



PRIME MINISTER

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

SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM MISSION TO FRANCE

The delegation representing members of the South Pacific Forum, which I foreshadowed yesterday, will have discussions in Paris with the French Foreign Minister, Mr Herve de Charette, on Monday 19 June.

The purpose of the delegation's visit is to make clear directly and unambiguously to the Government of France the deep resentment felt by South Pacific countries at the French Government's decision to resume nuclear testing in the South Pacific region and to seek reconsideration of that decision. All the countries of the Forum deplore the decision and urge the Government of France to reconsider.

The Forum has a long history of opposition to nuclear testing, reflected, for example, in the adoption of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone.

The mission will be led by Senator Evans, representing Australia as the current Chair of the Forum. Other members will include President Bernard Dowiyogo of Nauru, the immediate past Chair of the Forum, and a special envoy from Papua New Guinea, which will assume the Chair of the Forum at the next Heads of Government Meeting in September. The Secretary-General of the South Pacific Forum, the Hon Ieremia Tabai, will also participate in the mission. Mr Tabai is the former President of Kiribati.

Discussions are underway with other Forum members which have also expressed an interest in participation.

CANBERRA
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