



Sir Geoffrey Yeend
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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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AUSTRALIA/UNITED KINGDOM NUCLEAR SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT

The Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, said that he was pleased that, at last, an Australia/United Kingdom Nuclear Safeguards Agreement could become a reality following the announcement of formal agreement by the European Commission.

Australia and the United Kingdom had attempted to meet earlier the objections of the European Commission concerning legal issues. These issues were not concerned with safeguards or safety measures. However, at no stage was Australia prepared to compromise on our own stringent safeguards requirements.

Mr. Fraser said that in his discussions with the British Prime Minister in Canberra last weekend, he had emphasised the importance of an Australia/United Kingdom agreement and was grateful that, as a result of these discussions, Mrs. Thatcher had personally intervened with the President of the European Commission, Mr. Jenkins.

The announcement of the Australia/United Kingdom Agreement, coming immediately after the signing of the Australia/United States Nuclear Safeguards Agreement in Canberra, is one of major significance, further demonstrating Australia's commitment to non-proliferation objectives and the avoidance of the misuse of nuclear materials.

Mr. Fraser said that in his statement to Parliament on 25 August 1977, he had emphasised that Australia had an international responsibility to provide energy to an energy deficient world. At a time of severe worldwide energy and fuel shortages, supply of Australian uranium under new contracts could take place when these safeguards agreements were in place.

Mr. Fraser said that it was now time for significant progress to be made in the negotiation of an Australia/Euratom Nuclear Safeguards Agreement and he looked forward to co-operation between the European Community and Australia in this regard.

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