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CANADIAN ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGAL

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Don Jamieson, announced today that Canada would give \$15 million worth of wheat in a grant to Portugal. In addition, the Government has agreed to add Portugal to the list of beneficiaries of the Generalized System of Preferences and to fund a small technical cooperation project in the field of fisheries.

These decisions, which constitute an exceptional measure on the part of Canada, are in fulfilment of the commitment made by the Government, in October 1975, to provide assistance to Portugal and demonstrate in a concrete way the Government's desire to expand its bilateral cooperation with Portugal. In the same spirit of cooperation, the Government of Portugal intends to announce shortly a programme which it will finance to encourage contacts between the people of the two countries.

Canada's assistance comes at a time when the Portuguese Government has expressed the need for economic support from friendly countries. The wheat grant will have an immediate beneficial effect on the Portuguese economy as, because of special circumstances, its requirements in wheat are likely to reach extraordinary levels this year. The other elements of the assistance package being offered to Portugal are likely to have a more long-term effect. In offering this assistance to Portugal, Canada is associating itself with the group of countries which announced recently they would provide assistance to Portugal in the form of balance-of-payment support.

Canada has made clear its support for the democratic régime which was established in Portugal following the revolution of April 1974. The Government considers that it is in Canada's interest that strong democratic institutions be maintained in Portugal, an ally in NATO and the country of origin of several hundred thousand Canadians. In the course of the past two years, Canada has provided various forms of assistance to Portugal, including the grant of over half-a-million dollars, through the Red Cross, for assistance to refugees from former colonies now in Portugal and the provision of training for Portuguese military personnel with Canadian forces in Germany.