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PRIME MINISTER

101/93

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP**VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES**

I received this morning a personal message from President Clinton asking my agreement to delay by 24 hours our meeting in Washington next Monday. He explained this had become necessary because of his desire to hold a large-scale ceremony at the White House that day to mark the formal conclusion of the agreement on Palestinian self-rule between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Other circumstances mean the President has no choice with the timing of the Middle East ceremony.

The President reassured me of the importance he attaches to our meeting and the relationship with Australia, and offered to help rearrange other events in my Washington program.

In response, I have told the President that Australia warmly welcomes the exciting and historic breakthrough which has been achieved in the Middle East process. The agreement on mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation will end 30 years of unbroken hostility. Australia congratulates the parties to the agreement and commends the consistent support the United States has given to the peace process.

I have assured the President that I understand perfectly the need to reschedule our meeting and that I look forward to seeing him on Tuesday 14 September.

CANBERRA

10 September 1993