

APPENDIX 3

COMMUNIQUE BY THE MELBOURNE GROUP

Friday 28 August 1998, The Windsor Hotel, Melbourne, Australia

During the last three days, the Melbourne Group has brought together around the table experts on Asia-Pacific affairs from a number of countries, not least of them India and Pakistan, to discuss ways in which we can strengthen regional security. We have engaged in constructive discussion of a range of issues affecting security in the region as a whole, and we have done so in a meed of goodwill and even friendship. A report on the dialogue will be issued shortly. The Melbourne Group has reached consensus on a number of matters which we seek to bring to the attention of governments, journalists, business houses, students and scholars, and the general public in the various nations which make up the Asia-Pacific region.

Our conclusions have stressed the urgency to encourage those processes which will lead us towards minimising the risks of nuclear, conventional and other forms of conflict in the coming decades. We call on all governments and the policy-making communities to commit themselves to the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons. Specifically we urge that the following steps be taken to minimise the risk of nuclear accidents and confrontations:

- treat all nuclear weapon states, including India and Pakistan, equally so that effective arms control measures can be introduced more quickly;
- take nuclear forces off alert;
- remove warheads from delivery vehicles;
- appeal to all countries, including India and Pakistan, to sign and ratify the CTBT;
- support the decision by the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to commence negotiations on a 'cut-off' treaty to ban the production of fissile for nuclear weapons purposes;
- give serious and urgent consideration to ways of curbing missile development, transfers and use;
- consider the Report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons;
- undertake a range of confidence-building measures, dialogues and restraint to prevent crises and conflict and encourage the resolution of disputes and the alleviation of tensions;
- take concrete steps to safeguard the security of non-nuclear weapons states;
- take measures to encourage enhanced economic links, people-to-people contacts and regional and subregional cooperation.

In the course of its deliberations, the Melbourne Group became aware of the extent to which the Australian government had disengaged from India and Pakistan. In the light of this, and in order to further the positive goals set out above, we urge the Australian government to take steps to re-establish official visits and dialogue with India and Pakistan.

As part of the process of confidence building, which we recommend, the Melbourne Group wishes to maintain an on-going dialogue amongst its original participants and also to broaden that dialogue. We recognise that an important factor in building trust and confidence is the ability to share information and expertise, and to do this in a way which is quick and timely. Hence, the Melbourne Group proposes to establish a South Asia Security Network. The components of the network will be as follows:

- an information service providing timely summaries and news and analysis throughout the region;
- a policy forum on-line on South Asian Security to facilitate the sharing of data, documents and ideas;
- a repository for important documents, agreements and texts;
- an international, collaborative research program to promote the analysis of regional security questions;
- a series of further round-table discussions in Washington, Beijing, Tokyo, Dhaka, Colombo, Islamabad, New Delhi and other capital cities as a way of informing governments and the general public about the conclusions reached by the Melbourne Group.

The steps which will be taken to implement this network are:

- identify institutions willing to act as autonomous nodes in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Australia, United States and other countries;
- identify funding sources and seek support for the network;
- establish appropriate links between this network and the existing Nautilus Institute Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network