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## PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA  
HON RJL HAWKE, AC MP  
OPENING CEREMONY  
SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL MEETING  
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Mr President, Mr Secretary General, delegates, colleagues, friends, welcome.

This Party Leaders Meeting of the Socialist International opens today against the background of a world witnessing the most dramatic change in a generation and more. It is the background of the immensely important developments all over Europe and in the Soviet Union, the dynamic transformation in the Asia-Pacific region, and the aftermath of the Gulf war, with all its dangers and opportunities, not only for the Middle East, but for the whole world community.

This Conference also comes at a special time for the Australian labour movement. We celebrate this year the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Australian Labor Party. And, as a party, we celebrate this anniversary entering our ninth consecutive year in government.

We in the ALP are proud of our achievements over the past eight years; we are proud that through those achievements we have met the century-old aspirations of our Party and of the movement to which we all belong.

At every step we have sought to foster a sense of community interests with which all Australians can identify.

Such an approach came as a vital change after years in which our national affairs were seen as an inevitable and unresolvable struggle between interests which were by their inherent nature fundamentally opposed; and in which every issue had its winner and its loser.

This search for a national community of interest has been the constant theme of my career; it is basic to the concept and the workings of Parliamentary democracy; and it has been fundamental to the highest ideals of democratic socialism.

What makes the present state of world affairs so remarkable, so exciting and so challenging is the way in which we have seen, over the past few years, the emergence in the international community of a similar sense of community of interest. For the first time in fifty years, the people of the world are more conscious of the interests they share than of the issues that divide them.

The genesis of this great change has been the end of the Cold War - the abatement of fifty years of relentless strategic competition between the superpowers. But by definition the end of the previous era cannot determine the shape of the new.

The shape of the post-Cold War era depends on whether the confrontation of the past fifty years is to be replaced by a positive spirit of cooperation between nations - a true reflection of the community of interests between nations - or whether it will instead be replaced by a negative spirit of isolationism and self-centredness.

On 2 August 1990, Saddam Hussein challenged the world to decide which it will be. His invasion of Kuwait has forced the world to determine the nature of the world community and the way in which it will cooperate in the years ahead.

In that process we have found ourselves casting back to the tantalising years of optimism following the Second World War. At that time the founders of the United Nations, learning from their vivid and bitter experience of a world sliding into chaos, drew up principles of international behaviour which would prevent it all happening again, and established machinery which would make those principles work in practice to keep the peace.

The essence of the principles they established can be very easily stated: national borders must be respected, and those who violate borders by force must be resisted.

The machinery they established was more complex; but it too relied in the ultimate on a simple proposition. It was clearly expressed by one of the key architects of the United Nations, Australia's Labor Foreign Minister of the day, Dr H.V. Evatt. He said that in confronting aggression, if economic or diplomatic sanctions "are deemed inappropriate or prove ineffective, the Security Council may take any military action necessary to suppress the aggressor".

We in Australia believed from the very outset of the Gulf crisis that Saddam Hussein's aggression must be resisted, and that the United Nations offered the only effective way to achieve that. We also believed that the Gulf crisis constituted a vital test of the ability of the world community to work through the United Nations to preserve peace in the post-Cold War era.

So from the outset, Australia supported the United Nations as strongly as we could, first in its efforts to solve the crisis peacefully through diplomatic efforts and sanctions; and when that proved ineffective, by providing forces as requested by the Security Council in Resolution 678 for operations to expel Iraq from Kuwait.

We are relieved that those military operations were so swiftly and successfully concluded. But most of all, we are pleased that the international community, acting through the United Nations, has succeeded in acting together to meet and defeat an aggressor who had not just crushed and swallowed a weaker neighbour, but had also challenged the basic principles of international order.

This has been a victory for people everywhere who would live in peace. And it offers the strongest reassurance that the end of the Cold War will truly mark the start of a new era of international cooperation - based on a community of interest. Because the most striking feature about the international response to the Gulf crisis was the way in which nations from every continent of the world, with every shade of opinion, recognised the interests they shared with each other in opposing and reversing Saddam Hussein's aggression.

The common response of all members of the United Nations; of the members of the Security Council, and of the two superpowers, reflected their shared interests in a peaceful world order. But those shared interests reflected, in turn, certain shared values: national self-determination, national sovereignty and the rule of law over the rule of force.

These are the values which the parties represented here at the Socialist International have long stood for and articulated.

They are our values.

My friends,

I made it clear throughout the Gulf crisis that it was Saddam Hussein's violation of those values that was his most repugnant act - his greatest crime.

I did not say this in any pie-in-the-sky rhetorical sense, or with any desire to cloak the harsh reality of military conflict in a mantle of confected principle.

I said it because I meant it in a literal way - in a way that has direct and vital significance to the way that we conduct ourselves as an international community in the coming decade.

The point is that those values and the overwhelming desire for freedom which lies within us all, are, increasingly, tangible realities for millions of people around the world.

The reforms initiated by President Gorbachev inside the Soviet Union unleashed powerful forces across Eastern Europe, toppling unrepresentative regimes through the sheer and irresistible pressure of popular demand.

In eastern Germany, in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, in Poland, in Romania and in Bulgaria the human spirit has triumphed.

The human voice is being heard once more, where before was only the monolithic silence of oppression.

Australians, so distant from the events, nevertheless shared the sense of euphoria as the Berlin Wall was brought down.

And all this emerged within the context of a more constructive superpower relationship, in which the spectre of nuclear holocaust was replaced by the prospect of a more peaceful world.

It was this dramatic and uplifting prospect that Saddam Hussein threatened to rip away from us.

It was ultimately to regain that hope and to reaffirm our values that we had to fight in the Gulf.

But, my friends, the members of the Socialist International are entitled to derive particular satisfaction from this victory - the victory of the people over their tyrants; of expression over oppression; of sanity over irrationality.

For these victories are in a profound sense our victories.

One hundred years ago the founders of the Australian Labor Party made a critical, a fundamental decision.

Throughout the then Australian colonies, representatives of the industrial movement recognised that their goals would be best advanced, and their members best served, through participation in the parliamentary system.

Rational persuasion and legislative reform were perceived as the best means towards improved standards of living!

Whatever tensions there may have been within the Australian labour movement since then - and there has been, perhaps regrettably, no significant lack of them - there has never been effective questioning of the merits of that watershed decision, one hundred years ago.

So when we see other nations, such as the nations of Eastern Europe, gain or regain their democratic voice - when we see the collapse of so-called socialist parties and regimes that had suppressed or made a mockery of popular democracy - when we hear once more the clamour of political parties engaged in democratic contest - then we have every right to rejoice and every right to feel vindicated.

Their victory is indeed our victory.

There is a further lesson.

When the East Europeans overthrew their political masters they also overthrew the corrupted inefficiencies and injustices of their command economies.

These economies had for decades denied their subjects adequate access to basic goods and services - they had denied their industries - except their armaments industries - access to technological innovation - they had denied their workers the best opportunities for growth - they had shut the door on investment.

And they did so while committing, in many cases, outrageous assaults on their natural environment.

In short, they delivered low standards of living, and denied the basic aspirations of working people to economic security for themselves and their families..

In the words of President Havel, who appealed to those of his fellow Czechoslovakians creating things of value for society - "Once again you will be creating these things for yourselves and those close to you, not for those who rule over you or for the abstract future of a utopian ideology. ...I ask them not to forget that the profit they create is not an end in itself, but a means to enhance the common wealth of society, and to create conditions for a generally dignified and full human life"

These sentiments point to the great contrast in the countries and the economies in which social democracy has played a dominant role, whether as the party of Government, or as the principal Opposition.

The contrast between the two Germanies says it all.

In hailing the failure of the central command systems, we do not, of course, by any means concede the case for untrammelled, unreformed unreconstructed capitalism.

The leading Australian Labor historian, Professor Bede Nairn, has written a seminal history of the Australian Labor Party, which he entitled 'Civilising Capitalism'.

Parties like the Australian Labor Party have reformed the system to provide social justice, to enhance personal freedoms, to safeguard the environment, to protect the world's resources - and at the same time, make the economic system better and fairer.

That is the historic achievement of the parties of social democracy.

And that is the precise reason why, in the arrogance of their years of power, the advocates of the command system reserved their strongest anathemas for the parties of social democracy.

My friends,

Let there be no doubt. There is a long distance to travel before we can declare our task complete.

But in the challenges and opportunities of this new international order, we can certainly see that our aspirations have come closer to fulfilment.

Because

- if indeed we live in a world where collective security and the rule of law are more secure values - and I believe we do;
- if indeed we live in a world where the forces devoted to the repression of the human spirit have been set back on their heels - and I believe they have;
- if indeed we live in a world where the awesome build-up of weapons of mass nuclear destruction is less necessary - and I believe it is;

then we have indeed moved closer to our goals.

In such a world, we may legitimately entertain the hope that the resources formerly devoted to the suppression of the human spirit may now be invested

- in the liberation and the enlargement of the human spirit;
- in feeding and sheltering and comforting those who need help;
- in securing firm foundations for sustainable economic development; and
- in building security and prosperity for our children.

My friends

The values we share are also increasingly taking hold outside Europe. We have been heartened to see at last clear evidence of change in South Africa. Apartheid is not yet dead, but its end is near.

The changes taking place in South Africa could not have been achieved without the comprehensive involvement of the international community. Australia, with its partners in the Commonwealth, led in the process of imposing practical measures to bring South Africa to its senses. The efforts my Government made have been matched by the commitment and strength of the Australian labour movement's opposition to apartheid. I pay tribute to the role of the international labour movement in its struggle against oppression in southern Africa.

It is Australia's view that the point is being reached where President de Klerk's efforts deserve encouragement, as his predecessors' intransigence warranted condemnation. Together with the Commonwealth, we have agreed that pressure on South Africa should be eased as promised reforms are implemented. We urge the South African Government to maintain the momentum of reform and to speed the process of reconciliation and dialogue with black leaders.

Friends,

The revolutionary transformations taking place in global economic life are nowhere more visible than here on the Pacific Rim. This region generates one-third of the world's trade and more than half its economic output. It contains the world's fastest growing economies.

Our region also contains - and we cannot ignore them - points of tension between ethnically and culturally diverse peoples and nations; glaring disparities between wealth and poverty; and some of the world's most fragile and endangered ecologies. Many of these problems are being addressed.

I am proud of Australia's efforts to promote a lasting and peaceful solution to the problems in Cambodia. Not only have many years of tragedy been visited on the Cambodian people, but the continuation of this crisis has threatened the security and harmony of our region. Australia has taken the lead in promoting an international solution based on a direct United Nations role in Cambodia. We are committed to the long-term integration of Indo-China into the region - for too long has it been an island of stagnation in a sea of dynamic growth.

The logic of geography and economics directs Australia towards the dynamism and vitality of the Asian economies. As a Government, we have taken up the challenge of these tremendous opportunities and responsibilities: the opportunity to act, individually and collectively, to build a safe and prosperous future for our region; and the responsibility to play our role in the development of a safer and fairer global environment.

The process of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation - a process which I initiated in Seoul in 1989 - seeks to advance the common interests of regional countries, consistent with a fundamental commitment to fair and open trade.

Our region can, through its own internal behaviour, help set an example in the world. If Germany and Japan were the economic miracles of the 1950s and 1960s, countries elsewhere in Asia were the economic miracles of the 1970s and 1980s. And, from the outset, one of the objectives of APEC has been the encouragement by the region of fair and open international trade as a key to global prosperity.

But beyond that, our region is capable of demonstrating the capacity of countries not so long ago torn by conflict, countries with traditional rivalries, countries at different stages of development, and countries of great cultural diversity to cooperate together.

We hope, through institutions like APEC, to develop in the Asia-Pacific region the sense of a community of interests, and the awareness of shared goals, which the United Nations sets out to foster at the global level.

We believe that the end of the Cold War offers to our region, as it does to other parts of the world, the opportunity to build a more just and more secure international order.

To play a constructive role in that great process is the dedicated commitment of the Labor Party and government I have the honor to lead, and on whose behalf I again bid you most welcome to our country.

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