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For Immediate
Release

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CAAWS, CCES and AthletesCAN support South African runner

Ottawa, ON. . . Three of Canada's leading sport organizations have joined together to express support for South African 800 meter runner Caster Semenya. The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS), the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) and AthletesCAN are all concerned about the way this complex issue has been presented in the global media, as well as the lack of concern and breach of confidential information for the athlete who won the women's 800 meter race at the recent International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Championships.

"It's almost hard to imagine that in 2009, people immediately began questioning Caster Semenya's athletic performance because of the way she looks", said CAAWS Executive Director Karin Lofstrom. "Women still face different treatment if they don't happen to look a certain way, or if their body type differs from the established feminine social norm. Men who shave time off a world record, or dominate over their competition don't face any questions of gender stereotyping. Unfortunately, the furore over this issue, and the lack of understanding of complex medical information, speaks to the need for a much wider education of gender and sex issues, as well as the need to review the rules that currently govern athletic competition."

Paul Melia, CCES President and CEO, also expressed his concern for apparent ethical breaches surrounding the athlete's personal data. "There has been extensive coverage of this athlete's confidential information. How such sensitive and highly personal information made it into the hands of the media should be investigated. The medical community and the IAAF must ensure that measures are in place to prevent unauthorized access to such information. Athletes should be confident that their records are managed with the utmost care in order to protect their basic human rights to privacy and to prevent such rampant, ill-informed speculation – causing untold emotional suffering for the young athlete caught in this maelstrom."

AthletesCAN Executive Director Moirra Lassen feels that the human dignity of the athlete has been completely disregarded. "This young woman, who properly trained and prepared for this race, has been denied the athletic accolades that should have been hers as a World Champion. We believe that all athletes must be treated fairly, and despite the speed with which information can now travel around the globe in just a few seconds, she should never have been subjected to the intense scrutiny that erupted overnight. She is a talented young athlete, who deserves our respect, compassion and support."

The South African Government has filed a complaint with the United Nations about the treatment Semenya has received at the hands of the IAAF; CAAWS and AthletesCAN will be issuing a joint letter to the United Nations in support of the South African complaint.

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About CAAWS

As a leader in Canadian sport and physical activity, CAAWS fosters quality experiences and equitable support for girls and women. It has a vision to see a sport and physical activity system where girls and women are actively engaged. A not-for-profit organization, CAAWS offers a number of services, programs and resources to a variety of clients, including sport and physical activity organizations, teachers, coaches, health professionals and recreation leaders. CAAWS works in close co-operation with government and non-government organizations on activities and initiatives that advocate for positive change for young girls and women in the sport and physical activity communities. Visit www.caaws.ca for more information.

About CCES

The CCES is an independent, national, non-profit organization. Our mission, to foster ethical sport for all Canadians, is carried out through research, promotion, education, detection and deterrence, as well as through programs and partnerships with other organizations.

About AthletesCAN

As the voice of Canadian national team athletes, AthletesCAN ensures an athlete centered sport system by developing athlete leaders who influence sport policy and, as role models, inspire a strong sport culture.