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CANADIAN DELEGATION TO  
CSCE HUMAN CONTACTS EXPERTS MEETING  
APRIL-MAY, 1986

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, announced today that a delegation of Canadian officials will attend a meeting of experts on East-West family and other human contacts to be held in Berne, Switzerland beginning April 15. A preparatory meeting commenced April 2. The meeting is part of the process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the CSCE. The Canadian delegation will be headed by Mr. William Bauer, the Canadian Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator for the CSCE. Canadian parliamentary observers will be part of the delegation.

Since the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, the CSCE process has provided a framework for discussion among all the countries of Europe and Canada and the United States. The Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe is part of this process. At the insistence of NATO countries and like-minded neutral countries, close attention has also been given to questions of human rights and humanitarian questions. At Canada's initiative and invitation, an experts meeting on human rights was held in Ottawa, in May-June, 1985. The focus is now on humanitarian issues arising from families divided by political borders and on the need to expand human contacts especially between Western and Eastern Europe.

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Since the beginning of the CSCE, Canada has been a leading advocate of measures to facilitate «East-West» family contacts, family reunification, marriage between persons of different nationality, and personal contacts generally. Canada has taken a priority interest in this given the large share of the Canadian population which has family roots in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Moreover, it is evident that real security and cooperation in Europe will be achieved only when there is mutual confidence, and that the best route to its achievement is a substantial increase of human contacts. In recent years there has been a considerable growth in official, commercial and tourist travel between Western and Eastern Europe but, disappointingly, some countries still maintain highly restrictive controls on travel and emigration by their citizens.

Canadians are used to coming and going as they please--a traditional right guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms--and tend to forget the deep frustrations felt by many people in countries where these freedoms are not respected. The objectives of Canada at the forthcoming meeting in Berne will be to identify the obstacles still put in the way of East-West human contacts, and to encourage governments to adopt a more flexible stance towards family travel and family reunification in the country of a family's choice.