



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS:

PM No. 10/1972

PRESIDENT NIXON'S PEACE PROPOSALS

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. William McMahon

The Prime Minister, Mr. William McMahon, commented this evening on President Nixon's statement made earlier today, Australian time, on efforts towards peace in Indo-China.

Mr. McMahon said all Australians would be pleased that President Nixon had made public his imaginative and far-reaching proposals for ending the fighting in Indo-China on honourable terms. Fair-minded people would be impressed by President Nixon's account of the US negotiating efforts and the persistence with which those efforts had been carried on.

It was a matter for regret that the United States initiatives had so far met with a negative response from Hanoi.

Mr. McMahon commended the statesmanlike attitude of President Thieu and Vice-President Huong in declaring their readiness to step down while new Presidential elections were held.

Mr. McMahon drew particular attention to the following points in Mr. Nixon's statement:-

" Both sides will respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indo-China and those of 1962 on Laos.

There will be no foreign intervention in the Indo-Chinese countries and the Indo-Chinese peoples will be left to settle their own affairs by themselves.

The problems existing among the Indo-Chinese countries will be settled by the Indo-Chinese parties on the basis of mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's affairs.

"Among the problems that will be settled is the implementation of the principle that all armed forces of the countries of Indo-China must remain within their national frontiers."

It was to be noted that it was now for the North Vietnamese to accept or reject proposals under which elections would be held under international supervision and open to all political forces and parties in Vietnam, including the NLF.

Needless to say, the Australian Government would welcome the achievement of a negotiated settlement under which hostilities in Indo-China would be ended. This would, amongst other things, permit the withdrawal of the small Australian Army Assistance Group which is now engaged on training duties.

Mr. McMahon said he looked forward to the detailed presentation of the joint United States/Republic of Vietnam proposals. He sincerely hoped that they would be most carefully considered by Hanoi. It would be a profound disappointment to us all if the North Vietnamese reaction were no more than a repetition of its sterile demand that the United States bring the war to an end by, as President Nixon put it, "joining its enemy to overthrow its ally".

CANBERRA,
26 January, 1972.