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## McDOUGALL SAYS OAS STRONGER AT DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today wound up a three-day visit to Santiago, Chile, for the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly, the first in its history where all governments present were democratically elected.

"This is an extraordinary time to be at this OAS gathering," said Mrs. McDougall. "I found 34 proud democracies coming together to work on problems with more common resolve than ever."

Meetings began June 2 with the "informal dialogue" of the 34 Foreign Ministers and heads of delegation who attended the General Assembly. In discussions on consolidation of democracy, Mrs. McDougall emphasized the Canadian commitment to assist the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, created as a result of a Canadian resolution at the last General Assembly, to enlarge and enhance its role. She also suggested that the establishment of clear priorities would help strengthen the Organization.

A key element of the "Undertaking," emerging from the Assembly by Foreign Ministers, concerns the threat to international security posed by the uncontrolled proliferation of arms. Mrs. McDougall welcomed the discussion promoted by Canada to begin a study in the OAS of hemispheric security, in particular the vital question of arms proliferation. "The initiative is consistent with Canada's efforts, in a variety of global fora, to propose measures to deal effectively with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and excessive build-ups of conventional arms," she stated. "In addressing this problem, OAS Foreign Ministers are sending an important political signal to all regions of the world about our commitment to contributing to international peace and security in the post-Cold War era."

Mrs. McDougall had bilateral meetings with many of her Latin American and Caribbean counterparts including the Foreign Ministers of Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Costa Rica, Jamaica and Chile. This was her first opportunity as Secretary of State for External Affairs to meet them. They discussed OAS issues, the Canadian arms control initiative and bilateral relations. Canada's contribution to the OAS and its enlarged role in the hemisphere during its first year of membership was welcomed by her colleagues.

While in Santiago, Mrs. McDougall and Chilean Foreign Minister Enrique Silva signed a Memorandum of Understanding setting up a Joint Canada-Chile Economic and Trade Council to intensify economic relationships and to encourage two-way investment. "I see an increasingly important economic relationship developing between Chile and Canada. It will offer substantial benefits to both our economies," said the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

In her speech to the General Assembly today, Mrs. McDougall pointed to the important political and economic changes throughout the hemisphere but highlighted the need for the OAS to work vigorously to consolidate democracy, to promote human rights and to address problems related to the environment, drug trafficking and economic development.

"The OAS is becoming a stronger Organization. It is dealing with today's issues -- democracy, human rights, arms proliferation and the environment. Canada's membership has given us a voice and an important role in the issues affecting our hemisphere," Mrs. McDougall said on leaving Santiago.

Minister McDougall arrives in Copenhagen, Denmark, tomorrow to attend the NATO North Atlantic Council Meeting of Foreign Ministers, June 6 and 7.

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