

My Ministers are aware that the prosperity and security of New Zealanders is largely dependent upon the promotion and maintenance of the welfare of the whole community of nations. Through its activity in the United Nations and its specialised agencies, my Government will continue to play its part in the search for harmony among nations and the creation of conditions in which they may devote their resources to the pursuits of peace, the raising of living standards and the improvement of the quality of life for the peoples of the world. My Government believes that it is of the highest importance, especially in this year in which the Organisation is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, to renew efforts that will allow the principles of the United Nations Charter to be fully realised.

In Europe endeavours to move closer to the goal of Western European unity, a goal to which New Zealand has consistently lent its political support, have quickened. The countries of the European Economic Community are on the threshold of substantial economic integration. Negotiations for membership of the EEC are expected to resume this year with my Government in the United Kingdom and other countries that wish to play a full part in the Community. 1970 may well prove to be a turning point in European history with important consequences for the stability of the region and for its role in international affairs. Developments in this area will accordingly be followed with the closest attention by my Government in the months ahead. As a result of preparatory consultations with the governments concerned, my Ministers have been able to ensure that the vital nature of New Zealand's trading interests in the United Kingdom market is understood.

My Government is actively engaged in promoting closer co-operation with the countries of Asia and in encouraging regional solidarity. Through organisations such as the Colombo Plan, the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, and the Asian Development Bank, New Zealand is contributing materially to the economic and social development of the region. The recent decision to double the Colombo Plan appropriation is a practical demonstration of the importance my Ministers attach to this endeavour and constitutes a significant step towards the accepted target of 1 per cent of gross national product for external aid. In June this year my Government will be host to the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the Asian and Pacific Council, the success of which signals the growing sense of confidence and cohesion among the countries of the region.

New Zealand's contribution to defence arrangements in South-East Asia complements its efforts in the economic, social, and political fields. My Government is making the necessary arrangements to give effect to the decision to maintain units of the three Services in Malaysia and Singapore following the withdrawal of United Kingdom forces at the end of 1971.

The search for a peaceful and just settlement of the tragic conflict in Vietnam has the full support of my Government. My Ministers are disappointed at the lack of progress in the Paris talks. They hope that a more realistic and constructive attitude will prevail in the coming months, leading to a settlement which will ensure freedom and security for those who have for so long been exposed to the terrors of war.

Geographical closeness and a common Polynesian heritage are the foundation of the special concern and sympathy New Zealand has always felt for the people of the South Pacific. My Government will continue to give particular attention to the needs of my people in the