

# NEWS BRIEFS

## Canada renews diplomatic ties with Afghanistan

Canada officially renewed diplomatic relations with Afghanistan in late January 2002. Ties had been broken off in 1979 after the country was invaded by Soviet troops.

Until a separate Canadian diplomatic mission is established in Kabul, relations with Afghanistan will be the responsibility of Canada's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Konrad Sigurdson, based in Islamabad.

Canada is committed to participating in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and improving the living conditions of its citizens. Since 1990, Canada has contributed \$160 million in humanitarian aid for the country. At the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, held in Tokyo on January 21–22, Canada pledged an additional \$100 million in humanitarian and reconstruction aid.

## International Criminal Court soon to become reality

As of March 21, 2002, 56 of the 139 signatory states had ratified the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. Only four more ratifications are needed for the Statute to enter into force. Canada played a key role in the adoption of the Statute in 1998 and was one of the first countries to ratify it on July 7, 2000. Now we are working tirelessly to make the Court a reality. Canada's Ambassador to Sweden, Philippe Kirsch, is Chair of the Preparatory Commission set up to draft the technical documents required for the Court's operation.

The International Criminal Court will be a permanent tribunal mandated to prosecute individuals charged with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, where national judicial systems cannot or will not do so. Up to now, the perpetrators of such crimes have rarely been brought to justice, much less convicted. The Court will end this culture of impunity.

## International youth exchanges

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has just launched its annual campaign to promote international youth exchange programs. The Department manages some 60 bilateral and multilateral exchange programs jointly with over 20 countries in Europe, Asia and the Americas. Last year, the programs



In Kabul, Afghanistan, on December 31, 2001, young girls attend class at the Zargouna School.

This was the school's first day of classes since it was closed six years before under the Taliban regime.

