



# communiqué

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## CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, announced today that Canada has introduced a proposal at the Vienna Follow-up Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe aimed at enhancing the protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of members of national minorities and regional cultures.

In introducing the proposal, Ambassador William Bauer told representatives of the 35-nation conference (all European states except Albania, and Canada and the United States), that "as the history of 20th century Europe tragically has illustrated, when the rights and fundamental freedoms of members of national minorities are disregarded or degraded, the human cost is enormous."

The Canadian proposal was co-sponsored by the delegations of Belgium - on behalf of the European Community - the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States. It is based upon proposals submitted earlier at the Ottawa Meeting of Experts on Human Rights, and at the Budapest Cultural Forum.

The proposal aims to build on already agreed commitments set out in the Helsinki Final Act and the Madrid Concluding Document, the two major accords which comprise the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The proposal would require the participating states to take all the necessary legislative, administrative and judicial steps to ensure the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons belonging to national minorities within their territory.

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It also called upon participating states to refrain from discriminating against these individuals in their states. Further, it would require participating states to promote opportunities for these individuals to maintain, develop and transmit to others their own culture in all its aspects, including language, literature, religion, and cultural monuments and historical artifacts.

Ambassador Bauer noted that throughout the course of European history, migrations, resettlements, border adjustments, and in more recent times two world wars, had created across Europe a mosaic of different ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities which bore little or no relationship to national frontiers. Canada and the United States shared in the cultural tapestry of Europe by virtue of the vast numbers of Europeans who have emigrated to North America, and who have contributed to the very texture of our societies.

The Canadian proposal, if accepted by all delegations, would be a valuable step forward in assuring the protection of the rights and fundamental freedoms of national minorities and regional cultures, and in so doing contribute to the ongoing process of cooperation and security in Europe.