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EAST COAST FISHERIES AND MARITIME BOUNDARY SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Dr. Mark MacGuigan, and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Honourable Roméo LeBlanc, today expressed profound disappointment and regret at the news that the United States has unilaterally abandoned the East Coast fisheries agreement signed by the Canadian and U.S. Governments in 1979. The U.S. Administration has decided to withdraw this agreement from the Senate and has requested the consent of the Senate to ratification of the Gulf of Maine boundary settlement treaty only. The two agreements had been negotiated as a package and have been before the U.S. Senate for nearly two years.

The fisheries agreement called for cooperative management of fish stocks of mutual concern; provided for the establishment of total allowable catches and allocations from these stocks to the fishermen of the two countries; and established binding procedures to resolve problems that might arise in the implementation of the agreement. The boundary settlement treaty refers the Gulf of Maine boundary dispute to the International Court of Justice.

Dr. MacGuigan and Minister LeBlanc noted that this development will come as a shock to the Canadian parliament and public, and especially to Canadian fishermen. "It will inevitably strain fisheries relations between the two countries," they said. "The East Coast fisheries agreement was a fair and balanced deal for both Canadian and U.S. fishermen. Without it, there will be a serious threat of depletion of the scallop stocks and other fishery resources of Georges Bank." The Ministers stressed their intention to pursue every means of securing the necessary conservation measures.