



news release

Date **March 25, 1993**

No. 72

For release

CANADA WELCOMES ADOPTION OF A UN DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Mary Collins, today welcomed the adoption by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women of a Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The Declaration -- the result of a Canadian initiative -- was adopted by consensus at the Commission meeting in Vienna today and will be forwarded to the UN General Assembly for final consideration this fall.

"Violence against women remains one of the most pervasive and serious manifestations of human rights abuses," said Mrs. McDougall. "The adoption of this Declaration represents a commitment by UN-member countries to work toward eradicating violence against women."

The Declaration states that violence against women impedes women's enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and calls on governments to exercise diligence to prevent and punish acts of violence whether perpetrated by the state, within the general community or within the home. The Declaration also outlines a series of legal, administrative, social and educational measures that states should take in an effort to eliminate violence against women.

"This is a major step forward on the issue of violence against women," said Minister Collins. "It sends a strong signal about the importance that an increasing number of governments now put on this issue and places violence against women within the framework of existing human rights standards," added Mrs. Collins.

The Declaration contains a definition of violence against women, which includes physical, sexual and psychological violence. This is the first time that a specific definition of violence against women has been accepted by an international human rights body.

Canada is a strong and consistent supporter of women's human rights. At the most recent session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, held in Geneva February 1 to March 12, 1993, Canada successfully introduced a resolution that is aimed at integrating women's rights into the human rights mechanisms of the UN. Canada also worked for the consensus adoption of a resolution condemning violence against women in the former Yugoslavia as a war crime.

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