking you for the splendid arrangements and hospitality shown to us here in Ljubljana.

I would also like to commend you for the leadership you, your Ambassador in Vienna and the rest of your team have shown over the past year as Chair of the OSCE.

It has been a difficult year, and you have helped us all to navigate through very turbulent waters. Thanks to your efforts, we hopefully are now sailing forward towards smoother waters in the year to come.

A new Secretary General and the recent agreement on the scales of contribution for 2005-07 are the products of your firm guiding hand.

This agreement is a clear indication of our shared commitment to the OSCE's financial health and to the constructive role it needs to play in fostering regional security.

Last April, the Canadian government issued an International Policy Statement. It was the first time that we have taken a whole of government, comprehensive look at our foreign policy, and at how we need to adapt to the changing global dynamic, in order to build a world where Canada – and other nations -- can be secure and prosper.

The extent to which this Statement reflects the OSCE's cross-dimensional and comprehensive approach to security is striking.

Our International Policy Statement makes clear the fundamental importance of good governance, democracy and human rights as well as arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation as well as poverty reduction and environmental protection to address contemporary security challenges.

For this reason, Canada remains a firm believer in the OSCE as a forum to enhance regional stability and security within the OSCE region and beyond. And it is for this reason that Canada wants to ensure the Organization is as effective and efficient as possible.

Canada, like many others, had high expectations that the debate on reform and the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons from the "Common Purpose"

report would help to bring greater order to the OSCE household and focus its energies.

So far, we have not made much progress in articulating anew our clear common purpose in the 21st century or in defining how we can marshal our shared resources in the most effective way possible. We would expect the “Roadmap” will permit us to complete this process by the next Ministerial Council in Belgium.

For our part, we will continue to work hard with the Chairman in Office, other delegations and the Secretary-General to develop sound approaches to streamline the working methods of the Organization, in particular developing more focused and results-driven approaches to OSCE meetings and conferences, and developing better priority setting mechanisms through the budget process. In this respect, we particularly welcome the proposals which have been put forward by the Secretary General.

The Secretariat should provide coordination and long-term planning, while sustaining the institutional memory of the Organization. Just as our meetings and discussion should be results-driven, so too should the programs which the Organization implements on our behalf, including through the institutions and the ever important field missions, which play a critical role in implementing OSCE commitments.

For too long, the OSCE has been straddling between two identities – one as a conference, and the other as an institution. The issue of the legal personality and status of the OSCE should be resolved.

There is no question that the OSCE region has been transformed since the Helsinki Final Act was signed 30 years ago.

The progress we have made has been based on the deepening respect for the values of democracy, human rights and rule of law. Our progress has also been based on the confidence and transparency with respect to our military and political intentions, built on important agreements such as the CFE and Open Skies Treaties.

But we still have work to do to live up fully to the promise of Helsinki.

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has become a leading authority, not only within the OSCE region, but well beyond. It has been doing trail-blazing work in election monitoring. This expertise is internationally recognized as illustrated by the important role it played in the OSCE Election Support Team’s work in the recent Afghan elections.

Now, as part of the Copenhagen Plus dialogue, we can look for ways to improve and refine the mechanisms by which we maintain a vigilant defence of the fundamentals of democracy.

Sadly, examples of discrimination and religious intolerance in all their forms, can be found in all our countries. Canada knows well that it takes an ongoing effort to check discrimination and to build tolerance for different cultures and faiths.

The principles are the same. And, ODIHR’s integrated approach to discrimination is a reflection of this.

We need to be careful not to allow our own subtle biases affect our approach to discrimination and religious intolerance. All discrimination and all religious intolerance is unacceptable. We should ensure that our institutions reflect this unity of purpose through an integrated approach.

In undertaking OSCE commitments, we have agreed to hold each other accountable for fulfilling those commitments. We need to be able to discuss and respond to situations of non-compliance, in particular specific instances of grave concern to us all.

The tragic events in Andijan of this year horrified many of us around this table. We again urge Uzbekistan to allow an independent, international investigation, to determine true facts of what happened on 12 and 13 May in and around Andijan.

We all agree that there is no excuse or rationale for terrorism. It is mindlessly destructive and corrodes the values and, indeed, the very fabric of the community of nations.

However, all measures to counter terrorism must be in full compliance with international law, in particular human rights, humanitarian and refugee law.

The OSCE has a special role to play in promoting these norms and standards that underpin sound, democratic governance. Oppression, injustice and violence feed the social dissatisfaction that can create fertile recruiting ground for terrorists.

For our part, Canada is providing technical assistance – through our Counter-terrorism Capacity Building Program – to countries willing to develop strategies and programs to combat terrorism.

While the security architecture of Europe has changed dramatically for the good since 1990, the OSCE continues to have a vital role in promoting greater transparency and confidence in the military sector.

The CFE Treaty remains a cornerstone of regional stability and security on this, its 15th Anniversary. And the Adapted CFE Treaty has the potential to build upon this success.

However, fulfilment of the Istanbul commitments remains a precondition to ratification.

In the fall of 2006, Canada will assume the Chair of the Forum for Security Cooperation. We would like to use our chairmanship to foster greater interaction between the FSC and other OSCE bodies.

We would also like to build on the FSC's already impressive contributions in the area of small arms and light weapons in the lead up to - and following the 2006 Review Conference of the UN Program of Action.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, we would like to assure Belgium, the incoming Chair, of our full support and cooperation for the year to come.