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CANADA CONSIDERS CAMBODIAN ELECTION "FREE AND FAIR"

External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall today expressed satisfaction at the successful completion of voting in Cambodia, and urged all Cambodian parties to accept the results unconditionally. Almost 90 percent of registered voters cast their ballots in the United Nations-supervised election, May 23 to 28.

"Even though counting is still continuing and it will be a number of days before the final outcome of the vote is known, this election must be counted as a major step forward for the people of Cambodia," Mrs. McDougall said.

The Minister said she shared the judgement of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Yasushi Akashi, that the polling phase of the election was free and fair.

"The voting demonstrates clearly that Cambodians have a deep desire for national reconciliation and democratic government. It will now be up to those parties that have gained seats in the constituent assembly to work together to write a new constitution that will make those hopes a reality," the minister said.

Mrs. McDougall said Canada will continue to support the democratic process in Cambodia, and looks forward to working with a Cambodian government that reflects the democratically expressed will of its people. Canada believes, she said, that Prince Norodom Sihanouk has a crucial role to play in the creation of a new Cambodia.

Minister McDougall commended the role played by some 100 Canadian civilians and over 200 Canadian military personnel in the election process. This has included difficult and sometimes dangerous work over many months by some 35 UN volunteers from Canada who helped organize the vote and 50 Canadian polling station officers who supervised balloting and assisted in the count.