



news release

Date **May 4, 1994**
For release

No. 87

OUELLET WELCOMES SIGNING OF ISRAEL-PLO AGREEMENT ON PALESTINIAN AUTONOMY

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet welcomed the signing in Cairo today of the Agreement on Palestinian Autonomy in Gaza and Jericho by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

"This agreement marks a major milestone on the long road to peace in the Middle East," said Mr. Ouellet. "It is eloquent testimony to the courage and leadership of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat."

The Minister lauded the vision and tenacity of the Egyptian Government and of the Madrid Conference co-sponsors, the United States and Russia, in helping to bring this agreement about. Mr. Ouellet added that Canadians hope it will create a new dynamic for peace. He expressed the wish that similar progress will be achieved soon in the other bilateral negotiations, to pave the way for a durable peace throughout the region.

The Minister pledged continued Canadian support for the Middle East peace process, both bilateral and multilateral, including the Refugee Working Group that Canada chairs. The Working Group holds its next meeting in Cairo, May 10-12.

- 30 -

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