



**DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

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MR WHITLAM'S OVERSEAS VISIT, APRIL 1973

Attached is the text of a statement delivered to the House of Representatives on 1 May 1973 by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr E.G. Whitlam.

I wish to report quite briefly to Parliament on the overseas visit from which I returned yesterday. Subject to the requirements of the legislative program, I hope later in the session to be able to make a comprehensive statement to the House on the broad perspectives of the Government's foreign policy.

Honourable Members will know that I led the Australian Delegation to the Fourth Meeting of the Pacific Forum from 17 to 19 April in Apia, Western Samoa. For the first time there, seven Commonwealth countries were represented by their Heads of Government, as were the two countries with observer status, Papua New Guinea and Niue. Through leading the Delegation to this meeting myself I wished to emphasise the very deep interest which the Government takes in the affairs of the South Pacific. The Australian Government seeks to play a co-operative and helpful role in this area but in no way wishes to dominate in the region.

The Forum itself is so arranged that the great differences in size and economic strength between Australia and New Zealand on the one hand and the Pacific Islands on the other can be ameliorated by meeting as equals in its informal atmosphere.

I believe that on this occasion, as before, the meeting of the Forum was useful and successful. I am sure that these meetings will continue to consolidate regional co-operation between Australia and New Zealand and the islanders in the South Pacific.

At its first session, the Forum adopted a Joint Declaration deploring French nuclear tests in the Pacific. This declaration was an Australian initiative fully supported by the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr Kirk, and promptly agreed to by all other members of the Forum. We hoped that a declaration would have more impact than a reference in the communique. We were able to cable this declaration to Paris on the first day of the meeting while the Attorney-General, Senator Murphy, was there for the talks which he was conducting at that time with the French Government.

The Forum also requested me to take up with the British Government later in my visit the question of French tests in the Pacific, since that Government is responsible for dependent territories in the area including Pitcairn Island, the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony and, in part, the New Hebrides. This I did.

I was also pleased to announce to the Forum a voluntary contribution of \$NZ250,000 for 1974. This contribution, which is made to the South Pacific Commission, is in excess of our assessed contribution and in addition to the \$A15 million three-year aid program announced in 1972.

Fiji, and other members of the Forum, also accepted an Australian proposal that there should be a conference of Labour Ministers from Forum countries to discuss labour and related matters in Australia later in the year.

I also indicated Australia's willingness to organise an international training course in export development for the island members of the Forum in Australia in November.

I left the Forum for Vancouver and London before the final day, on which the Special Minister of State led the Australian Delegation.

In Vancouver, the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr Pierre Trudeau, extended to me the courtesy of meeting me in Vancouver for private talks while my aircraft was in transit.

The value of these talks was in no way diminished by the informality of the occasion and they confirmed my long-held belief that there are many areas in which Australia and Canada should co-operate more closely than in the past. We face similar problems in relation to our need to improve the status of our Aboriginal people. We face similar problems related to Foreign ownership and foreign investment. We can, I believe, develop

fruitful and more regular consultations on trade matters of common interest, our approach to questions in the United Nations, and law of the sea and multi-national corporations.

I have arranged with Mr Trudeau that our Governments should consult more closely and directly on these matters and that we should telephone each other as a matter of course when matters of mutual interest arise which affect Canada and Australia.

Before going into details about my London discussions, I would like to place on record the Government's general approach to relations with the United Kingdom.

The Australian Government's aim is to make our relations with Britain an integral and important part of our general international relations and not something apart as they have tended to be in the past.

Our relationship with Britain is inevitably changing. The changes we have made or propose to make on such matters as the powers of the Governor-General, appeals to the Privy Council, a new national anthem, the Queen's Style and Titles and the amendment of the oath of allegiance are in no way directed against Britain. They are solely intended to put our relationship on a more mature and contemporary basis and to reflect the development of a more independent Australian identity in the world. Indeed, what the Australian Government is seeking to achieve in its relations not only with Britain but with a number of other countries - the United States, China, Canada, and our Asian neighbours, for instance - is to give formal recognition to what has already happened, as the necessary foundation for a realistic, more independent, more mature foreign policy. What we seek to do is no artificial convulsion of contrived nationalism. This is certainly well understood and appreciated in London.

My talks with Mr Heath, Sir Alec Douglas Home, Lord Carrington, Lord Hailsham and other Ministers covered a wide range of matters of mutual interest in the foreign affairs, defence and constitutional fields.

I explained to Sir Alec Douglas Home and other Ministers and officials the decision of the South Pacific Forum in relation to French nuclear tests. I said that I was not speaking only on behalf of Australia but of the seven countries of the Forum, all of which were associated with the Commonwealth. I indicated that the Forum countries believe the United Kingdom should talk to the French. This would appear to be a natural consequence of our close Commonwealth relations, of Britain's major role in the negotiation of the partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and of its responsibilities, as an administering power, in respect of a number of Pacific territories. Honourable Members will be pleased to know that Sir Alec Douglas Home said he would study the views expressed at the Pacific Forum meeting and by myself and that he would draw them to the attention of the French Government. Sir Alec also pointed out that the United Kingdom had already urged the French to sign the partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

In Rome I was received by His Holiness the Pope in private audience. I regard myself as privileged to have been able to discuss many matters with this gentle and wise man. He welcomes the establishment between Australia and the Vatican of diplomatic relations, as a convenient means of communication and as facilitating the practical matters which need to be transacted. The Holy Father said, however, that even this sensible development of diplomatic machinery could not increase the depth of his regard for Australia and its people, and the warmth of his recollections of his visit to this country.

I took advantage of my brief visit to Rome to call on the senior Italian minister in Rome during my visit, Signor Colombo, who is, as honourable members will know, the

predecessor of the present Prime Minister of Italy, Signor Andreotti, who was away from Italy. Signor Colombo has an especially high reputation in E.E.C. circles.

I outlined to Signor Colombo the present Government's thinking on foreign policy matters. I found a close identity of views between our two Governments on all matters which we discussed, for example, the recognition of China and North Viet-Nam. I also explained to Signor Colombo our attitude to continued French nuclear testing in the Pacific. I posed the question to him that, if the tests were as clear and as harmless as the French suggested, then could they not be conducted in Corsica.

I was given to understand in clear terms that the Italian Government understood the concern of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islanders in a continued atmospheric testing in the Pacific and I was left in no doubt as to what the reaction of Italy would be if the French were to conduct nuclear tests in the Mediterranean.

On the way home I had talks in Mauritius with the Governor-General and the Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. I told the Prime Minister that we would welcome Mauritian representation in Australia and, apart from our need for area consultation, the opportunity that this might provide to tell Australians of the great pleasure they could derive from visiting the star and key of the Indian Ocean; that we were happy with the way in which the 26,000 migrants from Mauritius have settled without difficulties in Australia. I also assured the Prime Minister that our modest aid program under the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan would continue, and offered further assistance in the trade promotion field and marketing.

I raised, as I did in each country I visited, the question of French atmospheric nuclear tests. The House will understand that traditional French influence in Mauritius is

substantial. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister indicated that he would consider what he might say on this matter when he visits Paris shortly, and, in the meantime, indicated that he would have the question raised with the French Ambassador in Mauritius. The Prime Minister is clearly aware that, travelling as it does from west to east, fall-out from French testing affects his country as much as it does ours.

In conclusion, I would inform the House that during the 14 days I was away, including Easter Week, I believe I was able to emphasise our growing interest in regional co-operation in the South Pacific, to take steps to put our constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom on a more mature and rational basis and to clear away any misconceptions that may have existed about our relations with the United Kingdom, to establish as Prime Minister personal contact with Her Majesty the Queen and the Pope, and to pay a goodwill visit to the small but important Commonwealth country of Mauritius.

In each of the four areas in which I stopped, the South Pacific, the United Kingdom, Italy and Mauritius, I was able to outline the general direction of the Government's foreign policies and the more independent stance we are taking in four diverse and widely separated areas of the world.