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BY:.....

THE HON ALEXANDER DOWNER MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dr Andrew Southcott MP
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Southcott

I have received a copy of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties' Report 60 for Treaties tabled on 2 March 2004 and would like to thank the Committee for their deliberations on Australia's withdrawal from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

I accept the Committee's Recommendation 5 and propose to proceed with formally withdrawing from the *Agreement Establishing the International Fund for Agricultural Development*.

I would like to clarify my Department's position in response to Recommendation 4 which questions whether remarks in paragraph 5.65 of Report 60 were made by Departmental officials and whether this is the Department's approach to treaty making. At a meeting on 27 November 2003 with three IFAD staff who have Australian citizenship, Australian Embassy officials confirmed that the decision to withdraw had been made at Ministerial level. The IFAD staff were advised that this decision would be put to the JSCOT which would make its own conclusions and provide appropriate advice to the Government, and that Government would then make a decision as to how to respond to that advice.

Up to and during that meeting, there appeared to have been a continuing misunderstanding by IFAD staff that my decision to proceed with withdrawal was still under consideration. Embassy staff confirmed that my decision had been made, but that there was still a treaty withdrawal process that had yet to take its course.

I trust this satisfies the Committee with regard to Recommendation 4 of Report 60.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alexander Downer', written in a cursive style.

Alexander Downer