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CANADA RECOGNIZES ERITREA AS INDEPENDENT STATE

External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall and the Minister for External Relations and International Development, Monique Vézina, congratulated the Eritrean people for their overwhelming participation in the April 23 to 25 referendum on independence and the peaceful resolution of a 30-year struggle for independence. Mrs. McDougall welcomed Eritrea to the community of newly independent states and announced that Canada will begin the process of establishing diplomatic relations.

"I commend the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea on their spirit of reconciliation and good will which has permitted this historic referendum," said Mrs. McDougall. "Canada hopes this signals a new era of peace and regional co-operation in the Horn of Africa."

Thirteen Canadians, five in the United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Eritrean Referendum (UNOVER) and eight with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), were in Eritrea to observe the referendum. A majority vote in favour of Eritrea as a sovereign and independent country has been declared free and fair by the UN.

"The Eritrean people are showing remarkable strength and determination in rebuilding their country and forming an independent state, after 30 years of struggling through war and decades of famine and drought," said Ms. Vézina. "Canada will continue to provide food and humanitarian aid

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