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OUELLET URGES MYANMAR AUTHORITIES TO FIND PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO INTERNAL STRIFE

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today urged Myanmar's State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to work peacefully and seriously toward national reconciliation with the political opposition in Myanmar (Burma). The Minister also urged the authorities to refrain from escalating the armed conflict across the country and across the border with Thailand.

"Escalation of the armed conflict can only result in more human suffering within Burma, create more transborder refugees and impose a further burden on its neighbours and the international community," said Mr. Ouellet.

The Minister added that Canada remains concerned about the current situation in Burma, including continued human rights violations and the SLORC's refusal to abide by the results of the 1990 elections. Mr. Ouellet said that such concerns impede the development of full bilateral relations between Canada and Myanmar.

The Minister called on the SLORC authorities to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, enter into meaningful negotiations with representatives of the democratic movement, set up a clear timetable and commitment to a transitional constitutional process, provide legal guarantees to minorities, abolish forced labour and facilitate access for humanitarian groups to needy communities.

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Attached is some background information on the situation in Burma and on Canada's response to the conflict in that country.

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