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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Tribute to Dr. Feng Shan Ho

Statement by:

The Honourable Vivienne Poy

Tuesday, March 21, 2000

THE SENATE

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

TRIBUTE TO DR. FENG SHAN HO

Hon. Vivienne Poy: Honourable senators, on this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I pay tribute to the late Dr. Feng Shan Ho, Consul General of China in Vienna, one of the very few diplomats who acted against his own government by issuing visas to allow Jews to flee Nazi-annexed Austria.

Dr. Ho's story is among those told by Visas for Life, part of the Righteous Diplomats Project to be exhibited at the United Nations next month.

Feng Shan Ho was born on September 10, 1901 in rural China. Despite being poor and fatherless at age seven, he managed to graduate *magna cum laude* with a Doctorate in Political Economics from the University of Munich. He then entered into the Foreign Service of the Chinese Republic and was posted to Vienna in 1937.

After the Third Reich's annexation of Austria on March 12, 1938, thousands of Jews swamped Vienna's foreign consulates, desperately seeking visas that would enable them to flee persecution. Many consulates, including Canada's, carried out discriminatory policies and did not grant visas to Jewish refugees.

Consul General Ho, however, issued visas to Shanghai for any and all who asked. Shanghai was then under Japanese

occupation, and visas were not required for entry. However, a visa, as proof of emigration, was necessary to leave Austria.

The Nationalist Chinese government, which had diplomatic relations with Nazi Germany, instructed Dr. Ho to stop issuing visas, but he ignored his superiors. A year later, when the Nazis seized the Jewish-owned building that housed the Chinese consulate and his government refused to open a new office, Dr. Ho moved the consulate and paid all the expenses himself so that he could continue saving lives.

In August 1939, the Japanese military authorities in Shanghai curtailed the movement of Jewish refugees into China. Dr. Ho left Vienna in May 1940, knowing that he had accomplished all that he could do.

After serving four decades as a diplomat to different countries for the Nationalist Chinese government, Dr. Ho was discredited by his government when he retired to San Francisco in 1973 and was denied a pension for his 40 years of service. He died in 1997 at the age of 96. Dr. Ho will forever be remembered as a man firmly rooted in Confucian principles, a man of both intellect and compassion, and as a champion of humanity.

Honourable senators, the words of Dr. Feng Shan Ho are the most eloquent tribute to his actions:

I thought it only natural to feel compassion and to want to help. From the standpoint of humanity, that is the way it should be.