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PRIME MINISTER

19 September 1997

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD, MP
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW - RAROTONGA
COOK ISLANDS**

E&OE.....

JOURNALIST:

Are you happy with the outcome?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes I am happy with the outcome it's a very good outcome for Australia. It's also a fair outcome. It recognises the particular problems of the Small Island States, but also the fact that the only way that you are really going to get a lasting solution is to get everybody involved, including the developing countries, which are major greenhouse gas emitters. For the first time an international body has publicly accepted that, and when you see the communiqué you will see the reference to the need for a contribution from developing countries which are major greenhouse gas emitters.

JOURNALIST:

How hard was it to get there Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER:

Not too difficult, but these things take time. There was a range of views, but in the end we have a consensus and it's a good outcome. It's a very good outcome for Australia.

JOURNALIST:

Are some of the Small Island States they're angry. Tuvalu says they're angry Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well other people can speak for themselves. I mean we do have a consensus and I'm not going to comment on the individual reactions of people beyond pointing out that we have a consensus. I made it clear that for Australia's sake I could not accept mandatory targets, particularly mandatory uniform targets. There will be no reference at all in the communiqué to targets of any kind, let alone legally binding targets.

JOURNALIST:

So Australia got its way Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, it's a good outcome. I don't go into these things in terms of winners and losers, I go into these things to try and get an outcome first of all that's good for my country and all employees in my country. I also go in to try and get an outcome consistent with that goal which is fair to the other participants and I can say that I've achieved those two objectives.

JOURNALIST:

Well what's in it for the Small Island Nations Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well an emphatic recognition of the particular problems they face and also for the first time from a significant international forum a recognition that you've got to rope everybody in who's a contributor to the problem and the only way that you're going to rope everybody in is frankly to go down the Australian path, because you won't rope developing countries who are major contributors to the problem unless you have some recognition of the principle of differentiation.

JOURNALIST:

What has been the cost in terms of political goodwill?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don't believe there's been any cost in terms of political goodwill. It was a serious discussion and the outcome represents a consensus of views. I mean there was a consensus and I'm told that the communiqué dealing with climate change will be issued very shortly.

JOURNALIST:

Does this position for you now leave intact your negotiating position in the lead-up to Kyoto?

PRIME MINISTER:

Absolutely. Our negotiating position for Kyoto has been fully protected and I always intended that it would because that is my responsibility as Australia's leader.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Howard does the result of this meeting actually increase the chances that Australia's position will be accepted at Kyoto?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don't make a judgement on that. I sought at this meeting to protect Australia's interests and to be as fair as I could to the other participants. Our position at Kyoto will be put in greater detail as we approach the Kyoto conference. It is well known that the Australian government takes the view that the position being demanded of it by the Europeans is unfair and unreasonable and would cost Australians a lot of jobs and a lot of investment.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Howard, what did you have to give to the Small Island States to get their support in terms of the wording on the communiqué?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I think you ought to have a look at the communiqué. I don't talk about sort of gives and takes in these things. The communiqué expresses the consensus and it's a communiqué that I am very happy with because it reflects the concerns that Australia has. But by the same token it heavily emphasises the position of the Small Island States and it also, very importantly, and I repeat this point, for the first time ever will say that you've got to rope the developing polluters into the ring if you are to get a lasting solution to this problem. And that has been the missing link and the only way you'll get them in is to

abandon the idea of mandatory uniform targets. They'll run a mile from mandatory uniform targets, but they may not run a mile from something that involves differentiation and that's one of the reasons why Australia has been arguing that position all along.

JOURNALIST:

Was aid used as a bargaining tool at all?

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh no, no.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Howard are you at all concerned that Tuvalu is saying this morning that it's angry that it feels that there has been arm-twisting and they've been the loser. Are you concerned that they're saying that they're feeling that?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don't wish to comment on remarks made by my colleague Prime Ministers or Presidents. The outcome is a fair one. It's a good one for Australia. Well there was a consensus.

JOURNALIST:

Tuvalu said that you were one out in fifteen, one against fifteen. Is that true?

PRIME MINISTER:

I just invite you to have a look at the communiqué, I mean if people aren't happy with it ... (inaudible)...

JOURNALIST:... (inaudible)... but that's not reflective of what went on inside the room... (inaudible)...

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don't talk about what went on inside the room. I simply talk to the outcome and the outcome is something to which all the participants in the room committed themselves.

JOURNALIST:

... (inaudible)... your standing in the region is still intact?

PRIME MINISTER:

Of course it's still intact.

JOURNALIST:

Is it better than it was when you got here?

PRIME MINISTER:

I don't make a judgement on that. I think what happened was a demonstration that people of goodwill can reach a consensus. And that's the important thing.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister is it still your view that the concerns of the small island states maybe exaggerated and that their view of the world is at least to you it seems, I think you said a bit apocalyptic the other day, is that still your worry?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well the concern I was then expressing was the description some people were using of those concerns. Look, I understand the concerns of the small island states and I'll say to you what I said to a number of them in private conversations was that the way in which those concerns can best be met is to get all of the contributors to the problem involved in the solution. And you won't do that unless you allow differentiation. You have no hope at all of getting developing countries that are major polluters to contributing to the solution if you threaten them with mandatory uniform targets. And that is a message that we will be putting to other countries in the lead up to Kyoto. It's not an easy argument to sell. I've never pretended that this is easy. But Australia is in a special situation and my responsibility at the end of the day always, above everything else, is to protect Australian interests. And I will always do that at international conferences.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister at the start of this meeting I think you said that greenhouse wasn't really a problem here, it's now taken an unprecedented two days to sort it out (inaudible).

PRIME MINISTER:

I haven't said it wasn't a problem (inaudible) beat up (inaudible) well I think some of the things that have been said about it are a beat up yes, and I remain of that view.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Howard the Australian Eyes Only document, did that come up during the leaders' meeting?

PRIME MINISTER:

Very briefly.

JOURNALIST:

In what way?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well just very briefly.

JOURNALIST:

Did you apologise?

PRIME MINISTER:

No. I just stated what had been said before.

JOURNALIST:

Was Australia admonished by the other states?

PRIME MINISTER:

No.

JOURNALIST:

Did they tell you that it was a leader's responsibility these sort of things?

PRIME MINISTER:

No.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Howard will you be coming back to the next forum.