



PRIME MINISTER

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PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS AT OPENING CEREMONY OF I.P.U.

I am very pleased to join with His Excellency, the Governor General, the Chairman, and President, in welcoming all of you to Australia.

Your five study groups, which will meet in our National Parliament this week, in preparation for the 64th Annual Conference of the IPU, are discussing issues of great importance to every country and to all people.

The five subjects you will examine are diverse: disarmament; world economic development; decolonisation; and two issues of world resources, the law of the sea, and water management. Yet they have a common theme. Each in its own way vitally concerns the world's peace and security. In each area, progress is urgently required.

The maintenance of international peace and security and the achievement of significant arms limitation, hold a high priority in the Australian Government's foreign policy. The immediate task of arms control is to ensure greater stability in international relations. We should strive to set military balances at the lowest possible levels compatible with general defence requirements; and we should seek the prevention of the proliferation of destabilising weapons systems which can contribute to arms races.

It is encouraging that over one hundred countries have ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Despite its imperfections, that Treaty offers the best prospect of containing the spread of nuclear weapons.

Australia has welcomed the progress that has been made thus far in the strategic arms limitation talks between the USA and the USSR, and we hope that the problems encountered during the recent visit of Mr. Vance to the USSR do not deter either party from continuing negotiations. We attach great importance to the achievement of an agreement which would end nuclear weapons testing in all environments.

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Mankind is also faced with pressing resource problems. The world community is gradually coming to grips with the problem of safeguarding the environment in which we live, and of developing more rationally our scarce natural resources.

The deficiencies of water supplies, both in quantity and quality, looms as one of the great issues in economic and social development over the next twenty five years. It is within this context that the importance of the IPU's study group on water must be seen.

I hope that the group will be able to alert the broader community to the fact that a higher priority must be given to water conservation, and shed some insight on how this awareness can be translated into practical policies.

The study group dealing with the Law of the Sea is a prelude, not only to the IPU's meeting at Sofia later this year, but to the next session of the Law of the Sea Conference, which will begin in New York next month.

That Conference is now faced with an impasse on the important issue of the seabed beyond national jurisdiction. Australia is anxious to see this impasse broken. It is apparent that, unless there is a resolution of this issue, the agreements which have already been tentatively reached on many of the other issues being considered by the Conference, may very well break down.

If this happens, an historic opportunity to make a widely-accepted comprehensive convention, will have been lost.

Australia believes all nations should make every effort at the forthcoming session to reach accommodation on this vital issue. Australia takes a strong interest in the continuing dialogue between developed and developing countries on a new international economic order.

We are sympathetic to the economic problems and aspirations of developing countries, and we recognise the need to help speed up the pace of economic development in the developing nations. Aid to the developing countries has an essential contribution to make to this process.

Australia believes that there are improvements which could be made in this area, We have argued that wherever possible, official aid should be provided in ways that avoid adding to the recipient's debt burden.

While Australia believes that the essential framework of the present international economic system is sound, there is a clear need to endeavour to identify realistic and practical ways in which it can be improved, to the benefit of all countries.

The IPU - because it provides a forum for informed and constructive dialogue between representatives of developing and developed countries, is well placed to take part in the international consideration of this vital issue.

One subject that is at least as important as all of those I have mentioned, is the question of human rights. One of the study committees will be examining a key aspect of this question when it looks at decolonisation. Australia takes an active part in the international debate on this subject. In particular, through its membership of both the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation and the UN Council for Namibia.

I reaffirm the Australian Government's resolute opposition to all forms of racial discrimination, and its support for those practical measures, in conformity with the charter of the United Nations, designed to end apartheid and other forms of racism.

Ladies and gentlemen, you have much to discuss. I wish your deliberations well, for in each of the areas to which I have referred, greater understanding and new initiatives are urgently required.

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There are still some who argue that sport and politics have no relationship.

They argue that as sporting teams come and perform - teams selected on a racial basis - that is not something which should concern governments or in which governments should take some action.

That kind of view is no longer credible today.

It is not the government of the host country that has introduced sport into politics. It is the government of the other country that has made arrangements for sport to be so structured internally that people of one race alone can participate.

Accordingly, if a government operates its own social and economic system in that form, other governments cannot be expected to continue with the outdated proposition that sport is separate from politics.

It is clear that where a sport is practiced on a racist basis, governments must carry responsibility. It is the government that has then introduced politics into sport.
