



No. 159

July 28, 1992

CANADA TO PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL MEETING ON REFUGEES FROM THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today announced that Ambassador Gerald E. Shannon will represent Canada at a special meeting of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) tomorrow in Geneva. The purpose of this one-day meeting is to examine the immediate humanitarian needs of the victims of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and to intensify the search for a lasting solution to the plight of the refugees. Ambassador Shannon is Canada's Permanent Representative to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva.

"Canadians are appalled by the situation in the former Yugoslavia," said Mrs. McDougall. "We support the aim of the conference, which is to alleviate the human suffering in the short term. But treating the symptoms will not cure the problems at the root of the conflict. We must also do everything in our power to find a political solution."

The Minister added that Canada is committed to participating fully in international efforts to deal with the refugee problem and to find a just and durable solution to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Canada has provided over 1,200 peacekeeping personnel and ceasefire monitors to the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the area. Canada has also contributed \$5.25 million to international appeals for humanitarian assistance for the victims of the conflict. In addition, a Canadian Armed Forces Hercules C-130 transport airplane has conducted more than 30 relief flights to Sarajevo. In the past 12 months, Canada has extended the visas of approximately 15,000 citizens of the former Yugoslavia who had entered our country as temporary visitors.

"Canadian contributions have been substantial, and we will continue to share the burden that results from mass flows of refugees and displaced persons," concluded Mrs. McDougall.

- 30 -

Please find attached a Backgrounder on Canada's response to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

For further information, media representatives may contact:

Media Relations Office
External Affairs and International Trade Canada
(613) 995-1874

BACKGROUNDER

CANADA'S RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Canada is participating fully in international efforts to promote a peaceful settlement to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. In September 1991, Prime Minister Mulroney led the call for a UN peacekeeping force as the only means to stop the fighting and to permit negotiations. Canada has been active in searching for political solutions both at the United Nations and at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). It has also given generously to international humanitarian relief efforts to help the victims of the fighting. In the last 12 months, it has extended the visas of approximately 15,000 citizens of the former Yugoslavia who had entered Canada as temporary visitors.

Peacekeeping

About 1,200 Canadian troops and 30 Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) civilian monitors are deployed with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). One of the largest contributions to the international force, the Canadian contingent is based in Daruvar, Croatia. In June, Canada responded positively to a UN request to allow its troops to be reassigned to maintain security at the Sarajevo airport, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Their presence there has made possible the airlift of relief supplies for the population of Sarajevo. In early August, the Canadian troops will resume their duties in Croatia.

Diplomacy

Canada has repeatedly called upon the parties to the conflict to end the violence and negotiate peacefully.

Canada recognized the independence of Slovenia and Croatia on January 15, 1992. On April 8, it recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the hope that international recognition would discourage any attempts by its neighbours to partition the republic and would strengthen the chances of finding a peaceful solution acceptable to all the ethnic groups. In light of the continued fighting, Canada has not yet established diplomatic relations with the three newly independent countries.

Canada's position with regard to Macedonia is that its people have a legitimate claim to recognition. Canada plans no action, however, that would contribute to the further destabilization of the region. It is hoped that a mutually acceptable solution can be found on the contentious issue of the name of the republic.

While the two remaining republics, Serbia and Montenegro, have proclaimed a new union, Canada believes that the question of the continuity of Yugoslavia must be negotiated among the parties that made up the former Yugoslav republic.

Canada, along with other Western countries, has urged the Yugoslav Army, Serbia and Croatia to stop interference in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and has condemned Serbian aggression in the country. Canada supported the temporary suspension of Yugoslavia from the CSCE. Trade sanctions are in place, and further measures are under consideration.

Canada will participate in the conference, called by the British Prime Minister for the second half of August in London to discuss the issues at stake in this tragic crisis and will work toward resolving them.

Humanitarian Aid

To date, Canada has contributed \$5.25 million to international appeals for humanitarian assistance for the victims of the conflict.

- In the fall of 1991, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, announced a contribution of \$1.25 million to the Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) for the purchase and delivery of emergency relief and medical supplies from Canada to support the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the former Yugoslavia. Canadian Forces aircraft airlifted the supplies, and distribution took place in Croatia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia.
- In January 1992, Mrs. McDougall announced a contribution of \$1 million for the joint appeal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) for assistance to the victims of the conflict.
- In June, Canada contributed an additional \$3 million in response to Red Cross and UN appeals. The money was distributed to UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, the Canadian Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to support the purchase and delivery of food and medical supplies, and to assist refugees and displaced persons.
- Canada is also participating in the international airlift to the besieged city of Sarajevo. Since the start of the airlift on July 3, a Canadian Armed Forces Hercules C-130 transport airplane has conducted more than 30 relief flights to Sarajevo.

July 1992