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LETTER DATED 14 MAY 1985 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
OF AUSTRALIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT
OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to request that the attached statement on the situation in Lebanon, made in the Parliament on 8 May 1985 by the Australian Prime Minister, be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Richard WOOLCOTT

Annex

Statement on Lebanon made by the Prime Minister of
Australia the Hon. R. J. Hawke, in the Australian
Parliament on 8 May 1985

On behalf of the Government, and I believe on behalf of the whole Parliament, I express our great distress at the news of the continued violence which is taking place in that tragic country. We are certainly concerned at the recent events in the south of Lebanon, where as many as 20,000 Christians are reported to have fled their homes and to have sought refuge in the city of Jezzine and other towns in the region. We can only regret that the opportunity presented by the withdrawal of the Israeli forces has not been taken to restore Lebanese Government authority in the south. We are also seriously concerned at the escalation of the fighting in Beirut.

The Government expresses its deepest sympathy to the very large Lebanese community in Australia, many of whom have relatives in Lebanon. We are very conscious of the anxiety and suffering that they are going through at this time. I believe I can say on behalf of all members of the Parliament that we would want the members of the Lebanese community in Australia to know that our thoughts are with them as they go through this period of suffering and anxiety.

We appreciate of course that there is no simple solution to the problems in Lebanon. No one has a magic wand to wave which will resolve those problems. It is obvious, but it should still be said, that the first requirement is for an end to the fighting there, and certainly we from Australia call on all parties in Lebanon to exercise maximum restraint because it is only when the guns are silenced in that country that efforts can then be undertaken aimed at securing a national reconciliation through consultation and a peaceful settlement of outstanding problems. We believe that agreement among the present warring factions is the only basis on which Lebanon's independence and sovereignty will be respected.

We all recognize that one of the great tragedies of Lebanon is that it should have become the battleground on which foreign forces conduct their battles openly or by proxy. We believe strongly that all external interference in Lebanon's internal affairs should be brought to an end. If such necessary pre-conditions were to be met, negotiations could then begin for a long-term political settlement of that country's problems. In that respect I have noted suggestions that there should be a cantonal system of government along the lines of Switzerland. All one can say about that proposal, which has been floated in certain quarters, is that any such proposal would of course require the agreement of all of Lebanon's confessional groups.

I conclude by saying that the Government of Australia pledges to use all its influence, all the influence that we can bring to bear in the United Nations and in other international bodies, to pursue efforts aimed at bringing to an end the fighting in Lebanon, which is a necessary pre-condition to those consultations and negotiations which we would all hope would bring an end to the continuing tragedy of that country.
