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CANADA SIGNS PROTOCOL TO PROTECT ANTARCTIC ENVIRONMENT

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today announced that Canada has signed the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. The agreement will prohibit any activity relating to mineral resources in Antarctica, other than scientific research.

The Protocol designates Antarctica as a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science, and proposes to protect it by requiring environmental impact assessments, protecting antarctic fauna and flora, and establishing rules for waste disposal and marine pollution.

"This Protocol is an appropriate counterpart to the environmental strategy recently adopted by arctic nations, including Canada. We believe the polar regions are a key part of the campaign for global environmental protection," Mrs. McDougall said.

The Protocol also:

- allows environmental inspections of stations, installations and equipment by observers;
- establishes a committee to monitor the Protocol's effectiveness and to advise on new measures;
- encourages greater co-operation between the Parties through exchanges of expertise and joint expeditions; and
- provides for early response to environmental emergencies.