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MR. CHAIRMAN,

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS NOT SOLELY A DOMESTIC CONCERN FOR CANADIANS; SINCE A CANADIAN-LED RESOLUTION

AT THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN 1991, CANADA HAS WORKED IN CLOSE CO-OPERATION WITH MANY UNITED NATIONS MEMBER STATES FROM ALL REGIONS TO PRODUCE THE DRAFT DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.

THE DECLARATION, IN ITSELF, WILL NOT ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN; RATHER IT IS BUT A FIRST STEP - ALBEIT A MAJOR ONE - IN OUR COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOURS TO OVERCOME AND ULTIMATELY ERADICATE A PROBLEM THAT KNOWS NO GEOGRAPHICAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL OR CULTURAL BARRIERS.

A KEY ELEMENT OF THE DECLARATION IS ITS IDENTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE. CURRENTLY, NONE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS, INCLUDING THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN, ALTHOUGH EXCELLENT IN THEMSELVES, EXPLICITLY REFER TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN; THE DECLARATION, ONCE ADOPTED, WILL RECTIFY THIS OMISSION.

THE DECLARATION STATES THAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IMPEDES THEIR ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS. IT CALLS UPON GOVERNMENTS TO EXERCISE DUE DILIGENCE TO PREVENT AND PUNISH ACTS OF VIOLENCE WHETHER PERPETRATED BY THE STATE, WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OR IN THE HOME.

THE DECLARATION CONTAINS A NUMBER OF NEW ELEMENTS. IT IS THE FIRST HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENT TO REFER TO VIOLENCE IN THE HOME. IT IS THE FIRST INSTRUMENT TO CONTAIN AN EXTENSIVE - BUT NOT EXCLUSIVE - DEFINITION OF FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, INCLUDING PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE. AND, IN CALLING UPON STATES TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE, THE DECLARATION BECOMES THE FIRST DOCUMENT TO OUTLINE ADMINISTRATIVE, SOCIAL AND