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AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION • LONDON
PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

The Hon. Sir Victor Garland, KBE

SERIAL No. T212/82

8 November 1982

No
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Prime Minister

We shall let you know

a reply. VOL 9/11

John Louis Minister

I have been asked by the Acting Prime Minister, Mr Anthony, to convey to you the following message:

Begins -

"Australia attaches great importance to a comprehensive and widely supported Convention on the Law of the Sea. I am concerned to hear, therefore, that the United States Government is seeking actively to dissuade other Governments from signing the Convention adopted in April of this year and recently sent Mr Rumsfeld to a number of European capitals including London for this purpose.

It might be helpful to your consideration of the question of signature of the Law of the Sea Convention if I were to let you have an indication of Australian thinking.

Our final decision will be taken soon now that we have completed our consultations with other Governments, the Australian States and interested organisations.

Our disposition is to sign when the Convention is opened for signature in Jamaica in early December. This disposition is based on our assessment that most of our specific objectives, particularly in freedom of navigation which is basic to strategic mobility and in access to living and non-living resources, are met in the Convention. We would have liked to see more practical and 'free enterprise' provisions covering deep seabed mining: but we believe that this Convention embodies the only package of measures likely to be available in the foreseeable future.

For these reasons we should be extremely concerned if countries, such as Great Britain, with substantial interests in the Law of the Sea, did not support the Convention. If they were to stand aside this would inevitably increase the risk of maritime disputes, including over transit rights and access to resources,

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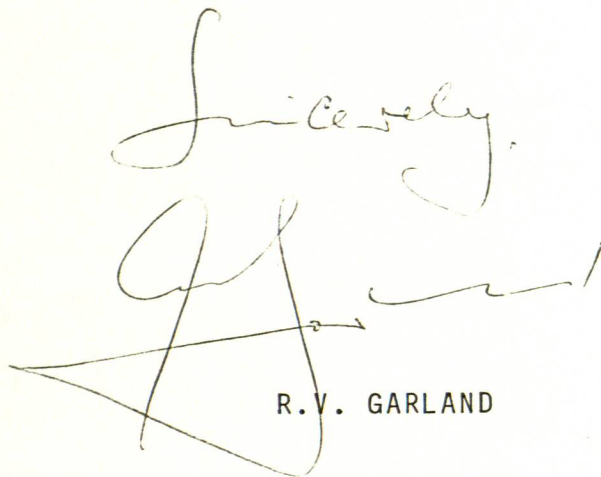
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which would have the effect of weakening the strategic and trading interests of the West. We believe that it will only be by signing the Convention and participating fully in the work of the Preparatory Commission that our countries will be able to influence the development of the Law of the Sea in a manner favourable to our interests. Whether the Convention will merit ratification will obviously be affected by the work of this Commission and may be a decision some years off.

I should add that the communiqués of both the recent South Pacific Forum and CHOGRM meetings strongly urged early signature of the Convention. There is concern in the Pacific that the decision of the United States not to sign can only benefit the Soviet Union.

I should greatly appreciate your reassurance that your Government will take a long-sighted view of the development of the Law of the Sea and decide to sign the Convention in Jamaica in December."

Ends.

Sincerely,

R.V. GARLAND

The Rt Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP,
Prime Minister,
No. 10 Downing Street,
LONDON SW1.

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