



**PRIME MINISTER**

FOR MEDIA

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I welcome and applaud the decision of the New Zealand Government to set aside ratification of the Antarctic Minerals Convention and work with Australia to protect Antarctica from mining.

As one of the seven Claimant States, New Zealand is a key party to the Antarctic Treaty. Mr Palmer's decision to set aside ratifying the Minerals Convention (known as the Wellington Convention) will give even greater impetus to Australia's efforts with France to create an Antarctic Wilderness Reserve - a Land of Science.

Mr Palmer and I discussed this possibility during my recent visit to New Zealand.

Last Saturday, Commander Jacques Cousteau and I discussed the increasing international support - snowballing support - that Australia and France have been getting for our proposal to create an Antarctic Wilderness Reserve. Other European countries such as Italy, Belgium and Greece are coming in behind us. Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov expressed a keen interest in our proposal when I met him in Canberra in mid-February. And judging from developments in the Congress, the United States appears increasingly unlikely to ratify the Convention.

Our push for a Wilderness Reserve is looking very strong indeed. With New Zealand's support, we can look forward with even greater optimism to keeping Antarctica free from mining.