



news release

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CANADA WELCOMES UN DECLARATION TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet and Secretary of State (Status of Women) Sheila Finestone today welcomed the adoption of a Canadian-initiated "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women" by the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

"The declaration is a significant step in the international community's collective endeavours to overcome and ultimately eradicate a problem that knows no geographical, political, economic, social or cultural barriers," Mr. Ouellet said.

The declaration is the first UN instrument to contain an extensive definition of forms of violence against women, including physical, sexual and psychological violence. The text also outlines a series of legal, administrative, social and educational measures that states should take in an effort to eliminate violence against women.

The declaration states that violence against women impedes women's enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and calls on governments to exercise diligence to prevent and punish acts of violence, whether perpetrated by the state, within the general community or within the home.

"Reference to violence in the home is an important breakthrough because previous international human rights instruments have avoided the private sphere. As we have learned in Canada, women are often in more danger in their own homes than they are on the streets," Mrs. Finestone said.

Canada first introduced a proposal for an international instrument to deal with violence against women in 1991 at the UN Commission on the Status of Women and has continued to take a leadership role on the issue at the international level.