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PRIME MINISTER

1996

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SOUTH PACIFIC NUCLEAR FREE ZONE TREATY

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I welcome the signing of the three Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) Treaty by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

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All five nuclear weapon states have now undertaken not to use or threaten to use nuclear explosive devices against any SPNFZ member and not to test nuclear explosive devices within the Treaty area.

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Accession by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America to the Treaty Protocols brings to an end the unhappy chapter of nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

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France's signature to the Protocols is particularly welcome, as is France's response to the concerns of South Pacific states by announcing its intention to close its testing facilities, except those required for environmental monitoring, and to support the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) study into the effects of its testing.

All Australians will hope that this action by the nuclear powers will have a positive influence on the critical final stages of the negotiation of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva where negotiations are due to end this year.

Australia remains committed to a ban on the testing of nuclear weapons and is working actively for a successful conclusion of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty negotiations.

25 March 1996