



**DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

NO

DATE

M/66

3 April 1973

AUSTRALIA TO ATTEND O.A.S. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Special Minister of State and Minister Assisting the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Willesee, announced today that Australia had accepted an invitation to attend the third regular session of the General Assembly of the Organisation of American States (OAS) to be held in Washington between 4 and 14 April.

Senator Willesee said that Australia would attend in an observer capacity and would be represented by Mr M.G. Williams, the Counsellor at the Australian Embassy in Washington responsible for Latin American affairs.

The OAS, a regional agency within the United Nations, is an international organisation founded in 1948 to foster mutual understanding and co-operation among the nations of the Western Hemisphere. The Organization, whose 23 members are all, apart from the United States of America, countries from the Latin American and Caribbean areas, operates through a variety of councils and specialized bodies in the economic, social, cultural and juridical fields. The General Assembly provides a forum for an annual review of the whole range of OAS activities.

Senator Willesee said that Australia's decision to attend the OAS General Assembly reflected the Government's interest in Latin America and was a recognition of the important role played by countries of that region in various aspects of international affairs.

The Government, he said, intended to send official Australian observers to other important meetings of Latin American countries as these occurred.

Senator Willesee added that the Department of Foreign Affairs was already holding informal consultations on a regular basis with the diplomatic representatives of Latin American countries in Canberra.