

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation meeting 2013

Canadian Statement for Working Session 12: Democratic elections and election observation – sharing best practices

Tuesday, 1 October 2012

Mme Moderator,

Freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law are core universal values that underpin Canada's foreign policy and international development assistance. Democratic development advances our interests because it offers the best chance for long-term stability, prosperity and the protection of human rights. Canada commends ODIHR for its work in democratization and elections, which makes a direct contribution to our comprehensive security.

In 2011-2012, Canada contributed \$200 million to help advance democracy around the globe, including within the OSCE. Our support includes assistance for locally-grown initiatives that seek to ensure that democratic systems and processes are responsive to the needs of citizens, and Canada will continue to hone and focus our efforts towards the global advancement of democracy to adapt to changing times, and to expand freedom where it is increasingly restricted.

Although elections alone do not make a democracy, they are an essential part of a transparent and accountable government. Canada continues to support electoral assistance and observation as part of its democracy support efforts. Election observations can enhance the integrity of election processes by documenting, deterring and exposing irregularities and fraud, and bearing witness to those who aspire for freedom. The presence of international observers can also help to mitigate electoral fraud and conflict, and build public confidence in electoral results. In short, ensuring transparent and accountable democratic election processes reinforce the role of those who lead their own government.

Canada supports ODIHR's work in the field of election observation, from the deployment of Needs Assessment Missions to the follow up on post-election recommendations. Since 2009, Canada has funded the deployment of 223 Canadians to 11 OSCE-ODIHR missions in six countries, including 199 Canadian election observers for the Ukraine Presidential and Legislative elections held respectively in 2010 and 2012.

ODIHR's election observation methodology is widely – and rightfully – recognized as one of the models of independence, impartiality and professionalism. We view election observation as a fundamental tool for fair and transparent democratic processes and value close cooperation between ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the priority area of election observation.

As a community of countries committed to democracy, OSCE participating States and Partners for Cooperation have clearly benefitted from the advice and support of the ODIHR through its elections work and from the high calibre of its election observation missions.

Canada looks forward to continuing its cooperation on democratization and election observation with the OSCE-ODIHR.

Thank you.