

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

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**AS DELIVERED**

**DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE (ON BEHALF OF A NUMBER OF  
DELEGATIONS – SEE LIST BELOW)  
STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR FREDERICKA GREGORY  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CLOSING OF THE OSCE OFFICE IN MINSK  
856 MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup>, 2011**

Thank you, Mister Chairperson,

I have the honour and privilege to take the floor today on behalf of the following participating States: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Canada.

Mister Chairperson,

It is with great regret that we must mark this day with the official closure of the OSCE Office in Minsk. We remain steadfast in our belief that the decision by the Government of Belarus not to extend the mandate of the Office is a serious step backwards in the cooperation of Belarus with the OSCE, and is a mistake.

The Office was founded to assist the Belarusian government in institution building, promoting rule of law, and encouraging outreach to civil society. As evidenced by the current human rights situation in Belarus in the aftermath of the December 19th Presidential election, it is clear that the mandate of the mission has not been completed. We continue to believe that the OSCE Office in Minsk has served and would continue to serve a role beneficial to Belarus were the government to decide to meet its commitments to the OSCE.

All 56 OSCE participating States, including Belarus, stressed in the Astana Summit Declaration “the importance of the ... OSCE field operations, in accordance with their respective mandates, in assisting participating States with implementing their OSCE commitments.” Adherence to this recommitment has not been demonstrated by the Government of Belarus.

We wish to express our continued solidarity with the Belarusian people and remain committed to support the development of civil society in Belarus. We reiterate our readiness to assist the authorities of Belarus in meeting their OSCE commitments, should they wish to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.