

NEWS RELEASE

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LIMITATION OF STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE ARMS

The Prime Minister and Acting Foreign Minister, Mr Whitlam, said today that he welcomed the joint statement by President Ford and Mr Brezhnev on the limitation of strategic offensive arms issued at the conclusion of their recent talks at Vladivostock. The two leaders had reaffirmed their intention to conclude a further ten-year agreement on the limitation of strategic offensive arms.

Mr Whitlam said that all governments should agree with President Ford and Mr Brezhnev that a long-term agreement on this question would be a significant contribution to improving relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, to reducing the danger of war, and to the enhancing of world peace.

The joint statement said that the two leaders agreed that further negotiations, which would resume in Geneva next month, would incorporate relevant provisions of the interim SALT agreement concluded in 1972, and provide for a new agreement to run from October 1977 to 1985. Both sides would be entitled to have a certain agreed aggregate number of land and sea-based missiles equipped with multiple independently targetted warheads (MIRVs).

The Prime Minister said this agreement regarding future negotiations was a significant and heartening result of the first meeting between President Ford and Mr Brezhnev. He welcomed the comment of the US Secretary of State, Dr Henry Kissinger that the agreement "marks the breakthrough with the SALT negotiations that we have sought to achieve in recent years".

The Prime Minister recalled that during his own address to the United Nations General Assembly on 30 September, he had spoken of the special obligations which the might of the superpowers imposed upon them, and had said that other countries were entitled to ask the superpowers to move forward to a stage of complete detente where their tremendous power can be used jointly to the betterment of the whole of civilisation.

The Prime Minister said all reasonable persons must realise that there would be very many great problems to be resolved in the long negotiations which would be held between the US and the Soviet Union towards the conclusion of a new ten-year agreement, but that it was heartening to learn that President Ford and Mr Brezhnev had concluded that favourable prospects existed for the completion of the work on the proposed new agreement in 1975.

The subjects to be discussed were very complex and highly technical, and they bore on the vital security of two super powers and thus, directly or indirectly, on the security of all other countries in the world.

The Prime Minister said he hoped that this welcome development between the two super powers would be followed by action by the US and the Soviet Union and by the other nuclear powers and countries of advanced technology towards strengthening the NPT, and thus working for the containment and reduction of nuclear weapons, and to endeavour to ensure that nuclear energy, with its tremendous potential, was directed towards peaceful uses.