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OFFICIAL VISIT TO TUNISIA AND ALGERIA BY THE
MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The Honourable Jean-Luc Pepin, Minister for External Relations, today announced his intention to make an official visit to Tunisia from April 22 to 25 and to Algeria from April 25 to 30, 1984.

Tunisia is Canada's oldest partner in North Africa. The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1957. In the initial phase of its development, Tunisia was one of the main recipients of Canadian aid in Africa. The main project was the Bourguiba Dam at Sidi Saad. Canada provided \$55 million of the total cost of \$200 million. Other Canadian projects have emphasised medical training and rural development.

Several ministerial visits over the years have contributed to strengthening and to intensifying Canada-Tunisian relations, as have the periodic meetings of the Bilateral Commission. The first meeting of this Commission was held in Tunis in 1969 under the chairmanship of Mr. Pepin, who was Minister Industry, Trade and Commerce at the time.

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Since 1976, relations between the two countries have benefited from a variety of new instruments of cooperation, including shared-cost training and technical assistance programs and Canadian export credits. In addition to political consultations with his Tunisian counterpart, Mr. Pepin will talk with other members of the Tunisian Government in order to examine the long-term outlook for cooperation and means of promoting exchanges. While in Tunis he will also have an opportunity to meet with Mr. Chedli Klibi, the Secretary-General of the Arab League.

In 1971, Mr. Pepin was the first Canadian Government Minister to make an official visit to Algeria. Since that time, relations between Canada and Algeria have progressed remarkably. Some examples of this include the establishment of a Bilateral Commission, the 1983 Framework Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation, the large number of ministerial visits on both sides, and the establishment of means of interpersonal and economic cooperation.

These developments, a result of the activities of the Canadian and Algerian governments and the performance of Canadian firms operating in Algeria, explain why Algeria ranked eleventh in 1983 among Canada's trading partners. Canadian exports have risen from about \$30 million in 1971 to one-half billion dollars today. Mr. Pepin's Algerian visit follows the recent signature by the Export Development Corporation and the Algerian Development Bank of a new line of credit for Canadian \$542.5 million to support the sale of Canadian capital equipment and services.

As well as permitting him to gauge the progress made in the bilateral relationship over the past decade, Mr. Pepin's Algerian visit will prepare groundwork for additional cooperation and more diversified cooperation. The visit will also provide an opportunity to exchange views on the principal questions of international interest.