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Foreign Policy Directions for the Coming Years

We are entering a period of change unprecedented in modern history. There is an active international political agenda, a charged economic environment, a fundamental change in the way we approach our physical environment and a structural transformation taking place in both the global political and economic systems. Keeping abreast of developments and actively and effectively pursuing Canadian interests in these circumstances will not be easy. Additionally, foreign policy has profound implications for national unity. Canadians will be looking to an active foreign policy as an expression of shared values, a determination to pursue collective interests and thus as a means to strengthen national cohesion and collective self-worth.

Making Choices

In an extremely tight fiscal situation it will be difficult to meet expectations; foreign policy choices, which will have to be made, will be hard. Finding the right balance between different criteria will sometimes be difficult. In detailing some of the key directions for upcoming years, this document should help define that balance, and avoid short-sighted or uni-dimensional decisions.

Strengthening Cooperative Security

The security of Canada and its people is an enduring and vital Canadian foreign policy objective. Although it remains essential to maintain military stability through defensive alliances, the decade of the 1990s presents Canada with the opportunity to work for a more cooperative world order based upon the rule of law.

The Gulf War, the conflict in Yugoslavia, and ongoing instability in the Soviet Union provide a forceful reminder of how the international environment can suddenly change for the worse in the absence of a stable international framework to fill the strategic void left with the passing of the Cold War. A reasonable defensive capability is a requirement of sovereign nationhood. We cannot afford to assume that all military threats against Canada and our international setting have disappeared forever. Canada's Defence Policy Review has defined how the Canadian Armed Forces will contribute to meeting our security objectives at a time of dramatic change.