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QUELLET CONGRATULATES SOUTH AFRICANS ON CONDUCT OF ELECTION

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today congratulated the people of South Africa on the historic occasion of their first truly democratic election. Preliminary assessments from Canadian observers, as well as observer missions from the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the European Union and the Organization for African Unity indicate that, despite certain incidents, the balloting was essentially conducted in a free and fair manner.

"The road to this election has been long and hard. These positive assessments are a testimony to the commitment and courage of the people of South Africa. Whatever the results of the election may turn out to be, South Africans can take pride in their magnificent achievement. On behalf of the people of Canada, I congratulate them on their entry to the community of free and democratic peoples," said Mr. Ouellet.

Some 180 Canadians travelled to South Africa to observe the election, including an official Canadian delegation lead by Mrs. Christine Stewart, Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa.

"Earlier today I spoke by telephone with Mrs. Stewart in Pretoria. She assures me that despite some difficulties, the election was properly conducted, and therefore the results will reflect the will of the people of South Africa. I also took the opportunity to thank Mrs. Stewart, the Canadian team and all other Canadians in South Africa, for working so hard to ensure that the election took place as it did," Mr. Ouellet added.

The South African Independent Electoral Commission is expected to announce official election results within days. On May 6, the new South African parliament will meet to elect the new President of South Africa, who will be inaugurated on May 10.

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