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## CANADA WELCOMES PRINCIPLES ON USE OF NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES IN OUTER SPACE

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today welcomed the adoption by the United Nations of a set of principles on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space.

"The principles approved by the UN General Assembly represent a real step forward in our attempts to create a legal regime on the safe use of outer space," said Mrs. McDougall. "Our country has had first-hand experience of the potential hazards of nuclear power sources launched into outer space. Because of this, our negotiators have been active in developing these principles."

The UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space began work on developing the principles in 1978 at Canada's request. That followed the crash of Cosmos 954, a nuclear-powered Soviet satellite, in the Northwest Territories and the subsequent radio-active contamination of the area surrounding the crash site.

The principles set out guidelines for minimizing the amount of radio-active material in space and limiting exposure in accidents involving systems using nuclear power sources. States launching nuclear-powered space objects agree to do safety assessments based on agreed criteria and to make the results publicly available. Should such a space object malfunction, the states are required to inform other countries that may be at risk from re-entry. The principles also contain provisions on compensation for damages caused by space objects carrying a nuclear power source, including reimbursement for clean-up operations.

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