



# PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
OPENING OF PEACE AND DISARMAMENT BUREAU  
SYDNEY - 11 DECEMBER 1987**

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We could hardly be meeting at a more appropriate or auspicious time.

While we in Sydney are opening a Bureau to advance the work of the Australian Labor Party in the vital field of Peace and Disarmament, the leaders of the two superpowers are just now finishing their meeting in Washington which has promoted that cause at the highest level.

The point I want to make today is that these two events, while taking place on very different levels, are nevertheless related in a direct way.

The agreement which President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev have already signed is an agreement of lasting international significance.

It is an agreement which eliminates an entire class of nuclear weapons from Europe and Asia.

It will result in the removal of more than 2000 intermediate range and shorter range nuclear warheads.

It is in fact the first time that the word "elimination" has appeared in the title of a nuclear arms-control treaty.

Previous treaties, as you know, have only reduced the rate of growth of the nuclear arsenals.

Now the leaders are talking about further progress in the arms control field.

They have characterised the INF Treaty as a first step.

They have talked seriously about the possibility of fifty per cent cuts in strategic nuclear forces.

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Of course no one would believe the nuclear genie can be somehow put back in the bottle from which it was released with the first nuclear explosion in the desert of New Mexico in July 1945.

But we are remain confident - indeed, we must remain confident - that we can contain that genie and prevent it from being used to obliterate mankind.

That is what links events at the Summit in Washington and the opening of this Bureau in Sydney.

Because I believe the leaders of the superpowers made their historic decision to seek nuclear weapons cuts in part because of their awareness of the great weight of public concern throughout the world on this grave issue.

They know that nuclear war could never be won and must never be fought.

And that realisation has come about because of the diligent, painstaking work by thousands of people around the world committed to nuclear arms control.

When we came to office in 1983, we moved quickly to appoint Australia's first Ambassador for Disarmament.

We have followed that up by using all the available world forums to argue for a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests, the elimination of chemical weapons and a reduction in strategic nuclear forces.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations Committee on Disarmament, Mr Komatina, told me earlier this year that Australia now played a leading role for the cause of peace and disarmament. It was his view that those causes would be better served if other countries followed Australia's example of strong political commitment and technical expertise.

We took a leading role in creating, with our friends in the South Pacific Forum, the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

And as I told the Parliament only this week, we will have a major role to play in the verification of the INF Treaty through the monitoring role of the joint facilities on Australian soil.

Australia has been in the fortunate position of being able to speak frankly to both superpowers.

We are firmly and fully allied to the United States and have used that close friendship to support our American friends on the many cases where we agree with them and, on the rarer occasions where we disagree, such as their proposed Strategic Defence Initiative, we have put our opposition frankly.

As for the Soviet Union, it was very clear from my own discussions last week with Mr Gorbachev that the Soviet leadership is committed to the process of perestroika and that this process of restructuring includes new thinking in foreign policy.

We welcome the Soviets' involvement in the INF Treaty and we made it clear we would welcome a constructive role for them in our own region. But I cautioned them that we would judge them not by their words but by their actions in for example Kampuchea and Afghanistan.

So Australia has cause to take some pride in the role it has played in creating a favorable environment for the current progress we have seen.

And of course the fact that there is the hope for greater progress makes it all the more important that we keep up this work.

The Peace and Disarmament Bureau will have an important role to play in our Party's work in this field.

It is a pleasure to open it today and I do so while making one plea, which I recognise may be preaching to the converted.

In this time of great hope for further progress in arms control, let us not underestimate the difficulty of the task ahead.

Progress in achieving further cuts in the nuclear arsenals will be slow and incremental and will take place only by patiently negotiated steps.

It will demand hard work and close attention to detail.

But its sometimes glacial speed must not be allowed to overwhelm us with the paralysis of despair.

If the Bureau is able to harness people in the real work of arms control - not raising expectations, and not breeding cynicism - then it will be doing its job well.

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