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CANADA TO UNFREEZE IRAQI ASSETS FOR HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, announced today that she has agreed in principle to release frozen Iraqi assets in Canada for the purchase of food and medicine for Iraq.

Mrs. McDougall is responding to a request from Global Ed-Med Supplies, a Canadian agency with extensive experience in emergency assistance, to release some \$2 million in Iraqi assets for the purchase of infant formula and heart medicine. The food and medicine would be distributed through the social and health services of the government of Iraq, subject to careful monitoring by Global Ed-Med Supplies.

"Canada strongly supports the United Nations Security Council's approach to Iraq, combining pressure, including the maintenance of sanctions, with the provision of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups. I am satisfied that this project fully complies with the conditions set by the Security Council for the release of Iraqi assets," declared Mrs. McDougall.

"We recognize that this project can make only a modest contribution to meeting the vital needs of the most vulnerable groups in Iraq. In order to make a real impact on health and social conditions, the Iraqi government at long last must agree to comply with Security Council Resolution 712, which calls for a UN supervised plan for Iraqi oil sales. We have repeatedly called on the government of Iraq to do so," added Mrs. McDougall.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has already provided more than \$23 million in humanitarian assistance through the United Nations and non-governmental agencies to ease the circumstances of the people of Iraq. "Canada is committed to alleviating suffering in Iraq and encouraging Iraq to help itself," the Minister said.

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