

The Second Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension, held in Copenhagen from June 5-29, 1990, expanded the scope of the human dimension by adopting principles of free elections and the rule of law, expanding the scope of human rights, and addressing the issue of minority rights and tolerance. Canada submitted at Copenhagen a proposal for strengthening the 1989 mechanism by adding a stage that would consist of sending rapporteurs to the site of alleged human rights violations, but the suggestion did not attract the necessary consensus.

At the Third Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension, held in Moscow from September 10 to October 4, 1991, Austria picked up on the Canadian proposal, and supporters were able to secure a concluding document that provided for the establishment of mediation and rapporteur missions even without the consent of the receiving state. In the most intrusive scenario envisaged, if ten participating states agreed, a mission of three rapporteurs chosen from a panel of experts could -- according to a convoluted series of steps and delays -- establish facts, report on them and give advice on possible solutions to a "serious" threat under the human dimension. The kinds of questions implied were those related to the abuse of minorities' rights and other proximate causes of conflict in Europe. It was a conditional but sensible step forward, and a provision enabling the CSO to engage the mechanism by consensus tied the human dimension into the CSCE institutional framework, complementing the conflict prevention machinery.¹⁹

Canada continued to want to develop the CSCE's human dimension to reinforce the cooperative security approach. However, it was clear even at Moscow that the ability to move forward in Basket III would be limited because the political will of most participating states -- except, ironically, the new democracies of East and Central Europe -- had reached a plateau at Copenhagen. New commitments were starting to rub up against Western states' own minority sore spots, and to conflict with their domestic legislation or constitutional division of powers. There seemed to be general agreement that the focus should shift from developing new normative standards to implementing existing commitments. Leading up to Helsinki, Canada intended to focus on implementation and monitoring, as well as on promoting respect for minorities. Canada was of the view that European conflicts were increasingly likely to involve groups inspired by ethnicity, ideology, religion or language. CSCE agreements according to which respect for minorities was a factor in security and stability, and in which the duty to protect minorities had primacy over the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs, had to be made operational. Measures for dealing with conflict had to be brought into play before, not after, tensions erupted in violence. Canada wanted the CSCE to be engaged in potentially troubling situations at an early stage, thus proposed at an October 1991 CSO meeting in Prague that the human dimension should be a

¹⁹Notwithstanding these provisions and the symbolic importance of its location, the Moscow meeting was for the most part uninspired. The sense of urgency injected by ministers in the opening days of the conference quickly evaporated. Despite impassioned statements by Canada, Germany and others that national minorities were central to European stability, the concluding document contained weak, open-ended language about whether national minorities even existed. Canadian proposals on the equality of women and the independence of the judiciary were adopted largely intact, mainly because they were among the only proposals for which the ground was prepared well in advance.

*not really -
public corp
emergency -
internal
affairs are
all off*