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PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER
VISIT TO JORDAN, CYPRUS, ISRAEL, SWITZERLAND AND EGYPT
19 FEBRUARY 1987

Madam Speaker,

I wish to report to Parliament on the visit I undertook from 23 January to 3 February to Jordan, Cyprus, Israel, Switzerland and Egypt.

Before this visit, no Australian Prime Minister had visited the Middle East for three decades. Yet that region is not only one of major international importance, but also one of growing direct interest to Australia.

Australia's interest in the region stems in part from the pivotal importance of the Middle East in international affairs; in part from its massive oil reserves; in part because it straddles our principal communications, trade and travel routes. Further, the Middle East is a growth area for Australian trade, taking exports totalling \$1.8 billion in 1985-86 and providing imports worth \$1.2 billion. Our multicultural society includes several communities with strong links to the region. And, not least among these interests Madam Speaker, Australia has sincere concerns of principle in the region: we regard the conflict in Lebanon as a human tragedy; we support the principle of self-determination of the Palestinian people; and like successive Australian governments we see moral as well as political imperatives in our commitment to the security of Israel and its right to exist within secure and recognised boundaries.

Accordingly, the objectives of my visit to the Middle East were clear. The first objective was to demonstrate that despite our geographical distance from the region, Australia recognises the significance of the Middle East, both in international affairs and specifically in relation to Australia.

Secondly, I sought to acquire at the highest level an appreciation of the political problems and prospects of the region, projecting Australia not as a party principal to the resolution of the various issues, but as a responsible and concerned nation bringing to those issues a balanced and principled policy.

Third, I sought to cement friendly and constructive relations with the leadership and people of Israel and in the two key moderate Arab nations, Jordan and Egypt. This friendship had already been enhanced by visits to Australia by Middle Eastern leaders, most recently by President Chaim Herzog of Israel.

My fourth objective was to develop our good bilateral relationships with these countries to our mutual benefit and, in particular, to assist Australia's commercial interests.

In Cyprus, it was my intention to discuss with the Cypriot leadership the problems besetting that island and to underline Australia's hopes for settlement of those problems. The visit also symbolised the friendly relations existing between Australia and Cyprus, not least as a legacy of migration and settlement.

Finally in Switzerland, the objective of my visit was, at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, to highlight the precarious state of the international trading system, to argue the need for reform of agricultural trade and to promote Australia as a focus of increased foreign investment and as a trading partner.

I am pleased to state that all these objectives of my visit were fully met.

The Middle East

On its election to office, my Government undertook a review of policy towards the Arab-Israeli dispute and reaffirmed the basic principles which have guided Australian policy.

These principles are:

- . recognition of the urgent need to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Middle East dispute.
- . fundamental commitment to the security of Israel and its right to exist within secure and recognised boundaries.
- . recognition of the central importance of the Palestinian issue for any settlement.
- . acknowledgement of the rights of self-determination of the Palestinian people, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of their own independent state.

During my visit to the region, I presented this policy to all my interlocutors, as an integrated whole. It was accepted by them all as a credible, principled, balanced and legitimate position.

In my discussions in the Middle East - which were thorough, detailed and invariably most friendly - a fundamental theme that emerged was the desire for peace of the Governments of the three countries I visited. The sincerity of this desire was marked not just by a yearning for the absence of conflict but by a perception that real and lasting peace will permit economic development and yield improvements in the quality of the everyday life of the peoples of all nations there.

However, there are differences among the parties concerned on the ways of achieving such a peace. In particular, there are differences on the question of the suitability of an international conference as a means of resolving the differences among the parties.

Some parties want such a conference involving the five permanent members of the Security Council, the nations of the region, and the PLO. They do not envisage it imposing solutions on the parties concerned but rather providing a framework in which negotiations can take place between the parties principal. In this sense the gap between the concepts of an international conference and of direct negotiations may well not be as great as is frequently suggested.

Australia sees merit in such a proposal. Determining details, such as the precise methods of procedure in such a conference, remains a complex task, but this is not a reason for the key players withholding positive consideration of the concept.

I was impressed during my visit by the commitment of both Israel and Egypt to maintaining the peaceful relationship they established through the Camp David process. I commended both countries for the courage and creativity of Camp David which remains a landmark in efforts to achieve peace in this troubled region. Egypt and Israel are I believe prepared to build further on the spirit of Camp David. At their Alexandria summit last September, 1987 was designated by them as a Year for Negotiations and I believe everyone in this Parliament would wish that this hope be realised.

A central requirement in any resolution of Jordan's relations with Israel is to determine the future of the Palestinian people. In a number of the discussions I had in the Middle East, I encountered an emerging, important and strongly held view that the most likely and appropriate outcome for the Palestinian people is a confederation with the state of Jordan.

While I was in the Middle East I had discussions with Palestinians themselves about the problems they face on the West Bank and in Gaza, including restrictions on their political and economic freedoms.

I also heard from the Jordanian Government its plans for a program of humanitarian assistance to the West Bank. I was pleased to give this program the moral and political support of the Australian Government and I told the Jordanians that we would also, in our budget context, consider giving it material support.

A central obstacle to progress in resolving the Middle East dispute, I believe, is that factual realities are not fully reflected in formal positions.

It is clear that there is no organisation at this point which speaks for the Palestinians more than does the Palestine Liberation Organisation, not just in the West Bank and Gaza but more broadly in what can be thought of as the Palestinian Diaspora. The PLO may not have an exclusive representative status but it does have a representative status. This is not a value judgement about the PLO but simply a statement of fact. I believe this fact is understood in Israel.

It is equally clear that Israel's antagonists, including surely the PLO or at least the more sane elements of the organisation, now accept that Israel exists and will continue to exist as a independent and viable state in the Middle East. They know this is a fact.

But these realities are not yet explicitly recognised in the stated policies of those parties involved. Progress towards peace in the region could be made if both sides were to issue a simultaneous statement acknowledging each other's existence - if in effect each was explicitly to state what at present it tacitly believes.

What I believe is required is for the PLO for its part to issue a formal statement of position which would entail (i) acceptance of resolutions 242 and 338 as a basis for negotiation and thus (ii) recognition of Israel and (iii) renunciation of terror in favour of the process of negotiation.

For its part, Israel would be required, in the context of such a formal statement of position, to recognise the PLO as a party appropriately to be included in the negotiating processes.

In addition to this central Arab-Israeli dispute, my discussions in the Middle East also covered two other regional conflicts of very great concern to all the government leaders I met: the continuing tragedy of civil violence in Lebanon and the ceaseless and senseless slaughter and destruction in the war between Iraq and Iran.

On Lebanon, I put Australia's view that all foreign forces should be withdrawn except those which are in Lebanon at the request of the Lebanese government and whose presence is necessary to allow the development of conditions which can allow social, economic and political stability to be re-established within Lebanon and the authority of the Lebanese government to be asserted.

I made the point that the presence in Australia of a large and valuable Lebanese community, with close links to their country of origin, brought the tragic situation in Lebanon home to our national consciousness in a very graphic way.

On the Iran-Iraq war, Australia has maintained a position of strict neutrality. Neutrality is not, of course, disinterest. On the contrary we have tried wherever possible, notably at the United Nations, to contribute to a solution. We shall continue to do so.

Madam Speaker,

Australia has long proven its credentials as a country sincerely concerned for peace in the Middle East. To the extent possible we have been involved in measures to achieve it: we have for instance contributed personnel to peace keeping activities in the region and we have used multilateral forums and bilateral links to advance the cause of peace wherever possible. However, it would be idle to pretend that easy solutions exist in the region, or that Australia has any direct role in the peace process itself.

To sum up, my visit took place at a time when the path to resolving the Arab-Israeli dispute again seemed obstructed. There are no immediate prospects for a breakthrough. At the same time I was encouraged by the fact that the commitment to peace by the parties concerned has not died. Indeed, I detected a sense of realistic determination to continue, slowly but persistently, the search for progress. Moreover, as I have described, I believe there are ideas and concepts which, if pursued, would offer a way ahead.

I have said that Australia seeks no mediating or other role in the Middle East peace process. However, as I made clear during my visit, we are willing, if requested, to do all we can to help bring peace to this divided yet fundamentally interrelated region. No Australian Government can or should offer less.

Bilateral Relations with Jordan, Israel and Egypt

I said at the outset of this report, Madam Speaker, that Australia had several important interests in the Middle East. In Jordan, Israel and Egypt I was keen to advance the bilateral links Australia has with each of those nations.

Australian trade with Jordan is currently weighted heavily in our favour. In our talks in Amman, the Jordanians expressed their desire to increase exports of phosphate rock, potash and other fertilisers to Australia. They believe there may be scope for this as our current sources of supply diminish. I undertook to study a draft trade agreement prepared by Jordan.

Prospects exist for significant joint ventures, which will be further explored by both countries. These include the provision of fresh chilled sheep meat based on the importation of live sheep from Australia for fattening in Jordan, and Australian involvement in railway or road development and phosphate fertiliser industries. I also flagged Australia's interest in becoming a coal supplier to a new Jordanian power station.

Australian aid to Jordan consists principally of support for a Dryland Farming Project. Funding for this project is due to expire at the end of the year; however I told the Jordanians we would be prepared to consider a modest extension of this project.

Beyond these government to government links, Australia is well represented in Jordan through its archaeologists. I had the very great pleasure of inspecting the site of Pella, one of the most important archaeological sites in the Middle East, which is being revealed to the world through the capable involvement of an Australian team headed by Professor Basil Hennessy of the University of Sydney.

In Israel, I agreed with Prime Minister Shamir to establish a Working Party to examine the possibilities of further economic and trade co-operation between Israel and Australia.

The Working Party's tasks will include the investigation of Prime Minister Shamir's expression of interest in industrial and agricultural co-operation with Australia and my suggestion of further coal exports to Israel.

Australia and Israel also signed a Science and Technology Agreement during my visit. This is a result of the valuable contacts established by my colleague, the Minister for Science and Technology, Mr Jones, during his visit to Israel in 1985.

In a meeting with the mothers and relatives of refuseniks - Jews who have been denied ~~entry~~ exit visas by the Soviet Union - I agreed to raise at every appropriate opportunity the issue of the Soviet treatment of Jews. As I told Parliament earlier this week, I had taken steps to investigate the particularly pressing case of Sofia Landver, who told me in this meeting that she wanted to visit her terminally-ill mother in the Soviet Union. I had representations made about her case in Moscow and Canberra, and I took it up personally with the Soviet Ambassador in Australia. I am pleased to note that Mrs Landver has since been granted permission to enter the Soviet Union.

This is a significant human rights issue but, to revert for a moment to questions of the Middle East peace process, the issue also has a political significance. A major factor in Israel's willingness to accept an International Conference involving the Soviet Union will clearly be whether the Soviet Union is prepared to improve the position of Soviet Jewry. The Foreign Minister, Mr Hayden, and I will raise this and other matters with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr Shevardnadze, when he visits Canberra next month.

Madam Speaker, ties between this Parliament and the Israeli Knesset are very close. Your counterpart, Mr Shlomo Hillel, assured me a warm welcome awaits you when you visit in June. There was also widespread approbation in Israel of this Parliament's unanimous call last October for a rejection of the United Nations General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism.

It was apparent throughout my visit to Israel that one of the strongest links between our two countries is formed by Australia's large Jewish community. Its contribution to Australian society at all levels has been incalculable and invaluable, and its close contact with Israel has done more to promote understanding and goodwill between our countries than any policies, words or deeds by Governments could have achieved.

In Cairo, as in Amman, a principal area of concern was the strong trading imbalance. Egypt is one of Australia's principal markets for wheat. But Egypt exports little to us. I assured Egypt we will do all we can to expand Egypt's opportunities to export to Australia. A Joint Committee will be established between the two countries, not only to foster trade but to help develop the bilateral relationship generally. I also agreed with the concept of establishing a joint business council, but this is in the final analysis of course a matter for the business community itself. The idea is being investigated.

Closer agricultural co-operation is in prospect as a result of our talks, and I noted Australia's ability to supply technology and raw materials to projects such as the 2400 megawatt Zafarana coal fired power station.

Australia also indicated that efforts would be made to encourage increased Australian tourism to Egypt. Egypt's tourist attractions are of course well known already. But they will be even better known as a result of the very generous offer made by Prime Minister Sidky: that Egypt would be pleased to participate in our Bicentennial celebrations next year by providing a pharaonic exhibition. We are of course delighted at this offer and look forward with great anticipation to seeing the exhibition.

Cyprus

In my visit to Cyprus, I had detailed talks with President Kyprianou. We both noted the excellent relations that exist between Australia and Cyprus. Tens of thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots now live in Australia and continue to make valuable contributions to our multicultural society.

The substantive discussion with President Kyprianou focused almost exclusively on the tragic problems facing the divided island of Cyprus. Australia has been active in the search for a solution, both in the United Nations and through the Commonwealth.

We strongly support the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and non-aligned status of the Republic of Cyprus, as provided for in United Nations Security Council resolutions 541 and 550. I also expressed our support for the UN Secretary-General's efforts to find a solution, while noting that none of his proposals had so far proved acceptable to all parties. Australia believes all sides should co-operate with the Secretary-General and take no action which could jeopardise his efforts.

The President welcomed Australia's support for a solution and reiterated his Government's gratitude for Australia's role in providing personnel to the United Nations Force in Cyprus.

I took the opportunity to meet Australia's contingent of police and to express the Government's appreciation of the contribution they and their predecessors have made to the people of Cyprus, to the United Nations and to Australia's reputation as a co-operative and effective member of the international community.

Switzerland

In Davos, I attended and, at the invitation of the organisers, delivered the keynote address at the World Economic Forum symposium. I saw this annual conference as a valuable opportunity to highlight the achievements and potential of the Australian economy and to present before an exceptional audience of corporate and Government leaders our case against the spreading plague of protectionism in world markets.

My keynote address focused on the urgent need to free up world trade, particularly the trade in agricultural products. Agricultural protectionism, as practised by the United States, the European Community and Japan, is damaging not only efficient agricultural producers like Australia and third world economies which are heavily reliant on agricultural trade.—It is also damaging the protectionist nations themselves. Accordingly, I launched at the symposium a proposal to freeze the level of subsidies and to reduce the gap between world and domestic agricultural prices, so that market forces can again provide greater rationality to agricultural trade.

These proposals are now being followed up bilaterally with other Governments including through the efforts of the Primary Industry Minister, Mr Kerin and the Trade Minister, Mr Dawkins.

Also at the symposium, the Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce, Senator Button and I made a special presentation describing the significant investment and trade opportunities that exist in Australia as a result of my Government's economic policies. I outlined the strengths of the Australian economy and the principal elements of the Government's economic strategy, while Senator Button detailed the specifics of our industrial and investment policies.

In Geneva, I took the opportunity to discuss with the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr Miljan Komatina, in particular, our hopes for progress on a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a Chemical Weapons convention and a halt to the escalating arms race in outer space. Australia has been active in pursuing each of these issues, including in the Conference on Disarmament. Mr Komatina praised the constructive role Australia has played,

stressing the high-level political commitment we have demonstrated, the practical and effective attention we have devoted to important issues such as verification, and the dedication and professionalism of our Ambassador for Disarmament and other Australian representatives.

Madam Speaker,

I believe that as a result of my visit our relations with the key Middle Eastern states of Israel, Jordan and Egypt have been strengthened. I am pleased to inform the House that, on behalf of the Government, I invited King Hussein and President Mubarak to visit Australia. These invitations were accepted. Our commercial and other links with each of the three countries seem set to multiply and diversify. Our understanding of the Middle East in general has been deepened and our commitment to fair and principled policies in support of peace affirmed. Our friendly relationship with Cyprus has been fortified. Our arguments against protectionism have been advanced and our attractiveness for foreign investment and a partner for trade has been highlighted.



PRIME MINISTER

PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES, 19 FEBRUARY 1987

VISIT TO JORDON, CYPRUS, ISRAEL, SWITZERLAND AND EGYPT

Ministerial Statement

Mr HAWKE (Wills—Prime Minister)—by leave—I wish to report to Parliament on the visit I undertook from 23 January to 3 February to Jordan, Cyprus, Israel, Switzerland and Egypt. Before this visit, no Australian Prime Minister had visited the Middle East for three decades. Yet that region is not only one of major international importance, but also one of growing direct interest to Australia.

Australia's interest in the region stems in part from the pivotal importance of the Middle East in international affairs; in part from its massive reserves; in part because it straddles our principal communications, trade and travel routes. Further, the Middle East is a growth area for Australian trade, taking exports totalling \$1.8 billion in 1985-86 and providing imports worth \$1.2 billion. Our multicultural society includes several communities with strong links to the region. And, not least among these interests, Madam Speaker, Australia has sincere concerns of principle in the region: We regard the conflict in the Lebanon as a human tragedy; we support the principle of self-determination of the Pales-

tinian people; and, like successive Australian governments, we see moral as well as political imperatives in our commitment to the security of Israel and its right to exist within secure and recognised boundaries.

Accordingly, the objectives of my visit to the Middle East were clear. The first objective was to demonstrate that, despite our geographical distance from the region, Australia recognises the significance of the Middle East, both in International affairs and specifically in relation to Australia.

Secondly, I sought to acquire at the highest level an appreciation of the political problems and prospects of the region, projecting Australia not as a party principal to the resolution of the various issues, but as a responsible and concerned nation bring to those issues a balanced and principled policy.

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It is equally clear that Israel's antagonists, including surely the PLO or at least the more sane elements of the organisation, now accept that Israel exists and will continue to exist as an independent and viable state in the Middle East. They know this as a fact. But these realities are not yet explicitly recognised in the stated policies of those parties involved. Progress towards peace in the region could be made if both sides were to issue a simultaneous statement acknowledging each other's existence—if in effect each was explicitly to state what at present it tacitly believes.

What I believe is required is for the PLO, for its part, to issue a formal statement of position which would entail (i) acceptance of resolutions 242 and 338 as a basis for negotiations and thus (ii) recognition of Israel and (iii) renunciation of terror in favour of the process of negotiation. For its part, Israel would be required, in the context of such a formal statement of position, to recognise the PLO as a party appropriately to be included in the negotiating process.

In addition to this central Arab-Israeli dispute, my discussions in the Middle East also covered two other regional conflicts of very great concern to all the government leaders I met: The continuing tragedy of civil violence in Lebanon and the ceaseless and senseless slaughter and destruction in the war between Iraq and Iran.

On Lebanon, I put Australia's view that all foreign forces should be withdrawn except those which are in Lebanon at the request of the Lebanese Government and whose presence is necessary to allow the development of conditions which can allow social, economic and political stability to be re-established within Lebanon and the authority of the Lebanese Government to be asserted. I made the point that the presence in Australia of a large and valuable Lebanese community, with close links to their country of origin, brought the tragic situation in Lebanon home to our national consciousness in a very graphic way.

On the Iran-Iraq war, Australia has maintained a position of strict neutrality. Neutrality is not, of course, disinterest. On the contrary, we have tried wherever possible, notably at the United Nations, to contribute to a solution. We shall continue to do so.

Australia has long proven its credentials as a country sincerely concerned for peace in the Middle East. To the extent possible we have been involved in measures to achieve it. We have for instance contributed personnel to peace keeping activities in the region and we have used multilateral forums and bilateral links to advance the cause of peace wherever possible. However, it would be idle to pretend that easy solutions exist in the region, or that Australia has any direct role in the peace process itself.

To sum up, my visit took place at a time when the path to resolving the Arab-Israeli dispute again seemed obstructed. There are no immediate prospects for a breakthrough. At the same time I was encouraged by the fact that the commitment to peace by the parties concerned has not died. Indeed, I detected a sense of realistic determination to continue, slowly but persistently, the search for progress. Moreover, as I have described, I believe there are ideas and concepts which, if pursued, would offer a way ahead. I have said that Australia seeks no mediating or other role in the Middle East peace process. However, as I made clear during my visit, we are willing, if requested, to do all we can to help bring peace to this divided yet fundamentally interrelated region. No Australian government can or should offer less.

Bilateral Relations with Jordan, Israel and Egypt

I said at the outset of this report that Australia had several important interests in the Middle East. In Jordan, Israel and Egypt I was keen to advance the bilateral links Australia has with each of those nations. Australian trade with Jordan is currently weighted heavily in our favour. In our talks in Amman, the Jordanians expressed their desire to increase exports of phosphate rock, potash and other fertilisers to Australia. They believe there may be scope for this as our current sources of supply diminish. I undertook to study a draft trade agreement prepared by Jordan.

Prospects exist for significant joint ventures, which will be further explored by both countries. These include the provision of fresh chilled sheep meat based on the importation of live sheep from Australia for fattening in Jordan, and Aus-

ustralian involvement in railway or road development and phosphate fertiliser industries. I also flagged Australia's interest in becoming a coal supplier to a new Jordanian power station. Australian aid to Jordan consists principally of support for a dryland farming project. Funding for this project is due to expire at the end of the year; however, I told the Jordanians we would be prepared to consider a modest extension of this project.

Beyond these government to government links, Australia is well presented in Jordan through its archaeologists. I had the very great pleasure of inspecting the site of Pella, one of the most important archaeological sites in the Middle East, which is being revealed to the world through the capable involvement of an Australian team headed by Professor Basil Hennessy of the University of Sydney.

In Israel, I agreed with Prime Minister Shamir to establish a working party to examine the possibilities of further economic and trade co-operation between Israel and Australia. The working party's tasks will include the investigation of Prime Minister Shamir's expression of interest in industrial and agricultural co-operation with Australia and my suggestion of further coal exports to Israel. Australia and Israel also signed a science and technology agreement during my visit. This, I am pleased to say is a result of the valuable contacts established by my colleague the Minister for Science (Mr Jones) during his visit to Israel in 1985.

In a meeting with the mothers and relatives of refuseniks—Jews who have been denied entry or exit visas by the Soviet Union—I agreed to raise at every appropriate opportunity the issue of the Soviet treatment of Jews. As I told Parliament earlier this week, I had steps taken to investigate the particularly pressing case of Sophia Landver, who told me in this meeting that she wanted to visit her terminally ill mother in the Soviet Union. She was subsequently granted permission to enter the Soviet Union, but I have learned only this morning that tragically her mother died before she was able to travel to see her. One consequence of the efforts made on her behalf, however, is that two other relatives of Mrs Landver have apparently been given exit visas by the Soviet authorities.

This is a significant human rights issue but, to revert for a moment to questions of the Middle East peace process, the issue also has a political significance. A major factor in Israel's willingness to accept an international conference involving the Soviet Union will clearly be whether

the Soviet Union is prepared to improve the position of Soviet Jewry. The Foreign Minister (Mr Hayden) and I will raise this and other matters with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr Shevardnadze, when he visits Canberra next month.

Ties between this Parliament and the Israeli Knesset are very close. The Speaker's counterpart, Mr Shlomo Hillel, assured me that a warm welcome awaits her when she visits in June. There was also widespread approbation in Israel of this Parliament's unanimous call last October for a rejection of the United Nations General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism.

It was apparent throughout my visit to Israel that one of the strongest links between our two countries is formed by Australia's large Jewish community. Its contribution to Australian society at all levels has been incalculable and invaluable, and its close contact with Israel has done more to promote understanding and good will between our countries than any policies, words or deeds by governments could have achieved.

In Cairo, as in Amman, a principal area of concern was the strong trading imbalance. Egypt is one of Australia's principal markets for wheat. But Egypt exports little to us. I assured Egypt that we will do all we can to expand Egypt's opportunities to export to Australia. A joint committee will be established between the two countries, not only to foster trade but to help develop the bilateral relationship generally. I also agreed with the concept of establishing a joint business council, but this is in the final analysis, of course, a matter for the business community itself. The idea is being investigated. Closer agricultural co-operation is in prospect as a result of our talks, and I noted Australia's ability to supply technology and raw materials to projects such as the 2,400-megawatt Zafarana coal fired power station.

Australia also indicated that efforts would be made to encourage increased Australian tourism to Egypt. Egypt's tourist attractions are, of course, well known already. But they will be even better known as a result of the very generous offer made by Prime Minister Sidky that Egypt would be pleased to participate in our bicentennial celebrations next year by providing a pharaonic exhibition. We are, of course, delighted at this offer and look forward with great anticipation to seeing the exhibition.

Cyprus

In my visit to Cyprus, I had detailed talks with President Kyprianou. We both noted the excellent relations that exist between Australia and Cyprus. Tens of thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots now live in Australia and continue to make extremely valuable contributions to our multicultural society. The substantive discussion with President Kyprianou focused almost exclusively on the tragic problems facing the divided island of Cyprus. Australia has been active in the search for a solution, both in the United Nations and through the Commonwealth.

We strongly support the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and non-aligned status of the Republic of Cyprus, as provided for in United Nations Security Council resolutions 541 and 550. I also expressed our support for the UN Secretary-General's efforts to find a solution, while noting that none of his proposals had so far proved acceptable to all parties. Australia believes all sides should co-operate with the Secretary-General and take no action which could jeopardise his efforts. The President welcomed Australia's support for a solution and reiterated his Government's gratitude for Australia's role in providing personnel to the United Nations force in Cyprus. I took the opportunity to meet Australia's contingent of police and to express the Government's appreciation of the contribution they and their predecessors have made to the people of Cyprus, to the United Nations and to Australia's reputation as a co-operative and effective member of the international community.

Switzerland

In Davos, I attended and, at the invitation of the organisers, delivered the keynote address at the World Economic Forum symposium. I saw this annual conference as a valuable opportunity to highlight the achievements and potential of the Australian economy and to present before an exceptional audience of corporate and government leaders our case against the spreading plague of protectionism in world markets.

My keynote address focused on the urgent need to free up world trade, particularly the trade in agricultural products. Agricultural protectionism, as practised by the United States, the European Community and Japan is not only damaging efficient agricultural producers like Australia and Third World economies which are heavily reliant on agricultural trade. It is also damaging the protectionist nations themselves. Accordingly, I launched at the symposium a

proposal to freeze the level of subsidies and to reduce the gap between world and domestic agricultural prices so that market forces can again provide greater rationality to agricultural trade. These proposals are now being followed up bilaterally with other governments, including through the efforts of the Minister for Primary Industry (Mr Kerin) and the Minister for Trade (Mr Dawkins).

Also at the symposium, the Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce (Senator Button) and I made a special presentation describing the significant investment and trade opportunities that exist in Australia as a result of my Government's economic policies. I outlined the strengths of the Australian economy and the principal elements of the Government's economic strategy, while Senator Button detailed the specifics of our industrial and investment policies.

In Geneva, I took the opportunity to discuss with the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr Miljan Komatina, in particular, our hopes for progress on a comprehensive test ban treaty, a chemical weapons convention and a halt to the escalating arms race in outer space. Australia has been active in pursuing each of these issues, including in the Conference on Disarmament. Mr Komatina praised the constructive role Australia has played, stressing the high level political commitment we have demonstrated, the practical and effective attention we have devoted to important issues such as verification, and the dedication and professionalism of our Ambassador for Disarmament and other Australian representatives.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that as a result of my visit our relations with the key Middle Eastern states of Israel, Jordan and Egypt have been strengthened. I am pleased to inform the House that, on behalf of the Government, I invited King Hussein and President Mubarak to visit Australia. These invitations were accepted. Our commercial and other links with each of the three countries seem set to multiply and diversify. Our understanding of the Middle East in general has been deepened and our commitment to fair and principled policies in support of peace affirmed. Our friendly relationship with Cyprus has been fortified. Our arguments against protectionism have been advanced and our attractiveness for foreign investment and as a partner for trade has been highlighted.