

FOR PRESS

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PRESIDENT NIXON'S INDO-CHINA STATEMENT

Comment by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

The Australian Government holds strongly to the belief that a just and permanent settlement can only be finally achieved around the conference table.

For this reason we warmly welcome these initiatives taken by President Nixon to bring peace and tranquility to the states of South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and their neighbours.

I emphasise that our view about a negotiated settlement has been based on two fundamental democratic principles : the right of the people of these war-torn states to determine their own future and as a corollary that we will not be a party to imposing on other nations a form of government which the people do not want.

We understand the President's proposals envisage that the people of South Vietnam should freely vote for their own government and that candidates of any party should be free to stand at such elections.

We also understand that the people of South Vietnam will by their own vote decide whether or not they will eventually join with any other state.

Success or failure of President Nixon's new initiative will depend on the agreement by the Communists to accept the basic principles put forward and on their willingness to abide by them.

Particularly we welcome the proposal for the return of all prisoners of war, journalists and other civilians, without exception and without condition to the place of their choice.

CANBERRA
8 October 1970