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L'honorable Roméo Dallaire, sénateur (Québec – Golfe)

**For immediate release**

April 22, 2010

**Statement by LGen the Honourable Roméo Dallaire, (Ret'd), Senator, former commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda in 1994, on the Governor General's acknowledgment of the failure of Canada regarding the Rwandan Genocide.**

Governor-General Michaëlle Jean has acknowledged Canada's failure to respond to the Rwandan genocide as part of and as well as the international community. As the United Nations Force Commander and subsequent Head of Mission during the civil war and genocide in Rwanda, I appreciate the graciousness and humility of our head of state in acknowledging that Canada, too, failed to meet its international responsibilities by not reacting more vigorously. But I also want to recognize what Canada singularly did do:

- Canada sent two Hercules aircraft that literally kept my UN mission alive to stay in place and save tens of thousands of lives. Canadian fliers and planes kept my life line open; all other nations refused my requests.
- Within days of the start of the genocide, Canada sent 11 staff officers to rebuild my Headquarters and coordinate humanitarian relief when all others had been withdrawn so we could negotiate cease-fires, protect Rwandan civilians, be witnesses to the genocide and ultimately plan an eventual return of a sizable UN force to intervene. Despite the lack of reinforcements, these Canadian officers saved tens of thousands of lives and bore witness to atrocities of a nature and scale that defy description. The UN force arrived long after the end of the genocide and civil war.

What have we learned from our failure? Working with the United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Committee on Genocide Prevention, I also co-chaired, with Prof. Frank Chalk of Concordia University, a major project on Mobilizing the Will to Intervene (W2I) to prevent future mass atrocities.

To give meaning to the words of Madame Michaëlle Jean, I call on the Government of Canada to make preventing mass atrocities a national priority. I call on the Government of Canada to appoint a senior minister to carry out this responsibility within the Cabinet and the whole government. And I call on the Government of Canada to create an interdepartmental Coordinating Office for the Prevention of Mass Atrocities. These and other key recommendations emanated from the W2I project's detailed comparative



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study of Canada's and the United States' performance or lack thereof in Rwanda and Kosovo. Experienced and prudent, Canada knows how to lead in conflict resolution and prevention. Let us consider influencing and joining with the Obama administration and its recent initiatives to show that we can succeed in the prevention of mass atrocities and genocide.

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Contact:  
Rafael Guzman  
Office of LGen the Hon. Roméo A. Dallaire, (Ret'd), Senator  
(613) 995-3887