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CANADA JOINS INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF KOSOVO

The Honourable Maxime Bernier, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced Canada's decision to recognize Kosovo. Minister Bernier issued the following statement:

"We note that a significant number of countries, including our G7 partners and many of Canada's close allies, have already recognized Kosovo.

"Kosovo is a unique case, as illustrated by its recent history characterized by war and ethnic cleansing, the role subsequently played by the United Nations and NATO in administering the territory and providing for its security, and the ongoing role that international organizations such as the European Union will play in assisting Kosovo with its transition to full independence.

"As the declaration issued by Kosovo's parliament also makes clear, the unique circumstances which have led to Kosovo's independence mean it does not constitute any kind of precedent. Statements made by other countries recognizing Kosovo's independence have echoed this point.

"We welcome the commitment made by Kosovo to ensure the protection of the rights of Serbian and other minorities, including their right to safety. Canada also welcomes Kosovo's commitment to ensure the protection of religious and cultural heritage sites. Canada attaches great importance to the full implementation of these and other commitments, undertaken by Kosovo's leaders in line with the recommendations of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.

"The development of Kosovo into a democratic, multi-ethnic state that fully respects human rights is essential for peace, political stability and economic progress in the Balkans.

"In this context, Canada acknowledges this new international reality."

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For further information, media representatives may contact:

Foreign Affairs Media Relations Office
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
613-995-1874
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