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Foreign Policy: Law of the Sea: May 80.



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

10 December 1982

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No: T 236/82

*Ratu Mara*

Thank you for your letter about the Law of the Sea Convention.

As you will by now have heard, although we believe that the provisions of the Convention relating to navigation and the continental shelf are valuable, we find unacceptable the deep sea mining provisions and the unsatisfactory precedents which they would set, for example, as regards transfer of technology. The Convention will remain open for signature for two years and we, therefore, wish to explore the prospects for obtaining improvements to the deep sea mining regime before taking a final decision on signature.

A number of industrialised countries share these misgivings. I hope that your delegation can do everything possible to persuade other members of the Conference that there should be a revision of the deep sea mining regime. I know that New Zealand was very active in trying to encourage negotiations on this issue at the session of the Conference earlier this year. It would be helpful if you could explain to other delegations, including especially those from the Pacific region, the benefits to be gained by establishing a consensus on this as on other parts of the Convention.

Meanwhile, I am grateful to you for your help at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting in Suva in October.

/Ratu Mara

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Ratu Mara did indeed write to me separately about the Convention and about the Falklands. I have sent him a reply explaining how our own interests are affected by the Convention and assuring him that we will take into account the views of Commonwealth leaders in the Pacific region.

You may like to know that we have also made representations to the United States to ensure that they are aware of the concerns of the Pacific Islands states about fishing. We hope that the Americans will work towards agreement with countries like Fiji to establish fair and practical arrangements for tuna in the Pacific. If the deep sea mining industry were to develop, then the countries of the region could also look forward to benefits from this activity as well as fishing. This re-inforces the need to establish a generally agreed deep sea mining regime, which will promote and not deter this new industry.

Yours sincerely  
Raymond

The Rt. Hon. R.D. Muldoon, C.H., M.P.,