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CANADA RATIFIES GENEVA PROTOCOLS ON INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, and the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Bill McKnight, today announced that the Government has ratified the 1977 Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The Geneva Protocols are two humanitarian treaties that afford greater protection to civilians and soldiers during times of international armed conflict and civil wars. Canada will become bound by the Protocols six months after their ratification.

The Geneva Protocols represent a significant development in the codification of international humanitarian law. As such, they contain a number of important obligations for states that choose to become party to them.

Canada signed the Protocols in 1977, thereby making a commitment to consider ratification. The process of ratification required careful consideration of all obligations set out in the Protocols and, in Canada's case, required changes to existing legislation. This amendment to the Geneva Conventions Act of 1965 to allow the ratification was passed by Parliament in June of this year.

"Thanks to ratification, the Government can now take prompt action in the event that grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols occur, and all such breaches will be direct offences under Canadian law," stated Mr. Clark.

"Ratification of the Protocols is an expression of Canada's firm commitment to conducting any armed conflict within the limits set by humanitarian law, with as much protection as possible for those made vulnerable during periods of armed conflict," said Mr. McKnight.

Through the ratification of the Geneva Protocols, Canada has reiterated its support for humanitarian principles and continued its commitment to the development and protection of international humanitarian law.

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