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McDOUGALL WELCOMES THE RESUMPTION OF TALKS IN SOUTH AFRICA

External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall welcomed today's opening of multiparty constitutional talks in South Africa, which are expected to lead to non-racial elections and South Africa's first representative multiracial government.

"Today's resumption of constitutional talks is a crucial step toward the establishment of a new consensus on South Africa's post-apartheid future," said Mrs. McDougall. "Canada continues to encourage all parties to work peacefully toward an early agreement on transitional government structures."

Mrs. McDougall is Chairperson of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa (CFMSA), which has co-ordinated the Commonwealth's action on South Africa since 1987. In October 1991, on the recommendation of the CFMSA, Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed that economic (trade and investment) sanctions would be lifted when agreement is reached on appropriate transitional mechanisms in South Africa. Commonwealth financial sanctions would be lifted upon agreement on a new democratic constitution, or earlier if requested by an all-party conference or an interim government.

Delegations from the many South African groups involved in negotiations over South Africa's constitutional future have not met formally since the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) broke down in May 1992. Twenty-six groups and political parties will attend the new constitutional forum, including several that did not participate in earlier CODESA talks.

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