



PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER
PARLIAMENTARY DINNER GIVEN IN HONOUR OF PRESIDENT HAGLELGAM
OF THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA
CANBERRA - 13 OCTOBER 1988**

President Haglelgam,
Secretary for External Affairs Amaraich,
Secretary for Transportation Weilbacher,
Secretary for Human Resources Preterick,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to welcome President Haglelgam and the distinguished members of his party to Australia and, in particular, to our national capital in this, the year of Australia's Bicentenary. This is your first visit to Australia - indeed it is I believe your first State visit abroad. We are honoured that this should be so and you can be assured you are welcome guests here.

Your visit today - along with the visits by the heads of government of other South Pacific States - have played a most important part in the celebrations of our Bicentenary. They have served to remind us that, while we are celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of European settlement in this country, Australia is undeniably a nation of the Asia/Pacific region. This is where our future lies. Your presence here today underscores this fundamentally important geo-political reality.

In July of last year, Australia became the first country to establish diplomatic relations with the Federated States of Micronesia. In presenting his credentials to you at that time, Mr President, our Minister remarked on how much we looked forward to working with you in the future as your country took its rightful place at international tables. And this, I am proud to be able to say, we have done.

Although your country lies mostly to the north of the equator, in your history and your culture and in the kinds of challenges and issues you face as a nation, you have much in common with the Pacific countries south of the equator.

Through the negotiation of the Law of the Sea Convention and, since then, in particular through the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Forum, our two countries have worked closely and constructively together. We were pleased to be able to assist your entry to the Forum in 1987, and it was a pleasure for me to be able to work with you again at this year's Forum meeting in Nuku'alofa.

Your representatives have also played valuable roles in the fisheries negotiations with the United States, and are remembered too for their close interest in the negotiation of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

Mr President, Australia and the Federated States of Micronesia clearly enjoy a friendly and productive dialogue on a wide range of issues. As your involvement in regional affairs continues to grow, we will find ourselves working ever more closely together in meeting the challenges that we share with other Pacific Island countries. We look forward through those contacts to getting to know you and your people as well as we have come to know our closer regional neighbours.

When we undertook, on opening diplomatic relations with your country in 1987, to work with you in meeting the challenges which lay ahead, we were most conscious of the existing record of cooperation between us. We resolved then to build on the foundations of economic assistance which had been laid with our modest program of Australian Government training awards. Good progress has been made in the past year in meeting this commitment.

At the same time, some steps have been taken to identify and foster commercial contacts between Australia and the Federated States. The absence of a regular shipping service remains a problem, but I hope that, with the help of the South Pacific Trade Commission in Sydney and through the continuing discussions about the possible extension of Forum shipping line services, a satisfactory resolution can be found.

In all of this we have been cognisant of the overwhelming importance to you of your relationship with the United States. We are confident that we can effectively complement the assistance that the United States gives to your country. A clear example is in the provision of a patrol boat to augment your capacity to get the best out of your maritime resources. We look forward to working with you on that project.

We are pleased to have the opportunity over the next week or so to show you some of our country. The distances are great but that won't surprise you - Micronesians, I'm sure, are well accustomed to travel.

Mr President, I again welcome you to Australia and wish you well for the remainder of your visit. I also wish you, your Government and people well as you cope with the issues and challenges which lie ahead for the Federated States of Micronesia. In rising to these challenges, you may count on Australia as a constant friend and Pacific neighbour.

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