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OUELLET WELCOMES RELEASE OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today welcomed the decision of the military regime in Burma to release unconditionally democracy movement leader Aung San Suu Kyi after almost six years of house arrest.

"This is a victory for the Burmese people," said Mr. Ouellet. "Daw Suu Kyi's courageous stand for democracy and human rights has been recognized internationally. We hope that this decision ends once and for all her ordeal and will be extended to the many other Burmese political prisoners who have been detained for their participation in the pro-democracy movement."

The Minister also stated: "We hope the release of Aung San Suu Kyi will be a first step toward national reconciliation and democratic reform in Burma." Mr. Ouellet added that Canada will have an opportunity to take stock and review developments in Burma with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference to be held in Brunei on August 2 and 3.

The Canadian government has been consistent in urging Aung San Suu Kyi's release, both in bilateral dealings with the Burmese regime and in international fora. Mr. Ouellet described today's move as a welcome sign that the Burmese authorities have responded to the calls of the international community.

Aung San Suu Kyi, who was detained after criticizing the military regime for its brutal treatment of pro-democracy demonstrators, has been under house arrest since July 20, 1989. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

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