



news release

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CANADA SIGNS THE OPEN SKIES TREATY

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, and the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Marcel Masse, announced that Canada has signed the Treaty on Open Skies. Mrs. McDougall signed the Treaty today on behalf of Canada at a special ceremony during the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) meeting in Helsinki.

The Treaty allows each of the signing countries to fly over the territory of the others, at short notice, to promote greater openness and transparency in military activities.

The Ministers noted that Canada played a leading role in making the Treaty possible. Prime Minister Mulroney's proposal in the fall of 1989 started the process by inviting participants to the first negotiating session in Ottawa in February 1990. Canada and Hungary conducted test flights in 1990 and 1992 which helped establish the workability of the Treaty's provisions.

"This Treaty is a great step forward for international security-building efforts," said Mrs. McDougall. "All participating countries are now partners in a concrete effort to build confidence and dispel distrust."

"The Canadian Forces played a pivotal role in proving that the Treaty can work," said Mr. Masse. "The Department of National Defence is prepared to carry out Open Skies observation flights from one of its bases."

Canada and Hungary are the depositories of the Treaty in recognition of their special contribution to the Open Skies process. This means they will hold the legal texts of the Treaty and will receive the instruments of ratification and accession from the other participating countries.

An Open Skies Consultative Commission is being set up to oversee the implementation of the Treaty. Canada will chair the first session of the Commission in Vienna.

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