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NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE LLOYD AXWORTHY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE SECOND ANNUAL NGO CONSULTATIONS ON PEACEBUILDING

**OTTAWA, Ontario
February 18, 1998**

I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak to you this morning at the beginning of the second annual Peacebuilding Consultations, convened by my department jointly with the Canadian Peacebuilding Co-ordinating Committee [CPCC].

Holding these consultations was one of the commitments that I made when I announced the Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative on October 30, 1996, at York University. It reflects this government's commitment to conduct an open foreign policy making process, informed by a regular exchange of ideas with Canadians. It also reflects our commitment to be accountable to Canadians — to tell you what we have done, and what we have learned, in the process of implementing Canada's foreign policy.

In the same spirit of openness and consultation, we launched an intensive debate on peacebuilding at the meetings of the National Forum for Foreign Policy in 1996. The dialogue has been continued through a series of policy projects undertaken by the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, which have reported on everything from youth in South Africa to the effects of small arms, and of course through these annual consultations.

In the short time that has passed since the announcement of the Peacebuilding Initiative, this new forum has proved its value. The first Peacebuilding Consultation last year was attended by a broad cross-section of non-governmental organizations [NGOs] and institutions involved in international development, peace, disarmament and training in conflict resolution, both in Canada and abroad. To judge by the audience this morning, we have an even more impressive turnout for the second consultations. And since this is the Internet age, I look forward to "surfing" the CPCC Web page, and our own DFAIT [Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade] home page, to read the results of your discussions in the next couple of weeks.

When I spoke in October 1996, there was a great international drama unfolding, which was on my mind and the minds of everyone in my audience: the refugee crisis in eastern Zaire. The very same day, the Government announced that we had offered the services of Ambassador Raymond Chrétien to the United Nations, as a special envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes region.

Today, there is another international drama unfolding, which commands the attention of Canadians and compels us to act in defence of our fundamental commitments to international peace and security. I am speaking of course of the situation in Iraq. We continue to hope for a diplomatic solution to this crisis, which was sparked by the continued intransigence of Saddam Hussein. Last week I met with the UN Secretary-General in New York to discuss the prospects for a diplomatic solution. The international community is faced with difficult choices. But we cannot allow Iraq's attempts to develop weapons of mass destruction to undermine regional stability and the authority of the multilateral mechanisms we have established to preserve world peace.