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BEATTY REITERATES CANADA'S SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

External Affairs Minister Perrin Beatty, in a meeting today with Chief Moshood Abiola, reiterated his deep concern at the grave breach of the democratic process in Nigeria. Chief Abiola is the undeclared winner of Nigeria's presidential elections, which were held on June 12, 1993, and later annulled by the military regime. Canada has described the results of these elections as free and fair.

Mr. Beatty gave Chief Abiola a copy of the report on the June 12 elections prepared by Canadian electoral observers. The Minister also arranged for Chief Abiola to meet parliamentarians from the three major political parties and senior officials of his department.

"Canada seeks to encourage and promote the democratic process in Nigeria," Mr. Beatty said. "We hope that the Nigerian people may soon enjoy the elected leadership they have long aspired to and deserve. Canada will be watching developments in Nigeria closely and will adjust its policy toward the interim government accordingly, in concert with other members of the international community."

Mr. Beatty called upon the transitional government in Nigeria to allow for the unimpeded return of Chief Abiola, and ensure his personal safety, freedom of movement and expression and his ability to participate fully in the democratic process.

Chief Abiola, who currently is visiting several G-7 capitals and the United Nations, underscored his appreciation for Canada's support for the democratic process in Nigeria, which he said had given comfort to the Nigerian people.

Canada has already adopted several measures targeting the Nigerian military establishment and supporting political detainees. Canadians are still advised to defer all travel to Nigeria.

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