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LEGAL AND CONSULAR AFFAIRS

The Department's legal tasks have been varied. They include advising the Government on questions of international law, authentication of legal documents for use abroad, and transmission of documents to governments of other countries under civil procedure conventions, extradition treaties, and arrangements for the reciprocal enforcement of maintenance orders. The Department registers and publishes agreements concluded by Canada with other countries. During the year, Canada became a party to thirty international agreements.¹

The Department has also been concerned with Canadian claims against other countries and with claims of other countries against Canada. Assistance has been available for Canadians who have claims against foreign countries for property lost as a result of the Second World War or confiscated under nationalization measures, provided they can show that after exhausting local remedies in the countries concerned they have suffered denial of justice or discrimination. The Department has conducted inquiries abroad on behalf of the War Claims Commission. It has assisted Canadians who have claims arising out of nationalization measures in Yugoslavia, which are dealt with by the Foreign Compensation Commission in London, set up by the United Kingdom—Yugoslavia agreement of 1950 to which Canada became a party. In the settlement of Canadian claims covered by the Treaties of Peace with Italy and Japan, and in the submission of claims for pre-war debts, loss of property, and injury in Germany, the Department has co-operated with the Department of Finance and the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada.

Consular assistance and services are made available by the Department to Canadian citizens in almost all foreign countries. Where the Department has not established a consular or diplomatic post, some of these services are performed by Canadian trade commissioners. Where there is no Canadian representative or where a Canadian post is not geographically convenient to handle the needs of the persons concerned, the United Kingdom diplomatic or consular posts look after Canadian citizens.

The duties of consular officers abroad include the provision of financial assistance on a recoverable basis to Canadian citizens and their dependents who are temporarily in distress, the issuance and renewal of Canadian passports, the granting of diplomatic and courtesy visas, and the provision of information on Canadian laws and regulations. Assistance is given in locating missing persons, representing Canadians in matters of estates, and procuring legal documents. Consular officers often act on behalf of other government departments. In countries where the Department of Citizenship and Immigration is not directly represented, for instance, they may function as visa officers. On occasion they are called upon to assist the Department of Trade and Commerce in the promotion

¹A list of these agreements will be found in Appendix F.