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STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P., ON
HIS NORTH AMERICAN VISIT, IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WEDNESDAY, 22 AUGUST, 1973.

NORTH AMERICAN VISIT

I would like to take leave of the House to report briefly to the Parliament and, through the Parliament to the Australian people, on my recent overseas visit to Mexico - the first by an Australian Prime Minister - to the United States and to represent Australia at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Ottawa.

I believe the visit was timely and useful to Australia both in establishing new and significant contacts overseas at the Head of Government level and in developing the more diversified and independent foreign policy for Australia to which the Government is committed.

In combining a visit to Mexico and a visit to Washington with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Ottawa I was able to restore a more appropriate balance to our approach to Central and North America. Washington is not the sole capital in that vast hemisphere.

MEXICO

In Mexico - which is a leader of opinion in Central and South America - my delegation and I received an enthusiastic and warm reception, especially from President Echeverria and Foreign Minister Rabasa. I believe the visit has opened a window onto Central and South America; that in future we shall have more frequent and meaningful contacts with Mexico and, indeed, with other Latin American countries.

I found considerable common ground between our two countries as middle powers on opposite sides of the Pacific. Like Australia, Mexico has had problems of overdependence on foreign countries and inadequate returns from the exploitation of its natural resources. The Mexican Government is also strongly opposed to the poisoning of the Pacific environment by nuclear weapons testing and has taken the lead in ensuring that there will be no such tests in Latin America.

I found that we were in general agreement also on that complex subject, the Law of the Sea, and our respective representatives will be co-operating closely in future to ensure that coastal states receive a fair share of the wealth of the oceans and of the sea bed.

I believe that the Mexicans are well disposed to Australia and our present policies and that they are eager to see the relationship between our two countries further enhanced.

President Echeverria accepted my invitation to him to visit Australia, probably some time next year. In the meantime we are pleased to welcome a group of Mexican Members of Parliament and probably, next month, the Minister for Agriculture, Mr Manuel Aguirre.

It is the firm intention of the Government that the increasing momentum of our relations with Mexico in particular and Latin America in general shall not be lost. I left President Echeverria in no doubt that we looked forward to having him here, not only because of the great personal charm of which he and

Senora Echeverria dispose, but also because such a visit will put the seal, as it were, on the Government's policy of fostering closer links with our neighbours across the Pacific.

I shall not take up the time of the House with further details of my visit to Mexico as I propose to table the Joint Communiqué issued after my visit.

THE UNITED STATES

In Washington I had substantive and straightforward discussions with President Nixon, Vice-President Agnew, Secretary of State Rogers, Dr Kissinger and numbers of other prominent Americans, including members of the Congress and the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs. All showed very considerable interest in recent developments in Australia.

My discussions in Washington covered the situation in the Asian and Pacific region, including relationships between the Great Powers, our relations with the United States, ANZUS, SEATO, the situation in Indo-China, nuclear testing, Korea, regional co-operation in Asia, the special importance of Japan and Indonesia to us, and other matters of mutual interest.

I told United States leaders that we continue to give strong support to ANZUS which we see as embodying some of the most important permanent and natural elements in the relationship between the three Pacific partners. On the American side also, the value of ANZUS is not questioned.

I also told the Secretary of State that ANZUS alone of our Treaties in this area seemed entirely satisfactory and that any Australian Government would strongly support it.

I explained our reservations about SEATO and found that many of them were shared by the United States. I made it clear that some aspects of the Manila Treaty as distinct from the Organisation itself, were of continuing value, especially to Thailand, and that Australia did not intend to withdraw from SEATO.

I can assure the House that, following my talks in Washington, I believe those basic matters on which we agree are much more numerous, important and lasting than those few issues on which our views might differ. That is certainly the view of the American Administration.

I believe, in fact, that the Australian-American relationship will be seen to rest now on firmer foundations than it did in the past. We have brought it to a new maturity.

I believe too that the American Administration now fully accepts that Australia is not a small and relatively insignificant country as it was once called there but a middle power of growing influence in the South East Asian and South Pacific regions.

I believe that America respects and welcomes the less compliant and more independent, though equally friendly approach, which the Australian Government now adopts towards the United States.

In the United States I also paid a brief visit to New York where I visited the United Nations headquarters and addressed a very well attended gathering of the Australian-American Association.

The texts of this speech and my address to the National Press Club in Washington are of course available to any Member who might wish to have them.

THE COMMONWEALTH

I turn now to the meeting of twenty-three Commonwealth Heads of Government and representatives of the other nine Commonwealth Heads of Government which took place in Ottawa from 2 to 10 August.

This was, in the opinion of the more experienced Heads of Government present, the most successful Commonwealth Meeting yet held at this level. It was successful because participants focussed their attention on the main practical issues in international affairs facing us today. The Conference was attended for the most part by men with modern ideas. They represented every geographic region. Above all it was a meeting of equals sharing a common concern for co-operative effort and frank consultation.

The scope and achievements of the Conference are outlined in its final Communique which I also table for the House's information. The document largely speaks for itself.

The Meeting was remarkable, not as some have suggested for differences of opinion, but for the wide identity of interest in the approach of so many members to the realities of contemporary international life. We started with the basic proposition that we of the Commonwealth are now all medium or smaller powers and that we all experienced in some way or other a vulnerability to changes brought about by the nature of the relationships between the major powers. From this position we developed an appreciation of the opportunities for members of the Commonwealth and the benefits to be realized through closer Commonwealth consultation and co-operation. In this respect my pre-election statement of faith in the Commonwealth and its importance for Australia has been vindicated.

I would like to place on record the value of the wide-ranging discussions to all present and to draw attention to the practical and functional co-operation at the Conference.

Moreover, I believe I established or consolidated a number of very useful personal contacts with a number of Heads of Governments especially from the Caribbean countries, Africa, and countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Mauritius and, of course, Canada itself. These contacts demonstrate that the Commonwealth is, as I believed even before I went to Ottawa, a valuable forum through which Australia can develop its more diversified approach to our foreign affairs.

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The need to codify acceptable behaviour by multinational corporations has been widely recognised and is the subject of detailed study by the United Nations. Problems created by a "brain drain" in developing countries have been the subject of international negotiation and study for a number of years. Similarly our concern with the threat from atmospheric nuclear tests is shared universally even if it is not transmitted in every case into effective action. In this respect I regret that a very small minority of Members could not support the original declaration submitted by the Prime Minister of New Zealand, to which we lent our support, in the context of our present efforts to prevent further such tests.

In Ottawa I was able to indicate to Commonwealth leaders that Australia will give more active support to Commonwealth co-operative ventures. We already are a contributor to its major channel for multilateral assistance, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation and to the Commonwealth Foundation. I announced in Ottawa that Australia will also support the new Commonwealth Youth Program to the extent of \$60,000 per annum for the next three years and that we will participate in the further study of proposals for a Commonwealth Development and Export Bank and an institute for the applied study of government.

I believe the contacts I made in Ottawa will lead to the development of more meaningful relationships with a number of countries in the Caribbean and around the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and in Africa.

AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATION

I should report to the House that one consequence of my visit to Mexico, Washington and Ottawa will be the widening of Australian representation in the Caribbean and in South America.

Following the discussions which I had, I propose to take steps to accredit the Australian High Commissioner in Canada to the five Caribbean Commonwealth countries, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Guyana and the Bahamas, pending the establishment of a separate High Commission in the Caribbean, the head of which will then be accredited to all five countries. At the same time I have under active review the Cuban request to establish a Trade or Consular Office in Australia. I am also consulting Guatemala and Panama with a view to accrediting non-resident Ambassadors to these countries.

I seek leave of the House to table the Communique issued at the conclusion of my visit to Mexico and the Joint Communique adopted in Ottawa by the Meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments.