



**DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

NO

DATE

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20 March 1973

GOVERNMENT TO ACT ON CONVENTIONS
OPPOSING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, has reaffirmed that the Government was resolved to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination as soon as the necessary legislative and other measures could be completed.

Mr Whitlam said that as a result of the Sharpeville tragedy in 1960, the United Nations had decided to mark 21 March each year as a day on which the world should fix its attention on the urgent need to eliminate racial discrimination wherever it existed.

Mr Whitlam said that the Government had approved the introduction of the legislation to enable Australia to give effect to the Convention and this would be introduced shortly.

A bill was already before Parliament aimed at repealing Section 64 of the Migration Act which was the last remaining piece of Commonwealth legislation that could be described as discriminatory on racial grounds.

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Mr Whitlam said that the Government's intention to ratify the Convention of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was in line with earlier positive steps taken by Australia since December last year.

He recalled that soon after the Government had assumed office, Australia, for the first time, had contributed to the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa, the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa and the United Nations Fund for Namibia.

The Government's decision to deny racially selected sports teams the right to visit or transit Australia could also be seen in this light.

Mr Whitlam said that in order to pave the way for ratification he had sought the co-operation of the Premiers of Queensland and Western Australia in giving high priority to the removal of the remaining minor pieces of discriminatory legislation in those States.