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AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION

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THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Subject filed in  
Foreign PD RTZ  
Law of the Sea

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T.183/84

2 November 1984

cc Subject  
Master

My dear Prime Minister,

Mr Hawke has asked me to pass to you the following text of a letter concerning the Law of the Sea Convention.

Begins.

My dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to request that your Government reconsider its position on signature of the Law of the Sea Convention before that Convention closes for signature on 9 December 1984. In Australia there is bipartisan support for the Law of the Sea Convention and you may recall that previous Australian Governments have raised this matter with you.

Australia's decision to sign the Law of the Sea Convention was based on our assessment that a fair balance had been struck in the negotiations between the economic and strategic interests of all states, and that the Convention will provide a clear and agreed framework for all aspects of the Law of the Sea. It provides assured freedom of navigation, which is basic to the strategic mobility and trade of the western world, and provides agreed access to living and non-living resources.

We are aware that the United Kingdom and a number of other countries have not signed the Convention because of objections to its provisions for mining of the deep seabed. Australia, too, would have liked to have seen more practical provisions covering deep seabed mining, but we consider that the present Convention embodies the only package of measures likely to receive wide support in the foreseeable future. We believe that many of the details and practical workings of a deep seabed mining regime will evolve satisfactorily over the coming years through the Preparatory Commission for the Law of the Sea.

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However, it is only by signing the Convention and participating fully in the work of the Preparatory Commission that western countries will be able to continue to influence the development of the Law of the Sea in a manner favourable to their interests. We believe that by signing the Convention the United Kingdom would be in a position to have the maximum influence upon the deep seabed mining regime, and ensure that it will be developed in the best way possible. If it were to sign the Convention, the prominent role that the United Kingdom would undoubtedly play in the development of the Law of the Sea through the Preparatory Commission, would also help to counteract the influence of the Soviet Union in this field.

Further, the Law of the Sea is seen by many developing countries as a test of western good faith in the equitable sharing of resources and in peaceful world development. We believe that it is most important that major western countries sign the Convention and thereby deny to the Soviet Union and its allies the opportunity to gain in political and strategic terms.

Australia sought a Comprehensive Treaty which covered all aspects of the Law of the Sea, and this has been attained. However, the participation of the United Kingdom, with its long historical maritime tradition and continuing economic and strategic interest in the peaceful use of the world's oceans and their resources, is very important if the Law of the Sea Convention is to develop into universally accepted international law.

I therefore very much hope that your Government, with its concern for the development of sound international relations, will give full weight to the above considerations and decide to join Australia and 137 other countries as signatories of the Law of the Sea Convention.

Yours sincerely

Bob Hawke

Ends.

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The original copy of this letter will be sent on as soon as it is received.

*Yours sincerely*

*A. Parsons*

A.R. Parsons

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

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