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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

WELCOMES DECLARATION OF CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, today welcomed the Declaration of the five Central American Presidents at San Isidro de Coronado, Costa Rica.

The agreement includes a unanimous condemnation of activities of all insurgencies in the region, as well as a reaffirmation of the United Nation's key role in achieving lasting peace.

"The Presidents have achieved agreement against very heavy odds, given the recent mounting tension in the area, and particularly the escalation of the civil conflict in El Salvador" stated Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark expressed the hope that all players in the peace process, not only the Central American governments, but outside powers, as well as irregular forces in the region, would get behind the consensus reached in Costa Rica, and seek peaceful settlements of disputes in the spirit of national reconciliation.

Mr. Clark confirmed Canada's continued support for the peace process. He noted Canada had already played an important role, -- beyond its historic interests in Central America -- to help achieve peace and economic and social justice in the region.

"Canada is a major contributor to the UN Observer Group (ONUCA), and is contributing heavily in many other ways; for example, our growing program of development assistance; in sending experts to observe elections; in technical and material assistance to the election process in Nicaragua; in the effective help we have provided, on an urgent basis, to refugees; and in speaking out strongly on the need to respect and strengthen human rights in Central America."

Mr. Clark reiterated his plea for an end to the bloodshed and violence in El Salvador.

"We have been saddened by the failure to achieve a peaceful settlement, in spite of intense diplomatic activities by the UN, the OAS and many individual countries, including Canada. We hope the agreement reached among the Presidents will have the effect of halting the fighting and bringing both parties back to the negotiating table."