Canadian Delegation to the
Organization for Security & Cooperation
in Europe

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

DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR FREDERICKA GREGORY
ON THE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE'S REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF DISCUSSIONS ON THE FUTURE OF OSCE ACTIVITIES IN GEORGIA
761ST MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
14 MAY 2009

Madame Chairperson:

- Canada would like to join others in thanking the Greek OSCE Chairman-in-Office especially Ambassador Mara Marinaki and her team for its formidable and unrelenting efforts at forging a fair, balanced and status-neutral compromise package in Draft Decision PC.DD 11/09/Rev.1 of May 8th, 2009 to secure the OSCE's continued presence in Georgia. Your work on this has been nothing less than superb, and has built effectively on the efforts of Finland last fall, in their role as the former OSCE Chair.

- We are clearly very disappointed that - after 5 months of hard negotiations in Vienna - an agreement could not be reached due to the intransigence of one participating State in accepting a status-neutral approach that was advocated almost unanimously.

- Georgia, as the host state, wants an OSCE presence in its territory and has requested OSCE assistance as there are still real needs to be addressed, especially in the wake of the armed conflict last August. We highly regret that the OSCE was prevented from fulfilling this wish of Georgia and from continuing its longstanding role in this country, as well as its important conflict prevention and resolution work.

- Canada continues to lend its firm support to the Greek Chairmanship's compromise proposal of May 8th because it captures the minimal common denominator for maintaining a status neutral approach, and for securing a meaningful OSCE presence in all war affected regions of Georgia. In our view, given the increasing tensions and incidents in Georgia, there is a need for a greater international presence, not less.

- Canada's position on Georgia is well known: we firmly support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

- The Russian Federation bears the responsibility for this unfortunate impasse on Georgia and for the termination of the OSCE presence there. This development does not send a positive signal, nor does it build the much-needed trust and confidence we require to address European security challenges. There can be no doubt that Russia's intransigence will have an impact on the Geneva Process, our CFE talks, as well as our European Security Architecture discussions.

- Canada also concurs with CiO's assessment that the price for the discontinuation of the OSCE Mission in Georgia will, unfortunately, be paid by innocent civilians because this is a step backward for our efforts to bring peace and stability to the South Caucasus Region.

- Madame Chairperson, I would like this Statement to be attached to the Journal of the Day.

Thank you, Merci, Efharisto