



DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NO

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STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON DEPARTURE FOR VISIT
TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND INDONESIA

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, said in Canberra today that he hoped his first visits to Papua New Guinea and Indonesia as Prime Minister would serve to emphasise his Government's commitment to the evolution of a secure, united and friendly Papua New Guinea and to the consolidation and further strengthening of Australia's vital relationship with its nearest and largest neighbour, Indonesia.

In a statement on his departure from Australia today, Mr Whitlam said that in Papua New Guinea he would be having talks with the Chief Minister, Mr Michael Somare, and other Ministers. He would also visit Goroka where he would have discussions with the local council and attend the Goroka show.

Mr Whitlam said that the visit to Indonesia would be his eighth visit to that country, although his first since becoming Prime Minister. Mr Whitlam said that in Jakarta he was looking forward to frank and substantive personal exchanges of views with President Soeharto and with a number of other Ministers including the Minister for Economy, Finance and Industry, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. While in Indonesia he would also address the

Indonesian Parliament.

Mr Whitlam said that since President Soeharto had visited Australia and his predecessor had visited Indonesia last year, the situations in the Asian region had undergone important changes. New Governments had come to office in Australia and New Zealand, a ceasefire was now operating in Viet-Nam, and active consideration was now being given to regional co-operation by the countries of South-East Asia and by Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, Indonesia and Australia had both recently become members of the Security Council.

It would therefore be timely for him to discuss with President Soeharto and Indonesian Ministers both the new approach of his government to international affairs and the changed situation in the Asian region.

Mr Whitlam added that Indonesia was the fifth most populous nation in the world and the only country with which Australia shared a boundary. A soundly based, close and lasting Australian-Indonesian relationship was therefore of paramount importance to both countries, now and in the future. He hoped his visit would contribute to the strengthening of this relationship.

Mr and Mrs Whitlam will be accompanied to Papua New Guinea by the Minister for External Territories, Mr Morrison, and Mrs Morrison, and to both Papua New Guinea and Indonesia by

Sir Richard and Lady Kirby, Miss Cathy Whitlam and Mr Bruce Grant, and members of the Prime Minister's personal staff.

Officials accompanying the Prime Minister are, from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Secretary, Sir John Bunting, and Mr M.J. Wilson; and from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Secretary, Mr K.C.O. Shann, and Mr R.A. Woolcott.

The Prime Minister is expected to return to Australia on Sunday, 25 February.