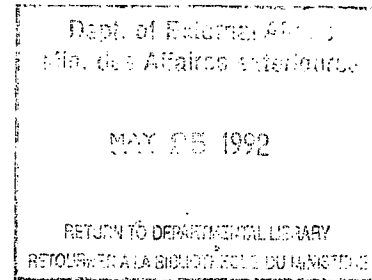




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PRIME MINISTER WELCOMES OPENING OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney today welcomed the opening of the Middle East peace conference in Madrid. On behalf of all Canadians he expressed the hope that the conference will lead to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. He praised the decision of Israel, the Palestinians, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt to attend this conference and wished all the delegations well.

The Prime Minister noted that he had written to the participants in the conference to urge them to seize this unparalleled opportunity to bring peace to the strife-torn region. He had also written to President Bush and President Gorbachev to congratulate them on bringing the parties together.

Stressing Canada's consistent support for the USA efforts to convene this historic conference, the Prime Minister reiterated that Canada stands ready to help those who take risks for peace in the Middle East. Canada has accepted an invitation to contribute to the multilateral phase of the conference, which will discuss arms control, water, environment, refugees and other issues of general concern to the Middle East.

The Prime Minister noted Canada's contribution would be an extension of our longstanding efforts to ensure security and stability in the Middle East, through contributions to peacekeeping forces, humanitarian and development assistance, and participation in the Gulf War coalition.