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CANADIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE
INTERNATIONAL RELIEF EFFORT FOR
KAMPUCHEA (CAMBODIA)

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Flora MacDonald, and the Minister of State responsible for CIDA, Martial Asselin, have announced today that Canada will make an initial contribution of \$5 million to the international relief effort to help the victims of the very serious famine now afflicting Kampuchea (Cambodia).

The Canadian Government has been following developments in Kampuchea over the last few months with ever growing concern. The Ministers noted that after the horrors inflicted on the Cambodian people by the Pol Pot regime had come the armed invasion by Vietnam with the inevitable accompanying destruction and chaos. The entire population faces famine because of the total disruption of rice planting by the on-going war. According to reports of representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of UNICEF, who have recently undertaken a mission to Kampuchea, malnutrition has reached crisis proportions and threatens the lives of an estimated 2.5 million people. Through starvation, exposure, military casualties and refugee outflows, the population of Kampuchea has already declined from over 8 million in 1975 to an estimated 5 million in 1979. The Red Cross has reported that almost no children under five years of age have survived and the 5-10 years age group is now seriously threatened. Furthermore, the advent of the dry season might well lead to an intensification of hostilities and the situation might become even more tragic.

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The Ministers noted that Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations has given to the ICRC and UNICEF the responsibility for organizing the international relief efforts and these two agencies have already supervised the delivery inside Kampuchea of small amounts of supplies. The ICRC and UNICEF are completing arrangements with the local authorities to ensure that assistance will indeed reach the afflicted. When this is done, an international appeal for more than \$100 million is expected. The Ministers also pointed out that the Thai Government had also taken action to assist those refugees from Kampuchea who can reach its borders and has issued a \$30.8 million appeal for aid. The Canadian contribution will be used for these two programmes.

For all these reasons, the Ministers said, it is the duty of the international community as a whole as well as the duty of Canadians to support these international efforts, without which the survival of an entire nation might be in jeopardy.

As has been expressed on many occasions previously by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, notably at the Refugee Conference in Geneva in July, the Ministers stressed that an exclusively humanitarian response to the present situation in Kampuchea -- compelling though the requirements for it may be -- is not enough. There must be a political approach to dealing with the roots of the problem, that is the policies being pursued by the Government of Vietnam.

To restore the independence of Kampuchea, hostilities will have to be brought to an end and the foreign forces now occupying much of the country will have to be withdrawn. The Ministers stressed that Canada would support any effort to start the process of political settlement through negotiations among the interested parties.