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OUELLET EXPRESSES DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT FOLLOWING RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES IN SRI LANKA

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today expressed deepest disappointment about the unilateral decision of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to abandon the peace process in Sri Lanka and to return to armed conflict with a surprise attack on two government naval vessels in Trincomalee harbour on April 19.

"We are dismayed at the precipitate actions of the LTTE and at the further loss of life. We call on the Tiger leadership to reconsider its decision and to return to the pursuit of a negotiated settlement. The LTTE has taken a step backward, given the fact that peace had held in Sri Lanka since January without major incident. Through it all, the Government of Sri Lanka has demonstrated a strong willingness to respond to many of the concerns of the LTTE," said Mr. Ouellet.

Mr. Ouellet noted that the Government of Sri Lanka has indicated that it is still willing to engage in the peace process despite the latest developments. He commended this courageous approach, which reflects a commitment to achieving a just and lasting solution to the ethnic discord afflicting Sri Lanka. "This is the only approach that offers a future for Sri Lanka," said Mr. Ouellet.

Canada remains committed to peace in Sri Lanka and has been actively supporting the peace process. A Canadian peace observer has been in Sri Lanka since January at the request of the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. Norway and the Netherlands have provided peace observers as well.

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