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## CANADA TO SIGN CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall will attend the Paris signing ceremony for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, on Wednesday, January 13.

"I am honoured to sign this Convention on behalf of Canada and it is my hope that it signals an end to a tragic chapter in world history," said Mrs. McDougall. "Canadians can take special pride in the conclusion of this treaty. The total abolition of chemical weapons has been one of our arms control objectives ever since Canadian soldiers experienced the horrors of gas attacks during the First World War."

The Chemical Weapons Convention is the first multilaterally negotiated agreement to abolish an entire category of weapons and to provide an extensive, detailed verification regime. An Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will be established in The Hague to ensure its implementation. The Convention will enter into force 180 days after 65 states have ratified it, but not before January 1995.

Canada has played a leading role in the negotiations of the agreement, which have been ongoing since 1984. The signing of the Convention represents an important achievement in Canada's initiative to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction, articulated by the Prime Minister in February 1991.

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## BACKGROUNDER

### CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is unique in that it is the first multilaterally negotiated arms control agreement with a complete and absolute ban on an entire category of weapons.

The CWC bans the development, production, stockpiling and use of all chemical weapons. It requires the destruction, over a 10-year period, of facilities capable of producing chemical agents.

It provides for the establishment of an Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague, to implement the Convention.

The Convention also contains the most comprehensive and rigorous verification measures ever developed in a multilateral agreement. States signing the Convention agree to allow the OPCW to:

- closely observe and confirm the destruction of any chemical weapons stockpile and production facility they possess;
- closely monitor any continuing permitted production of toxic chemical agents;
- monitor the global chemical industry with routine international inspections of civilian production and other facilities, in a graduated regime according to the degree of potential risk of cheating; and,
- as the ultimate recourse, to resort to short-notice challenge inspections, without right of refusal, if one state has reason to believe that another signatory state is engaged in activities incompatible with the obligations and goals of the Convention.

Should a signatory state be found to be in violation of its obligations, the Convention has a sanctions regime. It also allows the OPCW to refer serious violations to the United Nations Security Council for possible mandatory action under the UN Charter.

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