

Canada and the OSCE

Over the past six years, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has become an important platform for Canada to cultivate its links with Europe and to pursue political, security, humanitarian and other vital interests in the area. Canada's aim is to promote stability, democratization, human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, and market economics throughout Europe.

Canada is represented at the OSCE's Vienna headquarters by a permanent delegation and participates in OSCE councils, conferences, forums, biennial summits and other events. Canada has contributed to the Conventional Arms in Europe Treaty, which was renewed earlier this year; and the Treaty on Open Skies (which must be ratified by Russia, Belarus and Ukraine before it can enter into force). Canada also provides military experts to participate in verification activities.

Two Canadians have served as heads of OSCE field missions. A third is currently heading the OSCE mission to Ukraine. Canada has also participated in several OSCE election-monitoring and other missions in the region. Canadian contributions to the peace effort in Bosnia have received widespread recognition. Canadian military officers have participated in the Nagorno Karabakh peacekeeping planning group and in setting up the mission to Bosnia.

Canada conducts semi-annual consultations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and invites them to human dimension review conferences to learn about OSCE standards, principles, policies and the performance of participating states. These conferences also give NGOs an opportunity to raise human rights concerns.

The Canadian International Development Agency is funding the work of Canadian experts on elections and human rights; and it helps with various activities of the mission to Bosnia. Canada is also absorbing a large part of the cost of heading the mission to Ukraine.

The OSCE budget for 1996 is \$70 million, of which Canada pays about 5.5 per cent. Almost half of this year's OSCE budget was allocated for the mission to Bosnia.