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**MEDIA RELEASE BY NEW ZEALAND MINISTER OF
EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND TRADE,
HON. DON MCKINNON**

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Government Welcomes South African Rugby Unity Talks

"It looks like racially segregated rugby in South Africa is in its death throes. At long last, non-racial rugby in South Africa is a probability rather than a possibility, and that is a very welcome development." That was External Relations and Trade Minister, Hon Don McKinnon's reaction today to news that rival rugby bodies in South Africa had reached agreement on the formation of a new, united, non-racial rugby body. Unification is scheduled to take place on 20 March 1992.

"The New Zealand Government and others, including the NZRFU, have been urging rugby administrators in South Africa to unify. Hopefully the agreement to form one unified organisation signifies the beginning of the process that will enable a non-racial South African rugby body to be admitted to international competition. But that point has not arrived yet," Mr McKinnon said.

"Before competition can be resumed between South Africa and New Zealand on the rugby field we will be looking for clear evidence that all three Commonwealth conditions have been met. Achievement of unity on a non-racial basis is one condition, and that seems to be on track. However, there is still more to be done to meet the other two conditions...we will be looking for the new body to be recognised by the International Rugby Board, and by the appropriate non-racial sports body in South Africa," the Minister continued.

"As with the merger of cricket bodies the ANC's Steve Tshwete played a major role in bringing the parties together and in reaching agreement on the constitution of the new body. He deserves considerable credit for what has been achieved. Certainly I hope Mr Tshwete might be able to visit New Zealand some time in the future," Mr McKinnon added.

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"Only months ago, rugby unification in South Africa seemed unlikely in the short term. That there is now a good chance unification will be achieved in March next year is further evidence of the profound changes underway in South Africa. The creation of new sporting bodies on a non-racial basis is only one dimension of the rapid change in South Africa, and it is one in which we, and the NZRFU, have been able to be influential," the Minister commented.

"The likelihood of unity in South African rugby in the near future is a telling vindication of this Government's foreign policy. Ten years ago, New Zealand was split down the middle on South Africa when the Springboks were on tour here. In the past year, our Government has managed its relations with a changing South Africa in such a way as to have the broad support of New Zealand," the Minister observed.

"The key to our success has been a determination to work collectively with others. As part of the Commonwealth team, New Zealand has been able to influence the outcome to a degree. This would not have been possible if we had acted unilaterally or independently as some suggested. There is no real substitute for the collective approach in foreign policy for a country like New Zealand. Expect more of the same," Mr McKinnon concluded.