



FILE

PRIME MINISTER

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MIDDLE EAST

The Prime Minister said today that the Australian Government welcomed the dramatic progress towards an Egyptian/Israeli peace treaty which had been achieved during President Carter's recent visit to Egypt and Israel. "The prospects for the signature of a treaty are clearly now very good", the Prime Minister said.

The Prime Minister paid tribute to the statesmanship of President Carter whose personal initiatives both at Camp David last September and in making his recent visit to the Middle East had kept alive the Egyptian/Israeli dialogue at times when deadlock appeared likely. He also praised the courage of President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin in their willingness to work tirelessly in the interest of achieving a treaty.

The Prime Minister said a treaty between Egypt and Israel would be an historic event not only in itself, but in the stimulus it would provide to bring about peace in the Middle East as a whole. The Australian Government hoped that other Arab States, whose participation in the peace process will be necessary if there is to be a lasting Middle East settlement, could also be encouraged to join future negotiations. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that as the treaty was implemented, the doubts of other Arab States would lessen and that work on a comprehensive Middle East settlement would proceed.

The Prime Minister concluded by reaffirming the Australian Government's support for all moves designed to end the long years of tension and suffering in the Middle East, and to bring about a stability and peace absent from the region for so long.