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CANADA-FRANCE MARITIME BOUNDARY CASE GOES TO ARBITRATION

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, and the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, the Honourable Kim Campbell, today announced that oral proceedings in the Canada-France maritime boundary dispute will begin on July 29, 1991, in New York City.

As chief law officer of the Crown, Justice Minister Campbell will open Canada's case before an international Court of Arbitration. Ambassador François Mathys is the Agent and Counsel for Canada in the case.

The decision of the Court will settle a dispute over the location of the boundary that divides the maritime areas belonging to Canada and France off the coasts of Newfoundland and St. Pierre and Miquelon. The case centres on waters that contain rich fisheries resources and a continental shelf with potential hydrocarbon resources.

"This case has a direct impact on Canada's national interest and in particular on the well-being of the fishing community of the South Coast of Newfoundland. It will resolve a dispute according to principles of international law to which Canada is strongly committed," said Mrs. McDougall.

Canada argues that France's maritime area is limited to 12 nautical miles around the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. France considers that a modified equidistance line should be used, which would encompass some 14,500 square nautical miles (approximately 50,000 km²) of ocean.

The final arguments in the case will be considered by an ad hoc Court of Arbitration. The President of the Court is Mr. Eduardo Jiménez de Aréchaga of Uruguay. He was appointed by both parties, as were two other members, Mr. Gaetano Arangio-Ruiz of Italy and Mr. Oscar Schachter of the United States. Mr. Allan E.

Gotlieb was appointed by the Government of Canada and Mr. Prosper Weil was appointed by the Government of France.

These hearings follow two rounds of written pleadings submitted in June 1990 and February 1991. The proceedings will end on August 23. The Court's decision, which is expected to be delivered at the end of 1991 or early in 1992, will be final and binding on both parties.

- 30 -

For further information, media representatives may contact:

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

or

Communications and Public Affairs
Department of Justice
(613) 957-4211