

PRESS RELEASE

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OUTER SPACE TREATY ON ASTRONAUTS AND SPACE OBJECTS

The Honourable Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of State for External Affairs, announced today that Canada has signed the Treaty on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space.

In accordance with procedures adopted for the signing of the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in April 1963 and the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space in January last year, this new Treaty on astronauts and space objects was opened for signature by the three depository countries, Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union, on April 22. It was signed today on behalf of Canada by our High Commissioner in London, C.S.A. Ritchie, our Ambassador in Washington, A.E. Ritchie and our Ambassador in Moscow, R.A.D. Ford.

The Outer Space Treaty, which came into force in October 1967 and to which Canada is a party, solemnly affirms important principles relating to international co-operation in outer space. One of the significant concepts underlying the Space Treaty is that there should be no legal or political barriers to prevent the swiftest and most effective help possible being extended to any astronaut who

suffers accident, is experiencing conditions of distress, or has made an emergency or unintended landing, and that these "envoys of mankind" should be safely and promptly returned to the launching state. The new Treaty signed by Canada represents the combined effort of many countries to establish a practical legal arrangement to carry out these purposes, as well as for the return of space objects, which would be acceptable to all and which would preserve the full and complete sovereignty of States within their territorial boundaries. The Treaty is essentially humanitarian in character and it is for this reason that it is particularly welcomed by the Canadian Government.

As an active member of the 28 State United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Canada was directly involved in drafting and negotiating the text of the Treaty and was one of its co-sponsors in the United Nations. On December 19, 1967, the Treaty received the unanimous approval of the General Assembly, thereby adding to the valuable contribution to international peace which the United Nations is making through the extension of the rule of law to new human endeavours and through the promotion of collaboration among the greater and lesser States of the world.

Mr. Sharp said it was the sincere hope of the Canadian Government that this new Outer Space Treaty will prove to be another significant step in the direction of greater international co-operation in the practical and peaceful utilization of outer space for the general benefit of all mankind.