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PRIME MINISTER

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STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J KEATING MP

AUSTRALIA-INDONESIA AGREEMENT ON MAINTAINING SECURITY

Cabinet has agreed that Australia and Indonesia will sign on Monday 18 December a security agreement between our two countries.

The Agreement on Maintaining Security commits the two governments to:

- consult at Ministerial level on a regular basis about matters affecting their common security and to develop such cooperation as would benefit their own security and that of the region;
- consult each other in the case of adverse challenges to either party or to their common security interests and, if appropriate, consider measures which might be taken by them individually or jointly and in accordance with the processes of each government; and
- promote, in accordance with the policies and priorities of each, cooperative activities in the security field.

This is a serious and important step for both countries. The agreement is a significant and natural extension of the cooperation Australia and Indonesia have built in recent years through mechanisms such as the Australia-Indonesia Ministerial Forum and our collaboration on APEC. It demonstrates the confidence each of us has in the intentions of the other. But it goes beyond that to set out in formal terms for the first time our common interests in the peace and security of the region around us, and our intention to cooperate together in support of those interests.

The agreement will reinforce the security of the region as a whole by demonstrating to our friends and neighbours that Australia and Indonesia will continue to build a close and cooperative relationship.

It does not affect our existing international commitments. It is premised on our respect for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of all countries.

Discussions about the agreement have been in progress for eighteen months. I first discussed the matter with President Soeharto in 1994. I am grateful to General Peter Gration AC, the former Chief of the Defence Force, who acted as my personal emissary in discussions with Indonesia on this agreement.

Formal processes need to be completed in Australia, with the submission of the Agreement to the Executive Council for approval. I expect that to happen today.

The agreement will be signed by the Foreign Ministers, Senator Gareth Evans QC and Mr Ali Alatas SH, in the presence of President Soeharto and myself. The two Defence Ministers, Senator Robert Ray and Mr Edy Sudradjat, will be present, together with the Chief of the Australian Defence Force, General John Baker AC, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia, General Feisal Tanjung.

CANBERRA
14 DECEMBER 1995