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CANADA RATIFIES OUTER SPACE TREATY

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, announced today that the Canadian Government deposited identical instruments of ratification for the United Nations Treaty on "Principles Governing Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies" with the Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the Soviet Union, at ceremonies conducted in London, Washington and Moscow to coincide with 11 am, October 10, 1967, Washington time. The deposit of instruments of ratification by these three Depositary Governments with each other together with the deposit with them of similar instruments by two other governments, such as the Canadian Government, has now brought this important outer space treaty into force.

Canada, as a member of the 28-State United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space played an active role in the negotiations in Geneva and New York which culminated last year in the adoption by the General Assembly of the text of the Treaty. On January 27, 1967, Canada was one of the first of more than eighty countries to sign the Treaty and the early deposit of our instrument of ratification now serves to re-emphasize the importance Canada continues to attach to the Treaty.

This Treaty as explained by the government in June, both in the House of Commons and before the Standing Committee on External Affairs, is intended to ensure that outer space, the moon and other celestial bodies will be explored and used only for peaceful purposes and that there can be no national appropriation of such bodies. Of particular significance in this respect are those provisions of the Treaty which state that parties to it undertake not to place in orbit around the earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, install such weapons on celestial bodies or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner. The establishment of military bases, installations and fortifications, the testing of any type of weapons and the conduct of military manoeuvres on celestial bodies are also forbidden by the Treaty. These terms incorporate the main ideas expressed in the 1963 United Nations Declaration on Legal Principles Governing Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space. In this respect the Treaty represents a very significant step forward in the achievement of multilateral arms control arrangements.

The Treaty emphasizes freedom of scientific investigation on celestial bodies and in outer space. It also stresses co-operation among states both in avoiding the contamination of outer space and in the dissemination of information on conditions which might cause harm to the health or affect the safety of astronauts. In order further to promote such international co-operation states party to the Treaty are to consider, on the basis of equality, requests from other parties to build tracking facilities on their territory for observing the flight of space objects which the requesting nation has launched. The Treaty stipulates that if the request is considered favourably, all the necessary terms and conditions are to be arranged by negotiations. Should these terms and conditions prove unacceptable to the host nation, however, there is no obligation to grant the facilities requested.

Since the Treaty represents the codification and formalization of principles of international law, many of which were set out in the 1963 United Nations Declaration on Outer Space, and because of Canada's active role in the space field and in the international legal sphere, and moreover, because of the importance of the Treaty for the development of the rule of law in outer space, it is particularly appropriate for Canada, by its ratification, to be among the first countries to formally accept the principles which the Treaty enshrines.