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McDOUGALL SAYS OAS STRONGER AT DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today wound up a three-day visit to Santiago, Chile, for the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly, the first in its history where all governments present were democratically elected.

"This is an extraordinary time to be at this OAS gathering," said Mrs. McDougall. "I found 34 proud democracies coming together to work on problems with more common resolve than ever."

Meetings began June 2 with the "informal dialogue" of the 34 Foreign Ministers and heads of delegation who attended the General Assembly. In discussions on consolidation of democracy, Mrs. McDougall emphasized the Canadian commitment to assist the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, created as a result of a Canadian resolution at the last General Assembly, to enlarge and enhance its role. She also suggested that the establishment of clear priorities would help strengthen the Organization.

A key element of the "Undertaking," emerging from the Assembly by Foreign Ministers, concerns the threat to international security posed by the uncontrolled proliferation of arms. Mrs. McDougall welcomed the discussion promoted by Canada to begin a study in the OAS of hemispheric security, in particular the vital question of arms proliferation. "The initiative is consistent with Canada's efforts, in a variety of global fora, to propose measures to deal effectively with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and excessive build-ups of conventional arms," she stated. "In addressing this problem, OAS Foreign Ministers are sending an important political signal to all regions of the world about our commitment to contributing to international peace and security in the post-Cold War era."