

News Release

July 18, 1995

No. 128

CANADA URGES RESTRAINT IN NIGERIAN SENTENCING

Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa) Christine Stewart, on behalf of Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet, today expressed deep concern at the outcome of secret trials in Nigeria. Forty people, including ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice-President Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, have been sentenced in connection with an alleged coup plot. The sentences, believed to include some death sentences, are now under review by the military regime.

"Due process is vital, especially with such serious charges," said Mrs. Stewart. "Canada seriously questions the credibility of sentences rendered by secret trials with unseen evidence, in which the accused lacked access to counsel of their choice and judicial appeal. We urge the Nigerian authorities, in reviewing the sentences, to exercise maximum restraint and clemency for all accused."

The Secretary of State reinforced the message she conveyed in the House of Commons last month that Nigeria "... must act decisively to restore democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights."

Generals Obasanjo and Yar'Adua presided over a three-year military rule that introduced democracy to Nigeria in 1979. General Obasanjo remains prominent as an elder statesman and international voice for reform. General Yar'Adua has been active in political and constitutional circles.

- 30 -

For further information, media representatives may contact:

Media Relations Office
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
(613) 995-1874

