

An Army Regular Force Emergency Reserve will be established to assist, in certain circumstances, in meeting calls on Regular Army units and you will be asked to consider legislation for this purpose. A measure to lower the voting age for those in the Armed Forces who are on active service overseas will also be submitted to you.

New Zealand is expanding its social and economic assistance in Asia, the South Pacific and other under-developed areas. Aid through the Colombo Plan has been considerably increased. In Vietnam, where health needs are particularly pressing, my Government has taken steps to supplement the medical team dispatched two years ago and to extend the basis of its civil aid. As a further mark of New Zealand's sense of involvement in Asian affairs, you will be asked to consider a Bill to provide for membership of the Asian Development Bank.

My Government continues to attach special importance to the Commonwealth association. At the same time it has been deeply disappointed by acts of rebellion and a movement away from democratic government in some Commonwealth countries. It also greatly regrets recent divisions within the Commonwealth and Rhodesia's illegal declaration of independence.

New Zealand is once again a member of the Security Council and has an added responsibility in promoting the United Nations' efforts to maintain peace and security and to remove the causes of international tension.

In September last year, my wife and I had the pleasure of joining in the celebrations in Rarotonga which followed the proclamation of the new Constitution establishing the Cook Islands as a self-governing State, freely associated with New Zealand.

My Government is convinced of the need to give special attention to the South Pacific, a region within which New Zealand has substantial affinities and interests. It recognises an obligation to pay regard to the security, economic and social welfare, and the political development of the peoples of the South Pacific and to give full meaning to New Zealand's sense of partnership with them.

The Governments of the South Pacific area share with New Zealand feelings of grave concern at the intention of France to conduct nuclear weapons tests in this part of the world. New Zealand has made its opposition plain in the United Nations and in protests to the Government of France. It has responded to requests from Western Samoa and the Cook Islands that their protests should also be conveyed to the French Government.

In the field of the national economy, New Zealand has continued to enjoy prosperous conditions. Export earnings have been satisfactory despite a fall in the price of butter in the British market.

My Ministers have been active in developing both old and new trading relationships. The limited free trade agreement with Australia, which came into operation on 1 January 1966, provides new export opportunities for the products of New Zealand's farms and factories and especially of its forests. Discussions have been initiated with the British Government about New Zealand's future trading relations with Britain and, in particular, the continuation of rights of access to the British market for meat and dairy produce.

Active steps are being taken to obtain safeguards for New Zealand's substantial trading interests if Britain should decide to enter the European Economic Community. My Minister of Overseas Trade will shortly have talks in the capitals of the Common Market countries, as well as in London and Washington. To ensure that New Zealand's special position will continue to be made known in the countries of Europe, New Zealand's diplomatic representation is being strengthened by the establishment of Embassies in Bonn and Rome.