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CANADA TO SIGN CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall will attend the Paris signing ceremony for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, on Wednesday, January 13.

"I am honoured to sign this Convention on behalf of Canada and it is my hope that it signals an end to a tragic chapter in world history," said Mrs. McDougall. "Canadians can take special pride in the conclusion of this treaty. The total abolition of chemical weapons has been one of our arms control objectives ever since Canadian soldiers experienced the horrors of gas attacks during the First World War."

The Chemical Weapons Convention is the first multilaterally negotiated agreement to abolish an entire category of weapons and to provide an extensive, detailed verification regime. An Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will be established in The Hague to ensure its implementation. The Convention will enter into force 180 days after 65 states have ratified it, but not before January 1995.

Canada has played a leading role in the negotiations of the agreement, which have been ongoing since 1984. The signing of the Convention represents an important achievement in Canada's initiative to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction, articulated by the Prime Minister in February 1991.

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