



16

PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

26 October 1986

I have sent the following message to His Holiness Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi tomorrow, 27 October.

I was glad to receive from the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio in Canberra, Archbishop Franco Brambilla, the text of the Appeal for Peace which you launched during your recent visit to France. I share with you the hopes and ideals which you express in the Appeal. Your efforts over many years to encourage a safer and more peaceful world have provided an important impetus and inspiration to governments and peoples throughout the world. Your recent Appeal for Peace reinforces those efforts and I wish you every success in the initiatives you announced.

The Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi on 27 October, to which you have invited leaders and representatives of every major religion, will be an important and timely symbol of reconciliation and common aspirations in a world so often divided. It reflects the fundamental importance which men and women of goodwill attach to the pursuit of a just and lasting peace in the world. I extend to you my support and best wishes for this important occasion.

I also wish to express my support for your call for a universal truce to coincide with the Day of Prayer. A halt to violence in all its forms, even for the brief period of one day, would be an important reaffirmation of the fact that there are better alternatives to the threats under which we live and far more productive uses for human and material resources. I hope that your call for an international truce gives momentum to substantial and permanent steps that will lead to the creation of a more stable and peaceful world.

There is no higher purpose for governments than the pursuit of peaceful relations between nations and the maintenance of international security at the lowest possible level of armaments. This objective is of fundamental importance because it reflects the genuine and legitimate concerns of ordinary people throughout the world that they be allowed to live in peace and security. The Australian Government is fully committed

to this objective. We are working actively to encourage substantial, balanced and verifiable reductions in the conventional and nuclear arsenals and to promote the peaceful resolution of differences between nations.

True peace, however, entails far more than the absence of war. It demands a more sincere and universal observance of the United Nations Charter. It requires greater international efforts to reduce the enormous disparities in living standards and opportunities between the peoples of different nations and within nations. It demands respect for basic human rights and the elimination of discrimination, particularly that based on racial or religious grounds. It calls for the commitment of all governments and peoples to resolve their differences and grievances through negotiation and compromise rather than by use or threat of force. The Australian Government is dedicated to the pursuit of these objectives and we will continue to promote them through all the avenues available to us.

The designation by the United Nations of 1986 as the International Year of Peace provides a focus of concern and action on all these requirements for a more peaceful world. The Australian Government has made a major effort to support the principles and objectives of the International Year of Peace.

Your recent Appeal for Peace is a most appropriate initiative in this International Year of Peace and I hope it gains the wide international support that it deserves.

The Government and people of Australia look forward to welcoming you when you visit us next month.