

News Release

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CANADA TO CHAIR MIDDLE EAST REFUGEE WORKING GROUP PLENARY MEETING

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today announced that Canada will be chairing the plenary meeting of the Middle East Refugee Working Group (RWG) in Geneva, December 12-14.

"Our role as 'gavel' of the RWG builds on Canada's long-standing efforts for reconciliation in the region," said Mr. Ouellet. "We are proud of the fact that the RWG is making a difference to the lives of Palestinian refugees and fostering the conditions for a lasting peace in the Middle East."

Participants will discuss the situation of refugees in the West Bank and Gaza as well as those in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. They will also present an update of ongoing activities in support of Palestinian refugees.

Canada will provide information on three projects to be funded by the Canadian International Development Agency in 1996: a project to improve the living conditions of refugees in Lebanon, renovation of a Lebanese hospital wing that treats refugee women, and a contribution to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The multilateral track of the Middle East peace process was established in January 1992 and is co-sponsored by Russia and the United States. It is intended to complement and support the bilateral peace process. In addition to its role in the RWG, Canada is an active participant in the other four working groups: water, environment, regional economic development, and arms control and regional security. Canada is also a member of the steering group that oversees the activities of all the working groups.

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For further information, media representatives may contact:

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



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