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## McDOUGALL WELCOMES RETURN OF GUATEMALAN REFUGEES FROM MEXICO

External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall today welcomed the first organized return of Guatemalan refugees from Mexico. The event, which involved some 3,000 people, took place late yesterday, following the October 8, 1992 accords between the Guatemalan government and representatives of the refugees.

"I want to congratulate both parties," said Mrs. McDougall. "Their patience and flexibility have brought about today's historic event. I hope this will continue in the difficult weeks ahead as more refugees return and resettle."

Noting that this represents the beginning of the end to 10 years of life in refugee camps for some 45,000 Guatemalans who fled violence in the early 1980s, the Minister said this is a hopeful sign that Guatemala is moving from a long period of civil conflict to one of reconciliation.

Mrs. McDougall said that Canada is proud to have been able to play a role in the return through continuing and active participation in the International Support Group for the Return of Guatemalan Refugees (GRICAR). Canada also made contributions to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Program, and community development projects in the areas to which refugees will be returning. In addition, Canada has provided support to Canadian non-governmental organizations who went to Guatemala to accompany the returning refugees.

The Minister noted the key role of the UNHCR in organizing the complex logistics of the return and expressed appreciation for this work.

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