

PRESS RELEASE



CANADA

COMMUNIQUÉ

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

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N I G E R I A

The following statement has been made by the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of State for External Affairs on August 26th:

The announcement made on Saturday, August 24th in Addis Ababa that the Nigerian and Bajfran delegations meeting in that capital had agreed on a combination of air and land supply corridors for relief shipments was encouraging. It was unfortunately also premature. Later reports indicate that while agreement in principle may have been reached, the two parties have not agreed on the ways in which this is to be put into effect. They are meeting again today and it is our earnest hope that they will come speedily to final agreement.

The Canadian Government has, as was announced earlier, provided a cash grant of \$60,000 to the Canadian Red Cross in response to an appeal from the International Committee of the Red Cross for their relief efforts in Nigeria, and a grant in food aid in the amount of \$500,000 for the same purpose. A quantity of this aid was sent forward by Canadian Forces aircraft earlier this month, and preparations are being made for the despatch of the remainder. However, until agreement is reached on arrangements for onward shipment of the large quantities currently held in warehouses and depots in Lagos and other centres, no purpose would be served by sending more relief material into these centres at this time; it is the Government's hope that it will be possible to establish at the earliest possible date effective arrangements to permit an orderly flow in the quantities required.

The Government has been in constant touch with the ICRC which has been the relief organization most closely involved with the Nigerian problem. Contingency plans have been made for an emergency airstrip to be controlled and operated by the ICRC. These plans were drawn up with the technical assistance of a Canadian expert provided by the Government who is still in Geneva to advise the ICRC. This plan or a related one will probably be used if the further negotiations in Addis Ababa are fruitful. The Government awaits with keen interest new word on the progress of these current discussions.