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CANADA AND ITALY RATIFY MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE TREATY

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today announced the exchange of instruments of ratification for the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters between Canada and Italy.

"Criminal organizations exploit differences in legal systems in order to commit crimes and hide their proceeds. This treaty is a concrete example of Canada's and Italy's commitment to combat transnational crime," said Mr. Ouellet.

Through this instrument, Canada and Italy are following up on their pledge taken at the G-7 Halifax Summit last June to counter such activity and are also providing themselves with the tools to build a solid framework for co-operation in law enforcement.

The Treaty, which enters into force on December 1, 1995, will permit each party to provide the other with a wide range of assistance in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offences. Such assistance includes the gathering of evidence in one country for use in the prosecution of crimes in the other, and the identification of proceeds of crime that may then be confiscated.

This agreement will add to a network of bilateral mutual assistance treaties being established by Canada. To date, Canada has mutual legal assistance treaties in force with 12 countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Mexico and Australia. Another 20 treaties are at various stages of negotiation.

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