

PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT BANQUET GIVEN BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR ATTEF MOHAMMED NAGUIB SIDKY
PRIME MINISTER OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT, CAIRO
1 FEBRUARY 1987

MR PRIME MINISTER
MRS SIDKY
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

I HAVE GREATLY APPRECIATED, MR PRIME MINISTER, YOUR WARM WELCOME, YOUR GRACIOUS HOSPITALITY, AND IN PARTICULAR THE VERY BENEFICIAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WE HAVE ENJOYED TODAY.

ALTHOUGH THE LINKS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES GO BACK TO TWO WORLD WARS IN WHICH AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS CAME TO EGYPT, THERE HAS BEEN NO VISIT BY AN AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER TO YOUR COUNTRY IN MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS.

TO RECALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THAT LAST VISIT - RELATED AS IT WAS TO THE SUEZ CRISIS - IS TO APPRECIATE HOW PROFOUND HAVE BEEN THE CHANGES WE HAVE WITNESSED OVER THE THREE INTERVENING DECADES.

THE FAILURE OF THE SUEZ INTERVENTION WAS A VERY SIGNIFICANT EVENT IN THE ENDING OF COLONIALISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF NATIONALISM ON THIS CONTINENT.

AUSTRALIA HAS I THINK PROVEN ITS CREDENTIALS AS AN EFFECTIVE OPPONENT OF COLONIALISM, PARTICULARLY IN THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS. WHETHER IT BE IN OUR OWN REGION OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC, OR IN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT AGAINST APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA, WE HAVE MADE CLEAR OUR COMMITMENT TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND DEMOCRACY.

TODAY, EGYPT AND AUSTRALIA SHARE A MATURE, STABLE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP.

2.

FOR ITS PART, WHILE THE MIDDLE EAST REMAINS A FOCUS OF CONSIDERABLE TENSION, EGYPT HAS EMERGED AS ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL PARTIES WORKING FOR PEACE.

WITH THE ATTAINMENT OF THE CAMP DAVID ACCORDS IN 1978, EGYPT AND ISRAEL TOOK THE HISTORIC DECISION TO BRING TO AN END A LONG PERIOD OF CONFLICT. YOU DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE IS A NEGOTIABLE, PEACEFUL ROUTE TOWARDS THE SETTLEMENT OF WHAT ONCE SEEMED IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES.

I MUST IN PARTICULAR PAY TRIBUTE TO YOUR LATE PRESIDENT, ANWAR SADAT, FOR HIS FORESIGHT AND COURAGE IN ENTERING INTO THAT AGREEMENT.

PRESIDENT MUBARAK HAS CARRIED FORWARD THE WORK OF PEACE WITH GREAT DETERMINATION. ONLY LAST SEPTEMBER, FOR EXAMPLE, HE AND MR PERES DECLARED 1987 TO BE A YEAR OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE.

UNHAPPILY, OTHER VITAL ASPECTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE REMAIN UNRESOLVED. I HAVE TAKEN THE OPPORTUNITY OF THIS VISIT TO THE AREA TO INFORM MYSELF DIRECTLY OF THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE.

MY TALKS IN AMMAN ENABLED ME TO LEARN AT FIRST HAND THE SINCERE COMMITMENT OF KING HUSSEIN AND THE JORDANIAN GOVERNMENT FOR PEACE WITH ISRAEL.

IN ISRAEL, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY OF EXPOSURE TO A WIDE SPECTRUM OF OPINION WHICH INFORMS ISRAELI POLICY. THERE, TOO, I FOUND A SINCERE DESIRE FOR PEACE WITH ALL ISRAEL'S NEIGHBOURS.

3.

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT THERE WILL BE NO PEACEFUL, JUST AND LASTING SOLUTION TO THE DISPUTE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ITS ARAB NEIGHBOURS WHICH DOES NOT INCLUDE A GENERAL RECOGNITION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

WE REMAIN FUNDAMENTALLY COMMITTED TO THE SECURITY OF ISRAEL AND ITS RIGHT TO EXIST WITHIN SECURE AND RECOGNISED BOUNDARIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338.

WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT A RESOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION IS CENTRAL TO ANY MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT.

WHILE IN ISRAEL I HAD VALUABLE TALKS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF PALESTINIAN OPINION. THESE TALKS HAVE CONFIRMED THE VIEW CONSISTENTLY HELD BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT THAT THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE MUST HAVE THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION INCLUDING THE RIGHT, IF THEY SO CHOOSE, TO INDEPENDENCE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING THEIR OWN INDEPENDENT STATE. IN THE COURSE OF A NUMBER OF THE TALKS I HAVE HAD SINCE LEAVING CANBERRA, I HAVE ENCOUNTERED AN EMERGING AND IMPORTANT VIEW THAT A CONFEDERATION WITH JORDAN IS THE MOST LIKELY OUTCOME.

WE RECOGNISE THAT WHATEVER ARRANGEMENTS ARE FINALLY SETTLED WILL DEPEND ON DECISIONS INVOLVING THE PARTICIPATION AND AGREEMENT OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

NOW, MR PRIME MINISTER, IN EGYPT, A COUNTRY OF GREAT IMPORTANCE AND CONSTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND, I VALUE THE DISCUSSIONS WE HAVE HAD TODAY, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING THE VIEWS OF PRESIDENT MUBARAK ON THE SEARCH FOR PEACE.

I AM ALSO VERY INTERESTED TO HEAR EGYPTIAN VIEWS ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WIDER MIDDLE EAST REGION, INCLUDING THE TRAGIC WAR BETWEEN IRAN AND IRAQ AND YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPORTANT ISLAMIC SUMMIT IN KUWAIT.

AUSTRALIA DOES NOT SEEK TO EXAGGERATE ITS CAPACITY TO INFLUENCE EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. BUT THIS VISIT OF MINE UNDERLINES OUR RESPECT AND FRIENDSHIP FOR THE COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES OF THE REGION AND OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR DESIRE FOR AN END TO CONFLICT AND TENSION AND THEIR ASPIRATIONS FOR PROSPERITY.

THAT DESIRE AND THAT ASPIRATION ARE SURELY INTERCONNECTED. RESOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE AS A WHOLE, BUILDING ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CAMP DAVID, COULD CLEARLY HAVE AN ENORMOUSLY FAVOURABLE IMPACT ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND PROSPECTS FOR EGYPT AND THE REGION. IT COULD OPEN THE WAY FOR PRODUCTIVE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN COUNTRIES WHICH ARE TODAY DIVIDED FROM ONE ANOTHER.

MR PRIME MINISTER

AS WE BOTH KNOW THESE ARE NOT EASY ECONOMIC TIMES. THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY IS ENCOUNTERING SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS AND PRESSURES. THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLICIES TO OVERCOME THESE DIFFICULTIES AND TO FACILITATE SUSTAINED GROWTH HAS BEEN A MAJOR PREOCCUPATION OF MY GOVERNMENT.

ACCORDINGLY, I HAVE REAL SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING FOR THE MUCH GREATER CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUR GOVERNMENT IN ITS EFFORTS TO ENSURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE.

FOR EGYPT, AS FOR AUSTRALIA, THE SUCCESS OF DOMESTIC POLICIES OF ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT WILL BE CRUCIALLY DEPENDENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH WE OPERATE. AS I HAVE REPEATEDLY STRESSED, MOST RECENTLY IN OPENING THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM AT DAVOS ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT FAIRER AND MORE OPEN INTERNATIONAL TRADING ARRANGEMENTS BE SECURED.

IN THIS AREA THE MAJOR ECONOMIC POWERS HAVE SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, NOT ONLY TO REFRAIN FROM PROTECTIONISM IN THEIR INTERNATIONAL BEHAVIOUR BUT TO PRACTISE THEMSELVES WHAT THEY PREACH TO OTHERS IN MATTERS OF ECONOMIC DISCIPLINE AND ADJUSTMENT AND COOPERATION.

MR PRIME MINISTER

I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE COOPERATION BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES CAN CONTRIBUTE, ALBEIT IN A SMALL WAY, TO ASSISTING EGYPT'S ECONOMIC ENDEAVOURS.

SINCE OUR TWO COUNTRIES ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IN 1950, OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS HAVE GROWN IN RANGE AND COMPLEXITY.

FOR AUSTRALIA, EGYPT HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT TRADING PARTNER, ESPECIALLY FOR EXPORTS OF OUR WHEAT. AT THE SAME TIME WE FULLY RECOGNISE THAT EGYPT WISHES TO EXPORT MORE TO AUSTRALIA AND I ASSURE YOU THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO HELP YOU IN THAT EFFORT.

IN NEW AREAS OF CO-OPERATION, RANGING FROM SUPPLY OF STEAMING COAL, TO ARID FARMING TECHNIQUES, TO TOURISM, I BELIEVE THERE IS GOOD POTENTIAL FOR US TO WORK TO OUR MUTUAL BENEFIT.

I WOULD LIKE ALSO TO RECORD OUR SATISFACTION WITH THE CONSTRUCTIVE CONSULTATION THAT TAKES PLACE BILATERALLY AND IN MULTILATERAL FORUMS BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND EGYPT ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES.

A PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT EXAMPLE IS THE STRONG SUPPORT OUR TWO COUNTRIES HAVE GIVEN TO THE CAUSE OF NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION, TO THE NPT, AND TO THE SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS. EGYPT'S ROLE HERE HAS BEEN EXEMPLARY.

EGYPTIANS HAVE BECOME VALUED MEMBERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY. THEIR PRESENCE HAS INCREASED THE KNOWLEDGE OF AND INTEREST IN THE LAND OF THEIR BIRTH AND ENCOURAGED EFFORTS TO PROMOTE COMMERCIAL AND CULTURAL RELATIONS.

TAKING ALL THESE STRANDS TOGETHER THEN, MR PRIME MINISTER WHAT BECOMES CLEAR IS THAT WE HAVE A RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH SHARED INTERESTS, MUTUAL RESPECT AND FRIENDSHIP FOR ONE ANOTHER FAR OUTWEIGH THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE BETWEEN US. I HOPE, AND CONFIDENTLY EXPECT, THAT MY VISIT TO EGYPT WILL SERVE TO DEVELOP OUR TIES EVEN FURTHER.

MAY I NOW, MR PRIME MINISTER, PROPOSE A TOAST TO YOU, MRS SIDKI, TO THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT AND TO THE CONTINUING FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE PEOPLES OF AUSTRALIA AND EGYPT.
