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COMPREHENSIVE TEST-BAN TREATY

Letter dated 14 June 1995 from the Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

In Australia's capacity as current Chair of the South Pacific Forum, I wish to bring to your attention the attached statement which has been issued today, 14 June 1995, by Permanent Representatives of South Pacific States Members of the United Nations, condemning the decision by France to resume nuclear testing in the Pacific.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 65 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Richard BUTLER, AM

* A/50/50/Rev.1.

ANNEX

Statement on the resumption of French nuclear testing issued
on 14 June 1995 by the Permanent Representatives to the
United Nations of Australia, Fiji, the Marshall Islands,
the Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, Papua New
Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands

South Pacific States Members of the United Nations deplore the announcement by France that it proposes to resume nuclear testing in the Pacific.

Only one month ago, following exhaustive negotiations at United Nations Headquarters, the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, including France, decided on the indefinite extension of that Treaty. At that time France also agreed that nuclear disarmament should be vigorously pursued and "pending the entry into force of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, the nuclear-weapon States should exercise utmost restraint".

South Pacific countries do not believe the testing programme, now announced by France, is consistent with those undertakings. Moreover, South Pacific countries, in particular small island States, gave their best asset in the Treaty negotiations, namely their trust, that the political understandings on which the extension of the Treaty were based would be adhered to. It now appears that their trust is to be abused.

French nuclear testing in the Pacific takes place in a territory far distant from metropolitan France. This brings back to public consciousness the question, if French nuclear testing is as safe as French authorities claim and has "no ecological consequences", why is it conducted in the South Pacific.

Mururoa Atoll (French Polynesia) is also within the area of the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga), which among other things provides a zone free of nuclear testing.

The resumption of testing by France would thus directly contravene what the independent States of the South Pacific region, exercising their individual sovereignty, have agreed to jointly.

The proposed French actions are particularly unfortunate at this critical stage in the negotiations in Geneva on a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

They also raise doubts about France's international commitment to meet its obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

This French decision, like the recent Chinese nuclear test, flies in the face of the global trend towards nuclear disarmament and an end to nuclear testing that has seen such encouraging progress since the end of the cold war.

As South Pacific representatives at the United Nations, we call upon the Government of France to reconsider its decision as a matter of urgency.
