

## **Government Response to the Report of the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs and International Trade**

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Canada's engagement with Central Asia has increased following the recommendations of the 2001 report by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on advancing Canadian objectives in Central Asia. The Government has formulated a strategy on this region that stresses security, economic development, democratic values and respect for rule of law.

The Government is in the process of reviewing representation abroad to determine where limited resources can best serve Canada's interests in way that both respects Canadian values and maximises limited resources. In addition, the numbers of staff at the Canadian embassy in Kazakhstan and officials dedicated to working on the region in Ottawa have been bolstered since 2001. The Government's Global Partnership Program, which aims to reduce the risks posed by weapons and materials of mass destruction, has also begun to develop activities in Central Asia through the International Science and Technology Centre.

Canada's economic relations with the region have developed significantly with closer cooperation, regular consultation and increased investment. The Government has facilitated the participation of companies coming from both Canada and Central Asia in agricultural, construction, mining and oil and gas trade exhibitions. Further, a regional trade mission to Central Asia is being planned for Spring 2005.

The 2001 SCFAIT report promoted the importance of "Parliamentary Diplomacy." This tool has been used to engage the countries of Central Asia. Since 2001, Canada, Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic have exchanged parliamentary delegations.

Since 2001, the Government has more than doubled its development assistance to Central Asia. Tajikistan has been the main recipient of official development assistance with a focus on agriculture and water resource management. Canada has provided several organisations across the region support for technical assistance and capacity building projects promoting democratisation, good governance, gender equality, eco-responsibility, and micro-credit enterprises. Such initiatives have been aimed at promoting sustainable development, environmental responsibility, deeper democratic reforms and economic well being. The International Policy Review will influence the Government's program direction in the region.

The Government works regularly with diplomatic representatives from Central Asia at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Mine Action program in Tajikistan is a notable area of cooperation. The OSCE is also developing ammunition destruction programs and police assistance projects. Canada is on the Board of Advisors for a regional educational institution, the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, and works to combat money laundering and corruption. Canada consistently raises human rights, good governance and democratic development through the organisation.

The Government, through the Department of National Defence, has established Military Training Assistance Programs with Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. These programs focus on language and peacekeeping training for and are aimed at facilitating Central Asian engagement in NATO's Partnership for Peace program.