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# PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
SPEECH FROM THE DINNER, GLOBAL CULTURAL DIVERSITY  
CONFERENCE, SYDNEY, 26 APRIL 1995**

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We have already had, today, a very good beginning to this conference - this important conference - on global diversity, and I think there was a unanimity of view that the conference began well - it certainly did with the diversity of that percussion performance we saw this morning, and I'm not sure that the Secretary-General and I were percussing people, but I know that the musicians were. At any rate, one is told that as the day closed, that it was a successful day, and we are very pleased about that. Because this is a very significant and important theme for the United Nations, and the world, to embrace, because - as we have remarked to ourselves over the course of this day - many of the world's problems are not now super-power problems, they are not nation - state problems - they are problems which arise from little differences and differences of view that have been concentrated into virulent, in some cases, strains of objection and intolerance and prejudice, which threaten the peace of countries, the peace of regions and the peace of the world. And we find ourselves joining in the United Nations in the endeavour of seeking to remedy some of these problems, to quell these conflicts, and we are coming to the conclusion - very obviously - that we are better trying to deal with the problems at the source, rather than the manifestations of them, when they already arise. And so, by the United Nations and the Secretary-General giving this conference its endorsement and its *imprimatur*, we are bringing to the world agenda an appreciation of the importance of diversity as something to celebrate, rather than something to fear.

Now, this evening, we are continuing the theme, and the performers tonight - the musical entertainment tonight - is again, another cause for the celebration of diversity, and the fact that it has enriched us all so very much. And let me say, that in this country, nothing has enriched Australian cultural life more than the new diversity of this country, and the openness to other cultures. And they are the cultures of our Aboriginal people, Asian cultures around us, European culture - all of these things have been the cause of enriching this country. I know there is now a threat - or a perceived threat, rather - to the

internationalisation of culture, and we have seen this particularly in entertainment, and we are very conscious of this because in this country, we lost a film industry to Hollywood in the 1930s. I'm sure many of our distinguished guests might not appreciate that there but for the grace of Charlie Chaplin went the rest of us - Charlie Chaplin, and Louis B Mayer and the Warner Brothers were a hell of a team to beat, but we did have an important Australian film industry. We have lost one, and we are determined not to lose another. You might know that, of course, we have the French elections on at the moment, and we - over the course of the Uruguay Round - we found ourselves implacably on the other side to the French in the Uruguay Round, seeking to give the producers of the South a place in these big agricultural markets, which unusually as a developed country, Australia participated in. But, of course, the one thing we joined the French on at the end of the Round was in protecting intellectual property - in protecting cultural property. And, I think, one can do these two things - that is, be proud of one's own culture, and do the things to enrich it and protect it, but through its strengths allow it to be open to others so we gain and secure a benefit from them. So I think we shouldn't fear the internationalisation of culture - I don't think it is a crude choice between selling ourselves or impoverishing ourselves in the cause of cultural fidelity - I don't think we need to do those things. I think we take the general view that we can profit by being open to the world, and if the proof of the pudding is in the eating, I'm sure that Australia is an example. But we have seen it so often - we have seen the impact of Greek and Roman art and architecture on the world, we have seen the power of Chinese culture, and the profound influence of Chinese art in Europe in the 18th and 19th century, we have seen the Indian sitar infiltrate its way into the music of Liverpool in the 1960s, we have...every time we have seen an openness to diversity, we have seen something better. And, of course, let me say on our part, that here - how we cherish in this country the culture of Aboriginal Australians - I think one of the great cultural phenomena of recent Australian history has been the rejuvenation of Aboriginal culture, and its integration with the non-indigenous cultures of Australia. And not only that, but we are seeing it acclaimed around the world as well.

We welcome diversity - it has been a cause of power to our arts and to our culture, and it makes the point again that here we are having a conference seeking to promote the idea that diversity is a cause of celebration, and can be a cause of celebration, and something richer, and better, rather than simply something that leads to division and fear and calamity.

Tonight, we are very appreciative of the fact that the Australia Council - which is Australia's premier arts funding body, the body most possessed of the charter of promoting Australian art and culture - has sponsored tonight's performance, which we are about to enjoy, and has arranged with the performers and the artists to come tonight to entertain us. I would like to thank the Australia Council, and the performers, for doing this in the cause of this great undertaking of increasing the awareness that we are seeking to understand better at this conference - about the value of global diversity, worldwide. I would like to, most especially, thank the Secretary-General for endorsing this conference, for coming here, for bringing his wife to Australia -

it is a great honour he does us. He has, without a doubt, the hardest job in the world. I don't think there is any...some say "well, the Presidency of the United States is the world's hardest job", and it may be true. But, seeking to resource this body - the United Nations - in its diversity, and in another form of diversity in seeking to secure the consensus that is always required to move it forward, to renew it, to consider its future and how it might be reformed - these are the things, the tasks, which have fallen in this age of ours to Doctor Boutros-Ghali. It is with those heavy responsibilities, that we know he has, that makes us appreciate ever so much more his attendance here.

Could I finally thank you all for being so enthusiastic about the conference - for coming to Australia, for doing us that honour, for joining us, and for coming tonight to celebrate this dinner with us, and to hear some of the performers, and some of the music, that I know you will be pleased to see.

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