

# News Release

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## OUELLET MARKS 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

In a statement marking the 25th anniversary of its entry into force, Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today reaffirmed Canada's commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and called for its indefinite, unconditional extension at the upcoming Review and Extension Conference in New York in April.

"The NPT enhances our security by limiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Canada firmly believes that it should be made a permanent fixture of international law," said Mr. Ouellet. "The world community must take advantage of the current high degree of international co-operation to enshrine indefinitely this most important document, which underpins regional and global security."

The Treaty entered into force on March 5, 1970. Signed and ratified by 171 countries, it enjoys the widest adherence of any arms control agreement in history. The treaty prevents the spread of nuclear weapons by restricting their possession to the five original nuclear powers – the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom and France – and commits the nuclear weapons states to negotiations leading to the elimination of their nuclear arsenals. It also establishes the framework for co-operation in the civil uses of nuclear energy.

Because of the political climate at the time, the Treaty was limited in duration to 25 years after its entry into force. A decision must be reached on whether to extend the Treaty indefinitely, or for a fixed period or periods of time. Canada is firmly committed to the indefinite, unconditional extension of the NPT.

The NPT Review and Extension Conference will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, April 17 to May 12.

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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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## Backgrounder

### THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

- The fundamental purpose of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is to prevent the emergence of additional nuclear weapons states.
- The basic provisions of the NPT are as follows:
  - All states are prohibited from possessing nuclear weapons except the five nuclear weapons states – the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom and France.
  - All non-nuclear weapons states agree to international safeguards to ensure that their peaceful nuclear activities are not diverted to making such weapons.
  - The peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the transfer of equipment and technology for the range of its civilian application are to be promoted.
  - States parties are to commit to pursuing negotiations leading to general and complete disarmament, particularly the elimination of nuclear weapons by the nuclear weapons states.
- The Treaty has now been acceded to by 171 nations, including the five nuclear weapons states, making it the most widely adhered to international arms control agreement in history.
- The NPT was opened for signature on July 1, 1968. Canada signed the agreement on July 23, and ratified it on January 8, 1969. The Treaty entered into force on March 5, 1970.
- The operation of the Treaty is reviewed every five years to ensure that the purposes of its provisions are being realized. There have been four Review Conferences to date.
- At the time of the original negotiations, some countries were reluctant to foreswear the right to possess nuclear weapons for all time. Consequently, it was decided that 25 years after its entry into force – which period has now elapsed –, states parties would be required to decide whether the NPT should be extended indefinitely, or for a fixed period or periods. This key extension decision will be taken at a conference in New York, April 17-May 12.

- With substantial trade in nuclear technology for peaceful purposes (from reactors to uranium), Canada was the first country possessing nuclear technology to renounce the production of nuclear weapons. Canada fully supports the indefinite extension of the NPT, and is working actively to reach that goal.
- Canada welcomes recent accessions to the treaty - namely Algeria, Argentina and Ukraine - and urges all remaining countries to add their names to the growing list of member states.