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PRIME MINISTER

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

THE SECOND FRENCH NUCLEAR TEST

I deplore the latest French nuclear test at Fangataufa. The test ignores the understandable outrage of the international community at the French Government's first test and compounds the sense of anger felt by regional countries as a result of continued testing.

This decision runs against common sense. France's good name in this region and around the world has been further damaged, and the test is contrary to the wishes of the 71 per cent of the French people who want the French Government to cease nuclear testing in this region.

Australia's efforts to press the French Government to abandon its testing program will be unceasing and unrelenting until the French Government hears the clear message from nations around the world to abandon its nuclear testing program. Our campaign will continue with the same vigour until all the testing stops.

The Australian Government does not accept that nuclear tests are necessary for the purposes stated by the French Government - to protect France's national security, to ensure the safety of the French nuclear deterrent and to develop simulation technology. The French Government must explore more fully the technical alternatives to further tests.

The French Government has failed to ask the question: would nuclear tests of this kind be tolerated in metropolitan France? Clearly they would not. The French Government must accord the South Pacific the same respect that it reserves for metropolitan France.

Australia fully supports the statement from the recent South Pacific Forum meeting that called on France to

- desist from further tests in the region and to close associated facilities, except those required for future environmental monitoring;
- accept full and exclusive responsibility for any adverse impacts from its testing on the Pacific environment and people;
- provide access to the international community to all scientific data it holds and to the testing sites themselves to enable an independent and comprehensive assessment of the risks involved;

sign and ratify the Protocols of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

Only these actions would show that France takes seriously its obligations towards those countries in our region with which it seeks good relations. If France cannot even agree to the region's reasonable requests for scientific access, it demonstrates its disregard for the interests of the South Pacific community.

Australia is well advanced in its negotiations with like-minded countries in bringing a resolution before the 50th session of the United Nations General Assembly in the coming weeks, which would constitute a strong statement of international opposition to nuclear testing and call for an immediate end to such tests. This will build on similar resolutions and statements made in the parliaments of many nations around the world, in international organisations such as the IAEA, and in regional groupings, including the South Pacific Forum and the ASEAN Regional Forum, and will leave the French Government in no doubt about the breadth of opposition to nuclear testing.

We will continue to facilitate campaigns of information and contact between the Australian and French people so that the basis of the opposition of Australians to the testing program and the intensity of their feelings are understood in France.

The recall of the French Ambassador to Australia, France's announcement that it will sign a truly comprehensive test ban treaty in 1996, and suggestions that the number of tests may be reduced are all signs that our campaign is having an effect. With every new test it holds, the immediate and the long-term costs to France increase.

CANBERRA

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