



PRIME MINISTER

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PRESIDENT REAGAN'S INITIATIVE ON THE MIDDLE EAST

I welcome President Reagan's initiative in calling for a fresh start to the Middle East peace process, one addressing the root causes of the conflict between Israel and the Arab States. The personal commitment of the US President brings new hope that a comprehensive and lasting solution will be found to the Arab/Israeli conflict. I hope that all the parties directly involved in the conflict will support Mr Reagan in reaching the compromises necessary to bring peace.

The US initiative is based on the Camp David process and on Security Council Resolution 242, both of which Australia has supported from the outset. Like the United States, Australia remains totally committed to the security of Israel, but we believe that this security can best be achieved by Israel reaching agreement with its neighbours.

Like President Reagan, Australia believes that any lasting solution to the conflict must be a political solution, and must provide for the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

President Reagan's statement has shown that the United States Government is prepared to address the underlying causes of the conflict and to use its great influence in the search for a just and lasting settlement. He has firm Australian support to that end.