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MAJOR CANADIAN INITIATIVE AT THE UNITED NATIONS
FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF
CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE

In a very important step, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, today conveyed to His Excellency Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Secretary-General of the United Nations, the results of an extensive Canadian study on procedures to apply in cases where there are alleged uses of chemical or biological weapons. Ambassador Stephen Lewis, accompanied by Ambassador for Disarmament Douglas Roche, delivered a letter from Mr. Clark to the UN Secretary-General and presented him with a ceremonial copy of a Handbook for the Investigation of Allegations of the Use of Chemical or Biological Weapons.

The Handbook is the result of a study by Canadian scientists and officials, concluded under the auspices of the Verification Research Programme of the Arms Control and Disarmament Division of the Department of External Affairs.

The text of the letter from the Secretary of State for External Affairs is as follows:

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Excellency,

On September 25, 1985, I had the honour of addressing the 40th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, at which time I stated that Canada had devised its own Programme of Action for the latter half of the Second Disarmament Decade. At that time, I indicated that Canada would present to the United Nations the results of detailed, practical studies it has undertaken related to the investigation of allegations of the use of chemical weapons.

As you know, over the past few years Canada has submitted documentation to the United Nations that has had a bearing on specific allegations. In addition, Canada submitted a study and made a presentation to the Group of Consultant Experts appointed by you under General Assembly resolution 37/98D concerning provisional procedures to uphold the authority of the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting the use of chemical or biological weapons. In accordance with that resolution, Canada also advised you of the names of scientific experts and laboratories upon which you could draw in the event of a requirement to investigate an allegation of the use of chemical or biological weapons. As you are fully aware, the use of such weapons would constitute a violation of either the 1925 Geneva Protocol or the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, or both. The international community ignores such acts at its peril.

Your initiatives to investigate allegations of the use of chemical weapons have been greatly appreciated in Canada, and have had our full support. If, regrettably, further investigative initiatives by you become necessary, you can count on Canada's continued support. It is, therefore, with particular pleasure that I am conveying to you, on behalf of the Government of Canada, the formal results of our work in the form of a Handbook for the Investigation of Allegations of the Use of Chemical or Biological Weapons.

This document constitutes a manual of procedures which would be useful to UN experts who may be called upon to investigate such an allegation. An impartial investigation would determine, to the extent possible, whether or not there are grounds to support the allegation. It is for this reason, we strongly believe, that a comprehensive and known set of procedures should exist to conduct a timely on-site investigation, a point which has been made many times in the past by the Experts appointed by you. This Handbook

identifies procedures, equipment and standard formats which would go a long way to ensuring that the findings of an investigation are as conclusive, as convincing, and as impartial as they can possibly be.

Canada will continue to explore ways in which it might make further practical contributions to the reinforcement of international law prohibiting the use of chemical or biological weapons. We hope that our efforts will stimulate other concerned governments to continue and to increase their own efforts to the same end. Only through the concerted activity of the international community can present and future generations be spared the scourge of these weapons of mass destruction.

We see this Handbook as the first substantive manifestation of what we had in mind in putting forward with other cosponsors resolution L.62/Rev.1 on "Verification in All its Aspects", which was adopted without a vote in the First Committee on 22 November 1985. We see procedures such as these being relevant to the on-going negotiations and eventual agreement on a comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons. While awaiting such agreement, we see this Handbook as a contribution to the role of your office and the United Nations in ensuring that allegations of the use of chemical or biological weapons be investigated in a timely and effective manner.

We would certainly be pleased to be associated with any follow-on action which might be prompted by this Handbook.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurance of my highest consideration.