



PRIME MINISTER

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP

AUSTRALIA RECOGNISES GEORGIA

Australia has decided to recognise Georgia as an independent state.

Australia recognised the eleven co-founders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on 26 December 1991. At that time, the Government decided not to recognise Georgia because there was not a government exercising effective control. Moreover, unlike the co-founders of the CIS, Georgia had not given the undertakings on observance of democracy and human rights that had been sought by the international community.

Georgian authorities have now indicated their acceptance of internationally accepted democratic and human rights standards. This has been accompanied by a welcome stabilisation of the situation within Georgia.

Australia is delighted to welcome Georgia into the international community. In particular, I am very pleased that such an able and respected statesman as Eduard Shevardnadze has decided to return to his native Georgia to head the interim state council. I am confident that Mr Shevardnadze will make a significant contribution to solving the formidable challenges faced by his country.

I warmly welcome the commitments made by the Georgian authorities to respect internationally accepted democratic and human rights standards. I also welcome the announcement that new and democratic elections will be held in the near future. It is Australia's hope that these elections will go a long way to resolving the tensions created by the recent conflict in Georgia.

Australia has also decided to establish diplomatic relations with Georgia. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Evans, has instructed the Australian Ambassador in Moscow, Mr Cavan Hogue, to make the necessary practical arrangements.

CANBERRA
29 March 1992