

X. Diplomatic and Consular Relations*

Diplomatic and consular relations—Australia opens new Consulate-General and Austrade office in Dubai

On 4 February 1993, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade issued a news release which read in part:

Australia has reinforced its commitment to the Gulf region of the Middle East with the formal establishment of an Australian Consulate General and Regional Headquarters for Austrade in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans, said the Gulf region represented one of the most dynamic markets in the Middle East. Exports to the United Arab Emirates had grown by 76 per cent in the first six months of 1992–93 and it was estimated that the current level of Australian trade with the Gulf region as a whole would double in the next few years...

The establishment of the Australian Consulate-General and upgrading of the Austrade offices in Dubai would provide additional impetus for further increases in trade...

Austrade originally established a post in Dubai in 1986 to help Australian business gain access to the growing markets of the Gulf Region. With increased international attention on the region during the rehabilitation of Kuwait in 1991, it moved to focus more resources on its Middle East services.

Austrade has now located the Headquarters of its Special Markets region—which stretches from the Middle East to Africa, South Asia and the former Soviet Union—in Dubai under its Executive General Manager Charles Jamieson. The Australian Consul General in Dubai is Mr C. Robert Shepard.

Official representation—Palestine Liberation Organisation in Australia—Middle East peace process

On 11 June 1993 the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Evans, issued a news release which read in part as follows:

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Gareth Evans, said today that the Australian Government had decided to allow an official of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) headquarters in Tunis to take up a position in the PLO office in Canberra...

“These decisions come at an important juncture in the Middle East peace process when moderation and flexibility from all sides are required to achieve a breakthrough in the negotiations,” Senator Evans said.

He said that although the PLO was not directly involved in the Middle East peace process, it was playing a central role in directing the Palestinian team in bilateral negotiations with Israel. There was broad support within the PLO for

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the negotiating process as a means of finding a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict...

Neither the PLO office nor the PLO representative in Australia has diplomatic or official status. The decisions taken by the Government do not alter this.

Senator Evans said the Government's decisions were in keeping with its policy of maintaining a dialogue with the PLO where dialogue seemed likely to be productive. They were consistent with current mainstream Western government practice.

Growing opposition to the peace process from extremist Islamic groups, including Hamas, highlighted the importance of countries such as Australia extending encouragement to the forces of moderation within the PLO.