

Government Response to the 30th Report of the Joint Standing Committee of Treaties

The Government thanks the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties for the comprehensive consideration given to the wide range of treaty actions considered in the 30th Report. The Report makes recommendations relating to two treaty actions. The Government response to such recommendations is provided below.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The Government is pleased that the Committee supported ratification of the *UN Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, done at Paris on 17 June 1994* (UNCCD) and recommended that binding treaty action be taken as soon as practicable (2.75).

On 12 May 2000, the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced that he had authorised the Australia Ambassador to the United Nations in New York to deposit Australia's instrument of ratification to the UNCCD. The instrument was formally deposited on 15 May 2000.

The Government's Response to the Committee's recommendation in relation to the UNCCD is provided below:

2.76 The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties recommends that:

at the time of ratification, the Commonwealth Government provides to the United Nations, and to the Australian State and Territory Governments, a statement on land management responsibilities within the Australian Federal system.

The Government has acted upon the recommendation as follows:

In a media release announcing authorisation to deposit the instrument of ratification, the Minister for Foreign Affairs also issued a statement on land management responsibilities within the Australian federal system. The statement affirms that ratification of the UNCCD will not entail any changes to Commonwealth and State land management regimes and that the Commonwealth acknowledges that primary responsibility for land management rests with the State and Territory Governments.

The statement was also conveyed to senior officials of the State and Territory Governments at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Treaties (SCOT) on 26 May 2000. The statement also accompanied deposit of Australia's instrument of

ratification at the United Nations through the UN office of Legal Affairs. As part of the process of deposit, our Ambassador was instructed to require the UN Office of Legal Affairs to circulate the statement within the UN system as an official document.

International Development Law Institute

The Government is pleased to note that the Committee recommended that binding treaty action be taken in respect of the *Agreement for the Establishment of the International Development Law Institute, done in Rome on 5 February 1998*. Binding treaty action was taken on 10 July 2000 with the deposit of Australia's instrument of accession.

The Government offers the following response to the recommendation put forward by the Committee in relation to this Agreement.

4.44 The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties recommends that:

the Minister for Foreign Affairs actively pursue the suggestion made by the International Development Law Institute that a regional office of the Institute be established in Australia.

The Government has taken note of the Committee's recommendation and negotiations for the establishment of a regional office of the International Development Law Institute in Australia are underway.