

**PRIME MINISTER**

10/96

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP**THE SIXTH FRENCH NUCLEAR TEST**

The French Government is to be strongly condemned for this latest test at Fangataufa and for conducting it during negotiations for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which are entering the final critical stages in Geneva.

Such an irresponsible action sends the worst possible signal to nations that aspire to possess nuclear weapons, and damages efforts to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Australia will continue to press France to end its testing program immediately and respond to the legitimate demands of South Pacific nations as expressed in the declaration of the meeting of South Pacific Environment Ministers, which Australia initiated and hosted, on 17 August 1995.

This declaration called for an immediate end to testing of nuclear weapons in the South Pacific and the closing of associated facilities, except those required for future environmental monitoring; for France to accept full and exclusive responsibility for any adverse impacts from French testing on the South Pacific environment and people; and to provide access by the international community to all French scientific data and to the testing sites themselves to enable an independent and comprehensive assessment of the effects of testing. If, as the French Government claims, it seeks to retain a role in the South Pacific then it must respond positively to the demands of the nations which it would call neighbours and friends.

I call on the French Government to announce immediately the cessation of its testing program, in line with statements by President Chirac; to sign without delay the protocols of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty; and to put all of its energy towards the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty this year.

CANBERRA
28 January 1996