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**STATEMENT BY MR. YVES BRODEUR,
ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY,
HEAD OF THE CANADIAN DELEGATION, AT THE SEVENTEENTH
MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Athens, 1 December 2009

Mr. Chairman,

It is an honour for me to speak today on behalf of Mr. Lawrence Cannon, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada. It is also a pleasure for me to be in Athens, and I thank our host, Prime Minister George Papandreou, for his warm welcome.

Our achievements this year would not have been possible without the inspired leadership of the current Chairmanship. I should like especially to pay tribute to your guidance in launching the Corfu Process and your efforts to ensure that it continues in the right direction, that of the OSCE.

The OSCE is of crucial importance to Canada's Euro-Atlantic relations. It also plays an essential role in the sharing of responsibilities with NATO and the European Union as they confront the difficult situations in the vast region under its responsibility, from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

It is also a prominent player in conflict prevention and the promotion of human and democratic rights, which are among the Canadian Government's highest priorities.

During lunch earlier today, we had a frank exchange of views on the principal security issues in the OSCE region. In deciding the path we are to take, it is vital for us to bear in mind the basic values and principles set forth in the Helsinki Final Act.

As Mr. Cannon said in Corfu in June, the institutions and commitments that make up the Euro-Atlantic framework have proved useful, remain solid and, in view of their effectiveness, bring together and are supported by a large number of countries. Confidence-building is a central focus of the Corfu Process.

Our words need to be put into action. At this time we must revive and reaffirm respect for existing commitments and for their full and comprehensive implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

One of Canada's main objectives for the Ministerial Council meeting is the start of talks within the framework of the Corfu Process, which must seek wider horizons and focus on the most pressing security issues facing our region, including new transnational threats and threats from outside the OSCE region.

The recent commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Europe reminds us of the vital importance for sustainable peace and security of the human dimension and fundamental freedoms.

In the light of the current decline in human rights, tolerance and freedom in some parts of the OSCE area, we are more determined than ever to promote these values.

Canada therefore emphatically supports the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and will continue to oppose all measures designed to limit its mandate or activities, particularly election monitoring.

Mr. Chairman,

Canada recently welcomed the three OSCE Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office to Promote Tolerance and Non-Discrimination and we encourage other participating States to welcome similar visits. The work of the Personal Representatives facilitates the OSCE's peer review process – one of the very *raison d'être* of our Organization.

Afghanistan remains a top Canadian foreign policy priority. We support the OSCE's programme of activities aimed at building regional co-operation in Central Asia and at addressing Afghanistan's capacity-building needs, especially in such key areas as border security, customs and counter-narcotics, as well as on good governance and democracy.

We believe that the OSCE should be allowed to work inside Afghanistan and that this should be done in co-ordination with other relevant international organizations. Canada was also pleased to take part in the recent OSCE election support team for the Afghan presidential elections.

The OSCE continues to play a critical role in maintaining peace and security, including through arms control and confidence-building measures such as the Open Skies Treaty, for which Canada is one of the depositaries. With respect to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE Treaty), we call on all nations to abide by their CFE commitments.

We continue to look forward to the entry into force of the adapted CFE Treaty when the right conditions are in place and when all participating States fulfil their commitments.

Canada supports the development of a strategic plan of action for OSCE police-related activities, in areas where the OSCE has demonstrated a distinct capability.

We also support the proposal that the OSCE Chairmanship be empowered to deploy limited observation missions of short duration to help strengthen the OSCE's conflict prevention and resolution capabilities.

Where our Organization has not done so well is in finding the political will for lasting solutions to ongoing "frozen conflicts".

We must not lose sight of the 2008 conflict in Georgia and where our efforts to re-establish a meaningful OSCE presence must continue, in all war-affected regions and in a status-neutral way.

We commend the Greek OSCE Chairmanship's efforts to this end and we hope the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship will continue these efforts. We reaffirm Canada's strong commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and our support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, I would like to extend Canada's full support to the incoming OSCE Chairmanship of Kazakhstan in 2010. Working with the first Central Asian Chairman-in-Office offers us a historic opportunity and we look forward to working closely with the 2010 Chairmanship in all dimensions of the OSCE's work.

Thank you.