Restoring our Voice in the World

Canada's accomplishments are the sign of a truly great nation. We have forged a country whose prosperity, diversity and enterprising spirit are admired the world over. As this platform demonstrates, Stéphane Dion's Liberals also firmly believe that making the world a better place starts at home.

Meeting the challenges of climate change in Canada will make our economy stronger and restore our credibility as a trusted partner in global efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Achieving excellence in green technologies and sustainable development here in Canada will open up new markets and opportunities for our exporters. Helping our workers develop their skills and knowledge will ensure Canadians retain their competitive edge in this global economy. The Liberal record of sound management of our nation's finances will ensure Canada minimizes the negative impacts of a slowdown of the U.S. economy.

Under the Conservative government, Canada has lost its independent, principled voice in the world. Under the Conservatives, Canada has retreated on the world stage. Canada has more influence in organizations like the United Nations and NATO when we speak to our deepest values: democracy, pluralism, religious tolerance, human rights, and the protection of civilians.

From time to time, acting on principle means taking stands that can run contrary to the policies and wishes of other governments. That is why recent Liberal

governments rejected Canadian participation in the Iraq War and the Ballistic Missile Defence project. Those were the right decisions for Canada. They were expressions of Canadian values and national interests, and they were rooted in a firm commitment to multilateralism and the international rule of law. That is also why Liberal governments worked so hard for the Land Mines Treaty and the International Criminal Court.

Canada's capacity to shape the international agenda is clearly linked to the level of our engagement in world affairs. We can influence NATO's direction because we have always been one of its most committed members. The International Criminal Court was created because Canada and like-minded countries pursued this idea determinedly.

In short, our influence cannot come from rhetoric alone – it is also established by the resources we chose to commit to issues.

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1. Climate Change and Global Security

Protecting our climate will be integral to the foreign policy of a Liberal government. The Conservative government's approach to climate change was initially to deny its existence. It then decided to sabotage, block or reduce any international efforts for greater action on climate change. In the space of 31 months, the Conservative government has moved Canada from hero to zero, from leader to laggard. Their irresponsible position was an insult to Canada's legacy of moral leadership in the world, and actually counterproductive in the efforts to get developing countries like China and India to take on greater efforts to fight climate change. A Liberal government will return Canada to its leadership role on the environment and restore Canada's credibility as an engaged and committed partner in multilateral efforts to fight climate change.

According to UN estimates, all but one of its emergency appeals for humanitarian aid in 2007 were climate change related. We can increasingly see that the fallout of climate change – competition for natural resources and arable land, water shortages, increased flooding and prolonged drought – drive large-scale population migrations and often lead to violent conflict. While this is a global phenomenon, the problem is often felt most acutely in some of the world's most volatile regions such as the Middle East and Africa.

Under a Liberal government, Canada will bring its expertise in the management and mapping of water resources to developing countries.

This has led many countries to view climate change not just as an environmental challenge but as a threat to global security. The cost of addressing the issue quickly is dwarfed by the cost, both economic and humanitarian, of failing to deal with it. That is why in addition to our domestic efforts and our commitment to lead multilateral efforts, we will also do more to assist developing countries deal with climate change as part of our approach to Official Development Assistance.

The climate change crisis has made the challenge of fresh water management in developing countries even more daunting. Under a Liberal government, Canada will bring its expertise in the management and mapping of water resources to developing countries. Today, more than 1 billion people still don't have access to safe drinking water and another 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation. According to some estimates, by the year 2025, 3.5 billion people will live in places where water is becoming scarce.

2. Diplomacy: Projecting Canadian Values Abroad

We will return to Canada's long-standing position of opposing the death penalty on the global stage.

The execution of a successful foreign policy begins with building a stronger Foreign Service. We will put an end to the incessant cuts and attacks on Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs seen under the Conservative government. We will ensure that our professional diplomatic service has the resources and means to stand up for Canadians around the globe. This commitment will start with a reversal of the current government's short-sighted decision to close consulates in Milan, St. Petersburg, Fukuoka and Osaka.

We will place protection of the rights of Canadians abroad at the centre of our foreign policy. Under the Conservatives, consular rights that Canadians are entitled to have not been extended in all cases. A Liberal government will not pick and choose which Canadian deserves to be treated with justice and fairness. All Canadians deserve that respect regardless of which country it is that seeks to deny a Canadian citizen their rights.

We will return to Canada's long-standing position of opposing the death penalty on the global stage. We will not subscribe to the flawed logic of the current government which believes that the death penalty is acceptable if the execution is carried out by a democracy. We all know far too well that terrible miscarriages of justice are possible in even the most democratic of countries. We will refuse to be timid in standing up for this basic belief. We will vigorously reassert Canada's long-standing position of seeking clemency for Canadians sentenced to death – in any country, anywhere in the world.

We will establish Canadian Centres for Democracy to foster democracy and good governance.

As important as it is for the government to protect Canadians abroad, Canada's foreign policy must be more ambitious. We must seek to make use of Canada's sterling reputation to lead the world on critical initiatives as we have so often done in the past. Canadians are justifiably proud of the leadership Canada exercised in obtaining a global ban on landmines – inventing a new approach to negotiating arms treaties. This process – known as the "Ottawa Process" – was recently used by other countries around the world to negotiate a ban on cluster bombs as Canada watched from the sidelines. While Canada did quietly sign on to the Cluster Munitions Convention in May, the government at no point showed any leadership during the 13 months of treaty negotiations.

A Liberal government will reverse this shameful performance by quickly ratifying and complying with the new treaty and making it a priority in our relations with other nations to encourage ratification and full compliance.

An active foreign policy must also take a long-term view, using Canada's influence to help build better institutions abroad. We will establish Canadian Centres for Democracy, offering training and capacity building initiatives in support of democracy and good governance. The first of these centres will be based in the Middle East. Respected countries such as ours need to help nurture the fragile institutions of democracy and good governance starting to take hold in the region.

3. Development: Sharing Canadian Hope and Vision with the World

A Liberal government will boost the International Assistance Envelope by $500 million.

In 2000, Canada signed on to a world pledge to, among other targets, halve extreme poverty, halt the spread of HIV/AIDS and provide universal primary education – all by 2015. As the UN Secretary General has put it, we can achieve the Millennium Development Goals only if we break with business as usual. We agree. Unfortunately, under the Conservatives, Canada's overseas development assistance has actually fallen as a percentage of our gross national product. This must change.

Following a thorough review of the focus and relationship of the Canadian International Development Agency with other government departments and all of its partners in the public and private sector, a Liberal government will increase Canada's foreign aid spending. We will boost the International Assistance Envelope by $500 million.

A Liberal government will also follow through on legislation proposed by the Liberals and passed in the outgoing Parliament that would give Canada's official development assistance a clear legislative mandate to focus our aid on poverty reduction, as well as improve transparency and accountability.

A Liberal government will lead the world in the battle against Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) which affect 2 billion people around the world. We will propose a new international initiative to eradicate a number of these diseases by, among other, bringing NTDs in the ambit of the Global Fund against Tuberculosis, Malaria and HIV/AIDS, currently the biggest and most effective international instrument to pool resources in the fight against these major scourges.

In the fight against NTDs, a Liberal government will lead by example and challenge other donors. Canada will assume the estimated $15-million shortfall in the Lymphatic Filariasis elimination program in Haiti, helping to eradicate a terrible disease.

Africa

We will focus Canada's conflict prevention efforts in Africa.

Canadians have a special relationship with Africa, one that we must continue to nurture. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have short-sightedly decided to turn their back on the continent.

Conditions in Africa today are the most hopeful in recent memory. Africa, which in 2030 will be as populous as India and China today, can make faster progress and take its rightful place in a globalized world. Canada can decide today to be a real partner in Africa's economic transformation or it can miss that opportunity.

But Africa's challenges are also an opportunity for our country to fulfil Lester B. Pearson's legacy. A Liberal government will focus its conflict prevention efforts in this part of the world. It will also assist the United Nations in better coordinating the resources it is marshalling in support of peace operations in Africa.

In Sudan, the United Nations faces an historic test. January 2008 marked the deployment of the joint UN-African Union peacekeeping mission to Darfur. If fully deployed, it will be the biggest peacekeeping mission in history. Canada has a duty to ensure this mission succeeds and a Liberal government will ensure Canada does its part. As a first step, a Liberal government would contribute resources to the mission so it can contract the tactical and heavy lift helicopters it needs.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Three and half billion people live in developing countries rich in oil, gas and

minerals. Canadian companies are very active in helping developing countries manage these important resources. In fact, in many parts of the world, our mining and exploration companies are the "face of Canada."

In recent years, the activities of some of Canada's mining and prospecting companies in developing countries have come under greater scrutiny. We understand that our efforts to build a richer, fairer and greener future should not stop at our borders. Socially and environmentally responsible Canadian mining and prospecting activities abroad are crucial to both our country's reputation, to the industry's bottom-line interests and, most importantly, to ensuring sustainable development.

A Liberal government will establish and promote a Canadian Corporate Social Responsibility Framework for all Canadian extractive-sector companies operating in developing countries.

A Liberal government will establish and promote a Canadian Corporate Social Responsibility Framework for all Canadian extractive-sector companies operating in developing countries. The Framework, based on the common work of mining companies and non-governmental organizations, will help promote responsible Canadian corporate behaviour abroad and strengthen our country's commitment to sustainable development. This initiative will make Canada a world leader in social corporate responsibility and set a new standard for other countries involved in extractive activities in developing countries to follow.

4. Stronger Relationships

The United States is our closest ally. A Liberal government will work to strengthen that key relationship. At the same time, we will protect Canada's interests and values in the North American relationship. For example, a Liberal government will keep Canada out of the U.S. missile defence shield.

A Liberal government will rebuild the economic and diplomatic relationship between Canada and China.

As globalization shrinks the distances between Canada and the rest of the world, our relationship with Asia is increasingly important. A Liberal government will rebuild the economic and diplomatic relationship between Canada and China, a relationship frayed by Conservative grandstanding and showmanship. We will give this relationship increased priority, negotiating Official Destination Status for Canada so that Chinese tourists can visit Canada more easily.

We will also strengthen our ties to the broader Asian market, investing in infrastructure such as the Pacific Gateway, and in additional measures and initiatives to increase our presence in Asia, and particularly in India. A Liberal government will establish a Canada-South Asia Trade Foundation with an initial endowment of $40 million. This foundation will be similar to the Asia Pacific Foundation, and will focus exclusively on developing trade and foreign policy strategies to strengthen our ties with South Asia.

Afghanistan

The Liberal Party remains committed to helping the people of Afghanistan as they work to build a stable, secure and democratic country. We are proud of the efforts of the men and women in uniform and the civilians who have taken up this

challenge. The Liberal caucus took the lead in drafting and passing the motion in Parliament on the mission in Afghanistan. Our changes to the motion forced the Conservative government to accept our views that: the mission needs to change so there is a greater emphasis on training, security and reconstruction; the military mission in Kandahar needed to have a firm end date of 2011; and the government must go beyond an exclusively military focus in its approach to Afghanistan by increasing efforts with respect to development and international diplomacy.

A Liberal government will ensure that it is understood that Canada's commitment to maintain a military presence in Kandahar will end by July 2011.

The Liberal amendments also imposed a greater commitment to transparency and accountability on the government. Too often, the Conservatives have not been forthcoming with Canadians about developments in Afghanistan, particularly with respect to such crucial issues as the treatment of detainees transferred by Canadians to Afghan authorities. This lack of transparency and accountability has harmed both our international credibility and domestic support for our efforts in Afghanistan. Under a Liberal government, this approach will change and we will be guided by the both the letter and the spirit of the resolution that was passed in the House.

We will also ensure that our international partners understand the nature and extent of the commitment that Canada has made. We will not say one thing to a domestic audience and another to our allies. Although we understand that Canada must maintain a long-term commitment to the people of Afghanistan, we will be unequivocal that we cannot continue to be asked to shoulder the bulk of the responsibility in Kandahar indefinitely. We will ensure that it is understood that Canada's commitment to maintain a military presence in Kandahar will end by July 2011.

5. Trade

At its core, Canada is a trading nation. Our businesses and workers develop first-class goods and services that they are able to export around the world. Those same businesses and workers benefit from competitively priced and innovative technologies that we import from abroad. The Liberal Party, recognizing the economic prosperity and international goodwill such exchange creates, is committed to free trade.

The United States will always be Canada's largest trading partner, and our vital relationship must be strengthened. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the significant impact the fall in the U.S. dollar has had on our economy, Canada must diversify its trade and investment activities. Emerging markets like China and India continue to grow, which means Canada needs to aggressively increase our export markets and investment ties with those regions of the world.

The Liberal Party is committed to multilateral negotiation through the WTO – nevertheless recent challenges at the Doha round highlight the need to also pursue bilateral trade agreements that reduce not only tariff, but non-tariff barri-

ers. A Liberal government will be guided by the firm conviction that the environment, human rights and corporate social responsibility are all critical considerations in the negotiation of free trade agreements.

6. Defence

Canada's ongoing commitment to the military mission in Afghanistan has depleted our ability to deploy the Canadian Forces elsewhere in the world. When combined with the commitments that will be necessary in order to provide the needed security requirements when Canada welcomes the world to the Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010, we are severely limited in our ability to offer assistance to other international efforts as they arise. By putting a firm end date on the military deployment in Kandahar, we will regain flexibility with respect to our military to respond to emergency situations both domestically and internationally.

A Liberal government will remain committed to the money allocated in the fiscal framework to the Canadian Forces (CF) over the coming four years – much of which was originally committed in the Liberal Budget of 2005. But the job of supporting Canada's armed forces doesn't end when our troops return home. Military life, overseas deployments, and dangerous missions take a heavy toll. Our soldiers need adequate support services when they return from overseas or leave the service. A Liberal government will support the current members of the CF and our veterans by establishing a dedicated $60-million fund to help them cope with post-traumatic stress disorder and other ailments. As previously mentioned, a Liberal government will also establish a health ombudsman both within the CF and within Veterans Affairs Canada.

A Liberal government will support the current members of the CF and our veterans by establishing a dedicated $60-million fund to help them cope with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other ailments.

The federal government must also ensure that our forces get the most value for money on military contracts. We will abandon the sole-sourcing approach to defence contracts taken by the Conservatives, ensuring that Canadian industry can compete for contracts while guaranteeing the best equipment at the best price. We will also finally act on the purchase of much needed replacements for the fixed-wing search-and-rescue (SAR) planes to replace the current ageing fleet. The previous Liberal government set aside money to make this purchase in 2005 but the Conservatives have failed to act. These SAR planes are needed both for the safety of Canadians but also to promote our sovereignty in Canada's North. That is why we will ensure that some of the new fleet of SAR planes are based in the North.

7. Arctic Sovereignty

A Liberal government will secure our claim to the Arctic. We will promote the sovereignty and interests of the Arctic not only through military or marine infrastructure, but also through environmental protection, surveillance, search and

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rescue, and by encouraging the sustainable use of the Arctic's natural resources by our Arctic peoples. We will create comprehensive policies and agreements – with circumpolar governments and indigenous peoples of the North – on security, transit routes and environmental protection in the Arctic.

Again, this is an area where Canada's traditional multilateral approach is so crucial and one the Conservatives have decided to ignore by refusing to send senior representatives at meetings of the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental forum of all eight Arctic countries. A Liberal government will reverse this trend and return to the practice of sending senior ministerial representation to the meetings. We will also re-establish the position of the Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs which the Conservatives have abolished.

A Liberal government will also commit the necessary resources to complete the mapping of the seabed in Canada's arctic by 2013 to strengthen our Northern sovereignty.

A Liberal government will work with Northern communities and territorial governments to find ways to mitigate the effects of climate change and to support innovation and research on cold-climate technologies. This includes a commitment to be a significant financial partner with the Yukon government in funding the proposed Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Cluster in Whitehorse and to look for similar opportunities to nurture research and development in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.