

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

P.M.: ... we have a difficulty that we haven't got the draft communique available yet. I think you understand we're going to send it on to you aren't we when it's available ... Well I think we should say quite honestly that before coming to Tuvalu there had been some question mark about how a forum meeting would go here because it was known that the facilities were rather limited but I must say that not only speaking for myself, but I would think for all participants, it has been an excellent decision to have the forum meeting here. It gives you a very insight to the nature of and the problems confronting the smaller island states in the Pacific. And they certainly cannot in any respect be faulted for the organisation, the enthusiasm and the hospitality which has been evident in the preparation and the conduct of this meeting. I certainly convey to the Prime Minister and the Government of Tuvalu our gratitude for the way in which the Forum has been conducted. If I could give a general overview of the meeting - it's really fallen I guess into two parts. On the first day we were concerned with two broad political issues if you like - the question of decolonisation and the developments in New Caledonia in that respect on the one hand and the question of a nuclear free zone concept on the other. I believe that the communique will reflect substantially useful discussions on both those areas. On the question of New Caledonia there was I think general agreement on these points. Firstly, of the integrity of the French Government in its desire to progress the negotiations towards independence. Associated with this, however, was the view that given the way in which tension is rising in New Caledonia acceptance of the desirability of trying to accelerate the referendum which is on current French planning set down for 1989. And while there was not agreement to the proposal that the question of New Caledonia should be reinscribed on the agenda of the Committee of 24 of the United Nations, nevertheless a number of Forum members will refer to this issue in their contributions in the debate in the General Assembly later on this year. We recognised also at a later stage in the Forum the reality that there is a very limited number of Kanaks in New Caledonia who have had the opportunity as a result of the neglect of previous French administrations to be trained professionally and technically. And the point was made at the latter stage of the Forum meeting that it would make a lot of sense for individual Forum members who had the capacity, such as Australia, to try and offer opportunities to these people to increase the number of professionally and technically trained people. So much for New Caledonia. On the question of the nuclear free zone ...

JOURNALIST: Could I just ask you whether Australia was happy about the resolution on New Caledonia?

P.M.: Yes. On the question of a nuclear free zone I think again it was a very useful discussion and a very large measure of agreement on the Australian proposals. And what we have done now and it's always useful at the end of a meeting to feel that

P.M. cont...: you just haven't talked about it and said well that's a good idea, we've gone more concretely now to establish a working party of officials to meet as frequently as possible to address themselves now to specific elements of the concept - legal questions, questions of the geographical limits of the zone. And with a view if possible, we don't know whether it can be done, to the presentation of a draft treaty to next year's Forum meeting. And that proposal has been processed now on the basis of accepting the Australian approach that there should be agreement by the Forum members of opposition to nuclear testing in the area, and an expression of commitment not to acquire, manufacture or store nuclear weapons, and an expression of opposition to dumping of nuclear waste products. And secondly, within that concept, the retention of the rights of sovereign states to make their own decision as to the visit of nuclear powered or nuclear armed ships. Now those were the two matters in the first broad area of discussion in the Forum as I pointed to you earlier. The second area has more to do with internal functional matters covering a range of issues of the work of the Secretariat of the Forum and its manifestation in trade, education and fishing areas for instance and finally there was a decision to convene the next meeting of the Forum which will be in Rarotonga in the Cook Islands on 4 - 6 August next year.

JOURNALIST: Do you believe that Mr Lange suffered yesterday by trying to take the Pacific states too quickly on the road to a nuclear free zone?

P.M.: I don't think it's a question of suffering. They had a view as to how to approach it. There came to be an acceptance that what's been done is the most sensible way of doing it and I don't believe that New Zealand is unhappy about that.

JOURNALIST: ... proposal mightn't be approved.

P.M.: No there had been some discussion at the officials level.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke at the risk of dragging you over ground you've already covered - the criticism over the nuclear free zone, claiming that its a paper tiger, even if it then came into force - how would you defend it to that criticism?

P.M.: It's manifestly an absurd criticism. I'm not quite sure why you want me to go through it again.

JOURNALIST: We haven't had it on television.

P.M.: I see. There are obviously in this world limits to what one nation or a group of nations at less than the superpower level are able to do in the field of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament questions. It would be quite futile to suggest that you have an unlimited capacity in this area. So what does make sense to do is to concentrate upon those things which are within your capacity. It is within the capacity of

P.M. cont...: the nations making up the Forum to make decisions as to what they will do in regard to the manufacture, use or storage of nuclear weapons. Now we have agreed that we are opposed individually and collectively to doing that - to manufacturing, using or storing nuclear weapons. And so the work that will be done on the preparation of the treaty concept will include that. Now I believe that it's useful that nations in this area of the world should tell the rest of the world that that's their position and that's what they are going to do. It is also useful that we should collectively as well as individually express our opposition to the testing of nuclear weapons in our region. I think the fact that we are moving to incorporate that within a nuclear free zone concept will be useful, not decisive but useful, in bringing some more pressure on France in that respect. Also by collectively within such a nuclear free zone concept that we should express our opposition to dumping of nuclear wastes in our region. That I believe will add to the possibility of ensuring that that is not done. Now these are the things that can be achieved by a nuclear free zone treaty. It would be an exercise in absurdity to suggest that you could do other things. For instance, that you could by having a nuclear free zone concept interfere with the freedom of transit on the high seas and so we don't pretend that that is involved. Equally it would be futile to suggest that having a treaty of this kind which can achieve those very specific objectives to which I have referred, that you should seek to impose upon individual states limitations upon their right to make judgements about their own security relationships and we don't seek to do that.

JOURNALIST: On the question of New Caledonia, after the Forum made clear its position on ... was there any indication given to the Forum that the Kanak Independence Front might accept the Forum position on this and might therefore not go outside the region.

P.M.: Well the Kanak Independence Front wasn't represented there.

JOURNALIST: I thought there might have been some indication passed on.

P.M.: No.

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