



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

19 JUNE 1979

### SALT II

The Prime Minister today welcomed the signing of the SALT II agreement in Vienna by President Carter and President Brezhnev.

The SALT II agreement is an important step forward, he said. It should lessen the risk of nuclear war and place limits on the strategic arsenals of both the United States and the Soviet Union. It should place limits on the development by these two countries of new strategic systems and open the way to future reductions in nuclear arsenals. An agreement of this kind involves compromise and no party gets all of what it wants. Bearing in mind the alternative - an unrestricted arms race involving the progressive application of new technology - the agreement represents a major positive step.

Agreement on SALT II will also assist efforts to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime. The capacity of the superpowers to encourage other states to forego the nuclear weapons option will be enhanced.

President Carter has assured the United States Congress that the SALT II agreement can be verified and that the United States nuclear deterrent will remain strong.

Mr. Fraser said that he and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Peacock, had made statements over the past year strongly urging the early conclusion of SALT II. Australia will continue to give full backing to the SALT negotiating process because of the very important role it plays in maintaining balance between the strategic deterrent capabilities of the superpowers. International stability and avoidance of nuclear war depend on maintenance of this balance. Through the operation of joint facilities in Australia, Australia has contributed substantially and for many years to the support of the United States defence concerns and thus to global stability and world peace. It will continue to do so.

Mr. Fraser said he hoped that the United States Senate would ratify the SALT II Treaty promptly. Failure of the Senate to support the SALT II Treaty could have a detrimental effect on the capacity of the United States Government to meet fully its global responsibilities.