



PRIME MINISTER

4 June 1974
Press Statement No. 255

AUSTRALIA TO SEEK PRESIDENCY OF U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY NEXT YEAR

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, confirmed today's press report that in March of this year, prior to the general elections, Australia had begun actively to seek support for the candidature of the Foreign Minister, Senator Willesee, for the Presidency of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1975.

Mr Whitlam said that, on the assumption that Senator Willesee would be re-elected to the Ministry and reappointed as the Foreign Minister, the Government intended to proceed with his candidature for the Presidency of the Assembly. Mr Whitlam recalled that Senator Willesee had led the Australian delegation to the General Assembly session last year, and was already well known to many delegation leaders.

Mr Whitlam said that this action underlined the importance which the Government attached to the United Nations in its foreign policy and he recalled the constructive contributions being made by Australia to the work of the United Nations. He noted that in addition to its energetic support for the peacekeeping, human rights, decolonisation, and economic and technical activities of the United Nations, Australia is currently a member of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council which are major organs of the United Nations under the Charter. As President of the Security Council in October 1973, the Australian Ambassador to the United Nations, Sir Laurence McIntyre, played an important role in helping to achieve a ceasefire resolution in the Middle East. Australia's current term as a member of the Security Council ends on 31 December this year.

Mr Whitlam said that the Government was determined to maintain its forward-looking policies which had been so well received in the United Nations.

Australia is a member of the Western European and Others group in the United Nations, and it is the turn of that group to nominate the candidate for the Presidency of the General Assembly in 1975. In March of this year preliminary soundings were started about the possibility of the group endorsing Senator Willesee as its candidate for the Presidency of the General Assembly in 1975. Consultations with members of the group are continuing. The Prime Minister recalled that Australia last held the Presidency of the General Assembly in 1948/49 when the late Dr H.V. Evatt was President of the Third Session of the General Assembly.