

PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
COMMITTEE ON JURIDICAL AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS

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Working Group to Prepare a Draft Inter-American
Convention against Racism and All Forms of
Discrimination and Intolerance

NOTE BY THE PERMANENT MISSION OF CANADA WITHDRAWING
FROM THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE DRAFT INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION
AGAINST RACISM AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND INTOLERANCE

Permanent Mission of Canada
to the Organization of American States



Mission permanente du Canada
auprès de l'Organisation des États américains

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30 November 2010

Mr. Danilo Gonzalez
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Dear Chair of the Working Group,

I am writing to inform you that Canada, after considerable reflection, has decided to formally withdraw from the negotiations on the draft inter-American Convention against Racism and all forms of discrimination. Our reticence to negotiate a new Inter-American Convention on Racism has been longstanding and our reasons for that reticence are well known to all OAS member states.

Indeed, since the beginning of the negotiations, Canada has been concerned about the risk that a new Convention would confuse or weaken already existing international standards, as well as overburden the inter-American human rights system. Our preference has therefore been and continues to be to focus on the implementation of existing international agreements on discrimination within the region. The UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), for example, has been broadly ratified around the world, including in Latin America and the Caribbean. It contains extensive provisions to combat racism and other forms of discrimination. It has never been clear to Canada how an Inter-American Convention would advance these already established international protections.

It has also been our position that any instrument resulting from this negotiation process would need to be credible, achievable and effective, as well as fully consistent with States' obligations under international human rights law. Canada continues to be concerned that many provisions of the current draft may undermine or be incompatible with international protection for human rights such as the freedom of thought, belief and expression.

While we appreciate the effort of Member States to come to consensus, our concerns with the process are such that we have concluded that our formal withdrawal from the negotiations is the most appropriate course of action.

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Canada

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Canada believes that all countries must work toward a world free of all forms of racial discrimination and shares the OAS and its members' objective of fighting racism in the Americas. Our record of promoting respect for human rights in the region, both bilaterally and multilaterally, is strong, and we will continue to vigorously defend the human rights institutions of the OAS in their work in promoting and protecting human rights in the Americas. We welcome any opportunity to work on concrete initiatives to combat racism and discrimination in and through the inter-American system.

Please accept our assurances that Canada will continue to work in practical ways with OAS member states towards addressing racism and promoting tolerance and non-discrimination in the Hemisphere.



Allan Culham
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Director General, Regional Policy and
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