



communiqué

No: 25
No.:

DIFFUSION: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
RELEASE: APRIL 21, 1980

AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN: CANADIAN CONTRIBUTION TO UNHCR

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mark MacGuigan, today announced a contribution of \$2 million to the international appeal of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on behalf of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. During the past year, over 680,000 refugees have fled their homeland and sought refuge in Pakistan. Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late December, the exodus has accelerated. The Government and people of Pakistan have responded to this unexpected and heavy burden in an admirable and generous way. In addition to its own refugee assistance programme, the Government of Pakistan has appealed to the international community for humanitarian assistance. In response to this appeal, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross have initiated major relief programmes which will provide basic food rations, medical care, clothing and shelter. Canada very recently contributed \$400,000 to the Afghanistan refugee programme of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In announcing the \$2 million contribution to the UNHCR, to be drawn from the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA's) funds, Dr. MacGuigan noted that, as well as being a humanitarian gesture, the contribution is part of Canada's overall response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which has been condemned by the international community. He added that by this contribution Canada has joined many other countries in offering humanitarian assistance to the innocent victims of civil strife and foreign invasion.