



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

8 DECEMBER 1986

It is with great pleasure that I sign today the instrument of ratification by which Australia will become a party to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) Treaty - the Treaty of Rarotonga.

The countries of the South Pacific Forum have built upon existing international treaties to make a new treaty that will help preserve the South Pacific as it is today - free from nuclear weapons stationed in the countries and territories of the region; free from nuclear waste dumping; and, with the tragic and we hope temporary, exception of French Polynesia, free from nuclear testing. All the countries of the region want to preserve these freedoms and that is the central purpose of the Treaty.

Australia's ratification follows the passage of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Bill 1986 by Parliament last week. With the passage of this bill, Australia has become one of the first independent sovereign countries in the world to make a commitment by national legislation against the nuclear weapons option. The Bill commits this and future Governments to prohibit the manufacture, acquisition and possession of nuclear explosive devices and the stationing and testing of such devices within Australia's territory. We take great pride in this stand.

Our ratification brings the number of ratifications to eight, which is the number required to bring the Treaty into force. Once our instrument of ratification is lodged with the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation in Suva, the Treaty's provisions will come into effect.

The Government is particularly proud of the part Australia has played along with its South Pacific partners in promoting this initiative and bringing it to conclusion. We regard the Treaty as a positive contribution to regional security and stability, in addition to giving formal expression to deeply felt regional concerns about nuclear proliferation, testing and dumping in the South Pacific.

On 1 December the Protocols to the Treaty were opened for signature by the five nuclear weapon states to signify their binding acceptance not to use or threaten the use of nuclear weapons against parties to the Treaty nor to conduct nuclear testing in the South Pacific. It is the Government's strong

hope that all the nuclear weapons states, which have major responsibility for international peace and security, will adhere to the Protocols.

The entry into force of the Treaty flowing from the Australian ratification constitutes a clear and unequivocal message to the world of the earnest desire of South Pacific Forum countries for the preservation of the South Pacific as the peaceful region which its name implies.

NOTE

The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty will be ratified in the Prime Minister's Office at 11.00 am on Monday, 8 December.

There will be a photo opportunity for the event at which the Prime Minister and a representative from the Fijian High Commission will sign the Treaty. Photographers and cameramen wishing to cover the event should assemble outside the Prime Minister's Office at 10.50 am.