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STATEMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
ON MARCH 21, 1971

Each year, on March 21, the world observes the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It is an outstanding occasion for Canadians to reflect on, and re-dedicate themselves to, the principles of human equality and dignity which form the basis of the Canadian Bill of Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Honourable Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of State for External Affairs, recently, made the following statement supporting the principle of racial equality and asking Canadians to demonstrate their belief in this principle by making voluntary contributions to United Nations programmes which seek to help make this principle a reality.

"It is the conviction of the Canadian Government that the observance on March 21, 1971 of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in the year designated by the United Nations General Assembly to combat racism and racial discrimination is an effective means for Canadians to become personally aware of the need for progress in the elimination of racial discrimination. As recognized by the Singapore Declaration of January 22, 1971, racial prejudice is 'a dangerous sickness threatening the healthy development of the human race' and racial discrimination 'an unmitigated evil of society'.

This day, established by the United Nations, reflects most vividly the important role played by the United Nations in the struggle to arrive at a world order based on mutual respect and understanding among peoples. In 1965 the United Nations General Assembly gave legal form to the concept of racial equality when it adopted the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Canada has adhered to this Convention and the Canadian instrument of ratification was deposited last October 14.

It is this principle of racial equality that should underlie the attitudes and actions of all Canadians. We should live in harmony, dignity and on a basis of equality with one another. We should contribute to the development and strengthening of individual rights and freedoms for all peoples of the world.

Canadians have not always met this challenge. The tensions within our own society in this changing world test our good will and our determination. We, like others, must learn to overcome ignorance, prejudice and ill will and seek to build our society on understanding.

Since the day of March 21 was chosen by the General Assembly in order to commemorate the incident on March 21, 1960, at Sharpeville, South Africa, I would urge that Canadians observe this day not only through their relations with others but also through voluntary contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa and the United Nations Consolidated Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africans."