



DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

communiqué

No: 26
No.:

DIFFUSION: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
RELEASE: APRIL 1, 1981

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN AFRICA GENEVA, APRIL 9 - 10

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Dr. Mark MacGuigan, announced today that he will lead the Canadian Delegation to the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA), which will be held in Geneva on April 9 and 10.

This ministerial level conference is expected to be presided over by the Secretary General of the United Nations, Dr. Kurt Waldheim. It has been called by the General Assembly of the United Nations and organized in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees.

The objectives of the Conference are to focus public attention on the plight of the five million refugees in Africa; to mobilize additional resources for urgently needed programmes of humanitarian assistance for these refugees; to assist the African countries of asylum which are attempting to cope humanely with massive numbers to obtain international assistance to assist them in their efforts.

The present number of five million refugees in Africa which is steadily increasing, represents a five-fold increase in numbers since 1976. One in two refugees in the world today is an African. The dramatic increase in numbers is the result of conflict and upheavals of different kinds and touches all parts of the continent. The situation is exacerbated by severe conditions of drought and underdevelopment in many cases. It presents a crisis of humanitarian and political significance for the world community. In keeping with its traditional humanitarian policy and as a result of its close ties with African countries, Canada intends to play a strongly supportive role at the Conference.

The Conference will also provide an opportunity for Dr. MacGuigan to meet with Ministers of African and other countries deeply concerned with this particular problem and related issues.