

Estonia has welcomed missions from the UN, the CSCE, and other international organizations to examine its human rights situation. While there is general agreement that Estonia is not abusing the rights of its minorities, poor relations between the Estonian and Russian communities are still cause for international concern. The CSCE currently has a long-term "preventive diplomacy" mission on the ground whose purpose is to promote better inter-ethnic relations and help build a civic society in Estonia.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada has consistently underlined the importance we attach to the protection of minorities and respect for international human rights commitments. We have urged the Estonian, Latvian and Baltic Russian communities to work together to address their respective concerns in a non-confrontational manner, and to make full use of international mechanisms.

Canada was a participant in the CSCE "preventive diplomacy" mission in Estonia, and we have offered to work to facilitate the absorption of Russophones into the ranks of Estonian and Latvian citizenry by providing assistance for second-language training. We also participate in a group of like-minded countries following Baltic issues in order to coordinate provision of technical assistance and human rights advice.

We are encouraged by recent improvements in Russian political participation at the local level in Estonia, and are monitoring closely the evolution of draft legislation on Latvian citizenship to ensure it conforms with international human rights standards.

Canada has acted forcefully on the issue of Russian troop withdrawals, rejecting their linkage to any other issue. At the same time, we are encouraging the Baltic States to address Russian concerns on minorities, underlining that relations with Russia are key to regional stability. Integration of the minority populations into social and economic structures is important for internal stability as well.

The strong showing in the recent Russian elections by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, a strident Russian nationalist, threatens to complicate this issue. Canada has therefore welcomed the recent Estonian-Russian conditional agreement on a complete Russian troop withdrawal by 31 August 1994.

For the second year running, UNGA 48 adopted a consensus resolution which welcomed the cooperation of Estonia and Latvia with international observer missions while acknowledging the existence of unresolved concerns in the two countries. Canada has consistently urged Russian, Estonian and Latvian representatives at the UN to ensure that Assembly discussions on these questions are resolved on a consensus basis.