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MCDUGALL COMMENDS REPEAL OF PILLARS OF APARTHEID

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today welcomed the passage of the Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Bill and the Population Registration Act Repeal Bill as a major step forward in the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa.

"This is a breakthrough for South Africa. Canada congratulates the South African Parliament, and the Government of President de Klerk, for taking this major step towards political reconciliation in South Africa. We also pay tribute to the thousands of South Africans who struggled for so long to bring about an end to apartheid. The abolition of this abhorrent legislation is their victory," stated Mrs. McDougall.

For four decades, the Population Registration Act forced all South Africans to be categorized by race. It served as the foundation for regulations denying black South Africans the vote. The Group Areas Act and Land Acts enforced segregated residential areas and restricted ownership of land by the black majority. With the repeal of these legislative pillars of apartheid, a major condition set out by the February meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers has been met.

Mrs. McDougall noted that the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers had also called on the South African government to take action on the remaining preconditions for negotiations, notably the return of exiles, release of political prisoners and repeal of repressive security legislation. She urged the South African government to move rapidly and creatively to resolve these remaining issues so that formal constitutional negotiations can soon take place.

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