

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire d'État
aux Affaires
extérieures

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
TO THE
TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
"HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
TO THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA"

OTTAWA, Ontario
March 8, 1993

The war in the former Yugoslavia seems to be unparalleled in terms of the complexity of the political, economic and ethnic forces involved. It continues to severely challenge the international community and we continue to search for effective ways of responding to this crisis.

We must cut to the very root of this tragedy. We must bring this war to an end. We must stop further bloodshed. We must convince all parties involved that the use of force will lead nowhere. The parties must realize that they will have to live side by side after this is over. They must realize that no peace can be brought about by the imposition of military might.

Intense negotiations have taken place in New York over the past several days. These are expected to resume toward the end of this week. They show signs that at least some of the parties are seriously interested in a negotiated settlement. Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance have produced over the months, and with much dedication, a comprehensive package. This should form the basis of new political, security and territorial arrangements for Bosnians. This is the only proposal available to the parties and they must all negotiate seriously on this basis.

We have been active with the parties, urging them to find a meaningful and fair compromise. This is precisely the message that our Ambassador to the UN delivered to Dr. Karadzic, on my instructions, last Friday. Any party that stands in the way of a political compromise will face further international condemnation and isolation. We are ready to do whatever we can to help the difficult search for peace.

That includes, of course, the provision of humanitarian assistance until this horrifying and tragic war is ended. Canadians continue to demonstrate their solidarity and their compassion for those who have been forced to suffer all forms of human degradation -- and our government will continue to provide support for these unfortunate people.

To channel this humanitarian assistance, we have chosen to utilize international relief organizations. We have disbursed over \$25 million through the United Nations and other organizations. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization, World Food Program, UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, UN Volunteers, International Committee of the Red Cross, and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have been our agents.

We have intentionally chosen to let those with expertise and objectivity assess the requirements. We have consistently told these organizations that our intention is to help those most in need with what they most urgently require.

We know this is not sufficient. We know that governments and public institutions in the region are barely capable of coping with hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. The economies of these countries have suffered greatly.

We have addressed what we believe to be the number one priority: to help those who have been expelled by warfare and to counter the ignominious practice of "ethnic cleansing."

First and foremost, we must ensure that people receive food, medicine and shelter. But we must also deal with the social and emotional legacies of war.

In December 1992, and again last Friday, I announced a specific grant to assist the victims of sexual violence. Canadians have been outraged by the rape and sexual assault of women and children in this war. The victims of these repugnant crimes require our urgent assistance. Both the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Honourable Mary Collins, and myself indicated on Friday that Canada will provide a further \$1.5 million to address these needs. Our contribution will help the UNHCR and UNICEF provide women and children with medical supplies, rape-trauma counselling services, food, clothing and shelter.

Today, I am pleased to announce a further contribution of \$9.5 million in response to the ongoing international appeals. We will help the World Food Program, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and UNICEF continue their activities.

This new contribution underlines Canada's continuing concern for those who are suffering. By channelling our assistance through these established agencies, we know that we are addressing identified shortages. We know that our contribution will be directed to and received by those most in need.

As this House knows, the Canadian Forces are present on the ground in Bosnia as part of the United Nations Protection Force. Our troops, a battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment, have already begun the task of ensuring safe delivery of humanitarian assistance in Eastern Bosnia. Our Forces have also brought large quantities of food and medical supplies by air to Sarajevo during more than 354 missions. Our men and women operate under the most hazardous of conditions with great commitment and bravery, and they are a credit to all Canadians.

The Americans have chosen to drop supplies from the air, to reach villages isolated for months from any relief. This is a commendable initiative that will supplement what is being done by land. We fully support them in their efforts.

But we know that humanitarian assistance by itself will never be enough. Canada will continue to explore all means for bringing a quick and lasting end to this tragedy.

We cannot allow the world to disintegrate once again into the basest forms of inhumanity. We must take the lessons of this century and put an end, once and for all, to the festering hatreds that continue to fuel the fires of war in the former Yugoslavia.