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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,
AT PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI'S BANQUET AT PEKING ON OCTOBER 31, 1973

Prime Minister Whitlam's Speech at Peking Banquet, Peking, October 31, 1973 (Nsinhua) -- Following is the full text of the speech in reply by Australian Prime Minister Edward Gough Whitlam at the welcoming banquet given by Premier Chou En-lai here this evening:-

Premier Chou En-lai, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Your Australian guests are immensely impressed by the splendour and warmth of our reception at the airport, along the boulevard and in the Great Hall of the People.

The days of our staying here two years and three months ago we will never forget, our reception on that occasion and now on this.

Australia is moving in a new direction, in its relationships with the world and specifically with the region in which Australia inevitably belongs. The course that we are setting is already clear and committed. Our concern is no longer exclusively with nations in far removed areas of the globe. Now, our concern is with all nations and particularly those with whom we share a common environment and common interests and with whom we seek relationships of equality. In Peking today, we give expression to our new international outlook. With no nation is our new aspiration symbolised more than it is with China, a power not only in our region but in the world. We look to a future in which over-emphasis on particular associations will no longer distort the proper relationships which should exist between Australia and all neighbours. In our view, this meeting in Peking contributes significantly towards that future.

China is our close neighbour. In China today we see a great modernising force, capable of exerting profound influence in the world. Close co-operation and association between our two peoples is both natural and beneficial. This co-operation - this association - will be strengthened by our talks this week in Peking - the first such talks ever between Prime Ministers of China and Australia.

In 1971 a small party and I visited China - before the first visit of Dr. Henry Kissinger - only a week before - and on this occasion, I understand, we are visiting China only two weeks before him. At that time, on behalf of the Australian people, I said that should I become Prime Minister we would establish diplomatic relations with China and that I would visit China in my first year of office. The first promise we fulfilled within three weeks of gaining office. The second at the ready invitation of Premier Chou En-lai, I am fulfilling now. Thank you, sir, for your invitation. For myself and for those who accompany me, we hope that we may have many opportunities to return the generosity and hospitality that you and the Chinese people have offered to us.

I wanted to make this visit in my first year of office as a demonstration of the significance attached by the Australian people to developing relations with China, and in the belief that our two countries should now work in concert for the mutual benefit of the welfare and security of our two peoples.

In China's approach to relations with other countries, we find a welcome emphasis on the principles of the equality of states and respect for the rights and views of small and middle powers. At a time when profound changes are taking place in the patterns of international relations, it is particularly important that the role of small and medium powers should be understood and appreciated, and that they should seize the opportunities for greater independence which the increased fluidity of the world situation presents to them. In this context, China's support for the principles of respect for the national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all states can make a significant contribution to strengthening peace. These fundamental principles we support and as we work together for their implementation, our two countries will be drawn into closer co-operation. We hope and expect that our two countries, in a relationship of mutual trust, will work increasingly together to secure respect for these broad principles in the affairs of the region which touches both our countries.

Australia shares China's desire for a fully effective solution to the Vietnamese conflict and China's desire that the Paris Agreements should be fully implemented by all parties concerned. Similarly, both countries look forward to the early restoration of peace in Cambodia. The Governments of both our countries have welcomed the agreements reached between the parties concerned in Laos and we share a desire that the correct implementation of these agreements will ensure peace in Laos.

We are both concerned that the different social systems of the countries in the region should not inhibit the flow of ideas and that greater consultation and dialogue among these countries may remove the barriers of misunderstanding and lessen the possibility of international conflict.

As relations between China and Australia develop, the continuing importance of expanding trade will be balanced by the development of close contact over a broad range of political issues. Consultations on international questions of interest to both countries are adding substance to our relationship. Exchanges in the scientific, technological and cultural fields will expand and buttress ties between the two countries.

Our relationship will not be exclusive but will have relevance beyond our purely bilateral concerns. For we believe that there are great benefits for all in putting aside the rigidities and animosities of the cold war era and grasping the opportunities inherent in the more open framework of relationships now developing in the world, to build a structure of cooperation based on mutual respect and mutual trust.

In this spirit, ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to join with me in a toast in honour of Chairman Mao Tsetung, in honour of acting Chairman of the Republic Tung Pi-wu, in honour of Premier Chou En-lai in honour of the heads of the Diplomatic Missions and their wives, in honour of all distinguished guests present, to the continued happiness and well-being of the Chinese people and to the friendship between Australia and the People's Republic of China.