

# AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA,  
MR E.G. WHITLAM,  
AT THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NEW YORK,  
MONDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER, 1974

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Mr President,

In this year in which Australia has established diplomatic relations with Algeria, it gives me particular pleasure, as head of the Australian Government, to congratulate you upon your election as President of this 29th Session of the General Assembly. The Algerian experience has encompassed many of the deepest problems facing the world and this world Organisation today. Sir - your nation's experience - and your own - ensure distinction and significance to your occupancy of this high post.

As head of the first Australian social democratic government since Australia helped to found the United Nations and to frame its Charter more than a quarter of a century ago, I re-affirm our loyalty to both. Such pledges are easily enough given; yet no nation makes them more sincerely, more earnestly today than Australia.

No country needs more than Australia the fulfilment of the international objectives of the United Nations to reach the fulfilment of her own national objectives. There are few countries in which the paradox is demonstrated with such force

that true national independence depends upon international interdependence. There are few nations to which the mirage of national self-sufficiency can be made so tempting; yet there are few nations for which that mirage can be so easily shattered. Australia, fortunate in possession of great resources, confident in the ability of her own people to develop those resources, is nevertheless not ashamed to admit her interdependence with her neighbours and her partners across the world and her dependence upon them. We are a people without illusions; we Australians neither falsely exaggerate our strengths nor fearfully exaggerate our weaknesses. It is precisely because we make a rational assessment of our strengths and weaknesses that we recognise that we depend upon a better international order to preserve those things we most value about our national independence. In seeking a better international order, we give primacy to the United Nations.

It is therefore with growing concern that we witness what can only be called a drift away from international order and international co-operation at present occurring in world affairs. Australia's concern springs not just from the real difficulties created by recent events but, even more, from the feeling that there has been a weakening of will, a loss of momentum in international determination to meet and overcome those difficulties.

Great hopes were born two years ago. The Australian Government wholeheartedly endorsed the movement towards detente between the United States and the Soviet Union. We wholeheartedly supported China's return to her true place in the family of nations - in this Organisation and in the world. We wholeheartedly endorsed the Paris Agreement to end the war in Vietnam. We therefore ratified the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, moved our China Embassy from Taipeh to Peking, and ended Australia's own military involvement in Indo-China.

Above all, we have been determined to do all we can to ensure that our region and the world should not for a second time lose the opportunity for a new settlement, a new step towards peace and progress, in the way that the chance was thrown away after the war in Korea and after the Geneva meetings in 1954. Yet we have to acknowledge that the hopes springing from the remarkable events of 1971 and 1972 are beginning to sour. There is increasingly a sense of drift, a sense of events out of control. The task of this Assembly should be to help stop that drift. Our natural pre-occupation with our national problems - and for most of us they are very great indeed - must not lead to a loss of

international concern and involvement. We cannot turn inwards. Even the most immediate problems of domestic worry - such as inflation which so many of us share, the strongest, the most highly developed along with the weakest and the least developed - are in essence international problems, for which there can be no ultimate, no complete national solution without an international solution. No nation, no group of nations, no bloc, no alliance, can live alone, can live entirely to itself in this new world. We are all internationalists now - by necessity. Australia is internationalist by necessity - and by choice. Each of us has our bilateral arrangements and our regional arrangements. Many, like Australia, through treaty or trade or tradition, have honourable alignments and valuable associations.

It is however through this Organisation, its Assembly and its councils and through the specialised agencies, that the enduring international settlements must ultimately be sought and the drift away from international co-operation must be arrested.

So there must be no loss of nerve, no loss of will here. If we here lose our nerve, if we here allow that drift to continue unchecked, we face the breakdown of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the breakdown of world economic order, the breakdown of all our high hopes and high words about closing the gap between the developed and developing nations and the breakdown of any claims of the United Nations Organisation to be an effective peace-keeper and peace-maker.

We should all stand guilty of betrayal of our peoples if we did not act now to stop the drift in these matters.

The special obligations which the might of the super-powers imposes upon them should not be made an excuse for indifference or indecision on the part of the rest of us. We continue to urge upon the superpowers the need for them both to maintain the utmost mutual restraint in their relations between themselves - and towards us. They can, of course, easily destroy each other; they can also destroy all of us. We are entitled to ask them to move forward to a stage of complete detente where their tremendous power can be used jointly for the betterment of the whole civilization. We are entitled to insist upon restraint in their deployment of forces overseas, in areas such as the Indian Ocean. Australia is strongly opposed to the Indian Ocean becoming a ground for competition, much less confrontation between the great powers.

Mutual restraint is also essential to prevent the excesses and dangers of the nuclear arms race.

Let me recall that those of us who are so far parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons have given the nuclear powers certain rights; they in turn have accepted certain responsibilities and given guarantees, as part of a two-way process. We undertook not to develop nuclear weapons in return for guarantees of protection and assistance in the development of nuclear knowledge for peace. Above all, the sponsoring powers undertook to promote and maintain a world order based upon comprehensive disarmament. Unless these obligations are sincerely fulfilled, the incentive abroad and the pressure at home for more and more nations to get nuclear weapons will increase. A co-operative effort by all leaders must find effective means of halting the arms race and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is nothing more urgent facing any of us today.

Australia therefore sees with deepest anxiety the continuing and new testing of nuclear devices, the prospect of an ever-increasing number of nations possessing nuclear weapons, and an even greater number possessing the capability of exploding nuclear devices. Where it has been open to Australia, we have expressed our concern in action before the International Court of Justice.

All of us face a nightmare world in which as many as fifteen or twenty nations may possess nuclear weapons by the early 1980s. There is time to prevent it. We have perhaps about a year, two years at the most in which to prevent it. Now is the time; it may be our last chance.

For our part, the Australian Government pledges that it will neither develop nor acquire nuclear weapons.

Our first aim must be to strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty and work for its acceptance everywhere. Real and rapid progress can best be made through this Treaty. We should build on what we have. We have not time to start all over again. Six years after it was concluded and more than four years after it came into force, some States have still to ratify the Treaty, or to make clear their renunciation of nuclear weapons development. Certainly we understand the difficulties the Treaty presents to some nations. We understand their reservations. We acknowledge discriminatory aspects of the Treaty as it now stands. We

would hope that the forthcoming Review Conference will remove some of these difficulties, but the Conference will be more successful and meaningful if more nations ratify the Treaty and work within its framework to improve it and apply it.

Secondly, we should make a comprehensive treaty to ban nuclear weapons testing an urgent priority. The treaties which have been concluded and resolutions which have been adopted are important achievements, but they have not gone far enough towards stopping the nuclear arms race. They are only steps towards universal and comprehensive agreement on nuclear weapons testing. We must complete the journey.

Thirdly, we need effective international arrangements to govern and control nuclear experiments for peaceful purposes. We all recognise the promise which scientific collaboration on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy holds for economic development in the interests of all mankind. But the world cannot afford the risks which lie in the prospect where increasing numbers of countries possess nuclear devices - even if they profess to have them for peaceful purposes only. We cannot shrug off nuclear explosions which present us with such a threat, particularly those conducted outside existing safeguards and without international inspection. Australia seeks support for an international arrangement by which all states could gain access to nuclear explosive services under agreed and secure international controls for peaceful purposes. We urge all nuclear states to co-operate in establishing such a service, preferably under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I join with the Foreign Minister of Canada in this call.

Another approach to the goal of disarmament worth serious exploration is the concept of peace zones. They are of course no substitute for comprehensive disarmament and no substitute for an effective Non-Proliferation Treaty. Australia, however, takes a particular interest in the agreements and proposals embodying this concept, because most of them affect our continent and our region directly. The Antarctic Treaty, the Indian Ocean peace zone, the ASEAN declaration, the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and the proposal by Iran for a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East all move in the right direction. They command Australia's broad support since they assert the dangers inherent in an uncontrolled, unregulated use of our planet for the deployment of nuclear weapons; they seek to limit the development, emplacement and use of nuclear weapons in the areas and

environments they cover; they all express growing anxiety about the spread of nuclear weapons; they all seek paths towards reducing tensions among the nuclear powers. For the Australian Government, these initiatives not only represent ends in themselves but, we believe serve to stimulate progress on other important measures intended to bring to fulfilment the hopes of mankind to live in security, free from the threat of nuclear war.

Let me say that Australia's anxiety about the nuclear arms race does not blind us to the risks to international peace and security from localised conflicts using conventional weapons. We, the members of the international community, stand condemned for our failure so far to find the sense of responsibility and the means of authority to stop regional disputes being settled by force. It is equally bad that some members of the international community have made possible - for profit - massive recourse to arms and the means of waging wars about to start or already begun. A world order which permits, or which, by default, sanctions the large scale transfer of weapons from one country to another where the risk of conflict is high, is gravely at fault and very foolish. It shortcircuits the process of peaceful negotiation and puts primacy upon settlement of disputes by war, by bloodshed, and as always happens - must always happen in modern war - by the bloodshed of the innocent.

Clearly, we still have far to go before the international community will agree collectively to forsake the short term gains on arms sales abroad in return for the longer term but less tangible benefits that this self-denying ordinance would confer on the weapons producers. Nevertheless, we now ask that the major weapons producing countries should set an example by imposing the strictest restrictions on the export of arms abroad to areas where there is a clear risk of conflict.

Recent events have shown that preservation of peace is more than a matter of arms control. It is also a matter of keeping the peace when violence threatens or occurs. It is not enough for members of the United Nations to pay lip service to the United Nations' peace-keeping role. Individual members have the duty to provide the material and financial resources to allow the United Nations to deal with threats to security, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression.

Australia stands ready to participate in peace-keeping operations in whatever way would be most useful. Australia is of course allied by treaty with the United States, and we make

no apologies for it. There is however no area of actual or potential conflict anywhere in the world where loyalties, ideology or interests, should make an Australian involvement in peace-keeping unacceptable or unwelcome. We wish Australia to be always among the first nations from which the United Nations would ask for peace-keeping forces; we shall be among the first to respond. We undertake to keep the Secretary-General regularly informed on the nature and size of contributions we are able to provide over a given period.

Australia further believes that the importance of preventive diplomacy must come to be more widely recognised and accepted and that the ample provisions offered by this Organisation for peace-keeping and good offices should be reinvigorated, explored more thoroughly and more thoroughly exploited. It is time, therefore, to look again at the hitherto untapped provisions of the United Nations Charter, to make all that we can of its capacity to provide useful contributions to such activities as fact-finding, conciliation mediation and negotiation.

We here should particularly devote increased attention to the role of the International Court of Justice. Not enough nations use the Court. Members of the international community cannot be compelled to take their cases before the Court but we should strive to build confidence in its worth, its wisdom, its workability as one way of rationalising and harmonising international relations. If the rule of international law and justice is to prevail, then an international tribunal is indispensable. The Court's jurisdiction should be widened. Jurisdiction should become compulsory and universal. New multilateral treaty arrangements - like that which will emerge from the Law of the Sea conference - should enforce compulsory settlement of disputes, with the International Court as the final court of appeal. By such steps the rule of law can be established and strengthened in a better world order.

In this difficult, complicated, crowded world we all are creating for ourselves, the causes of conflict multiply. Nuclear brinkmanship, ideology, border disputes, race hate, religious bigotry, national ambitions, foreign exploitation - all provide actual or potential sources of tension, conflict, bloodshed and war. Yet there remains for the future one of the oldest of all the causes of war - the threat of war for the possession of resources. Huge population increases, the revolution of rising expectations, the enormous and often

wasteful demands our technological civilization makes upon the world's resources, have increased the pressures on our world civilization to the very threshold of the tolerable.

For countries which lack resources the situation has become critical. The developing countries have been grossly disadvantaged. Last year's oil crisis brought this sharply home to all of us - developed and developing alike.

It is proper that in this world forum I should state the Australian Government's attitude to the use and development of Australia's own very considerable resources. There is no place in our thinking for "economic nationalism" in its crudest sense. We do, of course, wish to ensure steady markets at fair prices for what we produce. We recognise the great scope for increased co-operation between producers of raw materials and for groups of exporting countries to associate to build a better framework for orderly and rational development of production and trade. As a relatively developed and thriving nation, which also produces many resources shared by developing and poorer nations, Australia recognises its duty to co-operate with such nations in obtaining fair and reasonable return for our products. And we are co-operating. Equally however we in Australia accept our responsibility to reassure countries which depend upon our resources that they shall have steady, secure access to those resources at fair prices. We must protect our interests and we shall, but Australia is not in the business of resources blackmail. That is the way to international disaster - for producers and users alike.

Let us accept the plain fact that war for resources or food or markets by any nation or group of nations would, in modern times, represent the supreme folly. There is no war, nuclear or "conventional" by which the victor so-called, assuming there was one, could conceivably win back by war the resources used and destroyed in waging it. If we choose not to listen to the voice of humanity against war, we might at least listen to the voice of commonsense and indeed ordinary, rational self-interest.

As a major food producer, Australia is particularly interested in the proposals on food which President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger have made at this session. Australia undertakes to work constructively and co-operatively towards implementation of these proposals. Suggestions such as the establishment of an international system of grain reserves are thoroughly commendable and deserve our most serious attention.



Of all the changes which have occurred in the international community since World War II none has more profoundly altered the face of the world than the accession to independence by those peoples and states formerly under colonial rule. The process is not yet complete, but we look to a time in the near future when no territory will be controlled against its choice by a metropolitan power with whom it has no geographical, social, racial, cultural affinity. In this regard we particularly welcome recent decisions of the Government of Portugal.

Australia has acted with determination and vigour to apply the relevant articles of the Charter. Papua New Guinea became self-governing on 1 December, 1973. It will become fully independent as soon as the House of Assembly of Papua New Guinea decides. We expect this decision soon. Let me emphasise - the decision we await is by the House of Assembly. The Australian Government made its own decision long ago - we utterly reject a colonial role for Australia. Meanwhile the Australian Government deals with the Government of Papua New Guinea in all significant respects as that of a nation already independent.

There is to me, I must say, a most satisfying symmetry in the march of events by which Portugal the oldest, and Australia the newest, of the colonial powers are acting at the same time towards the liquidation of colonialism. Across the distance of 400 years the new world in Australia clasps hands with the old, in ending a false, demeaning, unworthy power over others.

The dramatic and welcome progress made towards the dissolution of the oldest and last of the colonial empires now enables the United Nations to direct even more concentrated attention upon the twin evil of racism - particularly its post-colonial manifestations in Southern Africa. We must be unremitting in the efforts sanctioned by the Assembly to break the illegal regime in Rhodesia, to end South Africa's unlawful control over Namibia and to end apartheid. We should all make determined efforts to see that the momentum which launched the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination is not lost. My Government - conscious that Australia's own record is seriously flawed - is determined to remove all forms of racial discrimination within our own shores, notably now, as notoriously in the past, against our own Aborigines.

While racism remains as cruel as any example of man's inhumanity to man, we should not, however, overlook the existence of other forms of discrimination which rob men and women of their right to live in dignity and peace of mind. Throughout the world political prisoners languish in jails or are otherwise deprived of their civil liberties. There are thoroughly unacceptable constraints on the right of political asylum. Religious and ethnic minorities are persecuted, workers are denied the protection of ILO Conventions, women are denied equal opportunities. The Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Willesee will during the discussion be putting Australian submissions to express our views and proposals on these matters.

There has never been a time in human history when the truth of the one-ness, the indivisibility of humanity, has been so manifest. It is no longer only a philosophical or religious proposition but an assertion of sheer reason and commanding commonsense. All the momentous recent developments have profound implications for the future conduct of international relations since they have one common theme - the interdependence of us all. That interdependence is now almost total.

An attempt by any state to bring about political or economic change in another through unconstitutional, clandestine, corrupt methods, by assassination or terrorism, undermines the rule of international law, encourages adventurism and anarchy, endangers world peace and turns quite quickly against even the most powerful nations who would seek to advance their cause by such methods.

The wilful erection of trade barriers by one state or a group of states without regard to the hardship caused to others can create economic dislocation around the world by curtailing or closing export markets to which their industries have become geared and on which their foreign exchange earnings depend.

Refusal to recognise the inalienable rights of all people to freedom and independence produces tension and conflict not only between the oppressed and the oppressors but between them and other nations which become associated or involved in these just and legitimate struggles.

Now more than ever, we look to the United Nations. It has the experience, the stature and the capacity to help us identify the sources of tension between nations, to prescribe collective measures to mitigate and eventually remove the causes of conflict, and to anticipate and prevent situations developing which have the potential for disturbing world peace.

Mr President,

It is claimed that the world is now short on leadership. It's truer to say that the nature, complexity and universality of the problems rushing in upon us render irrelevant and obsolete that concept of world leadership whereby a handful of powerful men in charge of the most powerful nations can chart the course for the rest of us to follow. So the challenge of the United Nations to provide a genuine and continuing source of leadership, of hope and purpose for the world is more urgent, the opportunity more real, than at any time in the Organisation's history. In the response we here make to that challenge, we shall be judged - as nations, as representatives of our nations and as men and women - not by our power or size or wealth, but by the honesty of our efforts to promote and practice the principles of the Charter of this United Nations.