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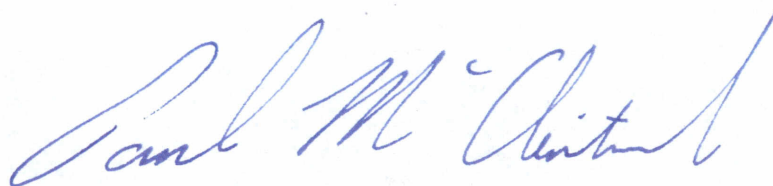
Cabinet Submission JH00/0285 - Reference copy of Possible bid for election to the United Nations Security Council for the term 2007-2008 - Decisions JH00/0285/NS and JH00/0285/NS/2

CABINET MINUTE

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE

**Submission JH00/0285 POSSIBLE BID FOR ELECTION TO
THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY
COUNCIL FOR THE TERM 2007-08**

1. The Committee agreed that:
 - (a) Australia express its interest in election as a candidate of the Western European and Other Group (WEOG) to the United Nations Security Council for the period 2007-2008; and
 - (b) in early 2002 the Minister for Foreign Affairs bring forward to Cabinet a Submission providing recommendations in relation to whether Australia should proceed with a firm candidacy.



Secretary to Cabinet

CABINET MINUTE

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE

**Submission JH00/0285 POSSIBLE BID FOR ELECTION TO
THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY
COUNCIL FOR THE TERM 2007-08**

1. The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of a possible Australian bid for election to the United Nations Security Council until after the Prime Minister's visit to New York in September 2000.



Secretary to Cabinet

Copy No. 14

CABINET SUBMISSION

POSSIBLE BID FOR ELECTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL FOR THE TERM 2007-08**MINISTER(S):** THE HON ALEXANDER DOWNER, MP, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**MINISTER'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

PURPOSE: To seek the agreement of the National Security Committee of Cabinet to Australia's expressing an interest in election to the United Nations Security Council for the term 2007-08

KEY ISSUES: On 9 March 2000, I wrote to the Prime Minister seeking his concurrence to my authorising our Mission to the United Nations in New York to register Australian interest in a two-year term on the UN Security Council in 2007-08. In his response of 16 April, the Prime Minister suggested that the matter be discussed by the National Security Committee of Cabinet at an appropriate time.

Four years have now passed since our loss to Sweden and Portugal in 1996 and it is time to consider whether Australia should once again seek a place on the Council. Australia's last term was 1985-86. The Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG), of which Australia is a member, has a history of vigorously contested campaigns for election to the two WEOG seats. The first currently uncontested slot is 2007-08, for which only Belgium has so far nominated. An early registration of Australian interest would give pause to potential competitors, would allow a six year campaign strategy and would avoid the situation where our friends commit to another candidate without knowledge of a possible Australian candidacy. A final decision to proceed would not need to be made until early 2002. It would be based on a rigorous and realistic assessment of our chances of success based on factors prevailing at that time.

The recommendations/conclusions contained in this submission will not significantly affect existing regional and rural services or jobs.

CONSULTATION: Prime Minister and Cabinet, Defence, Treasury, ONA, Attorney-General's Department

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: Cost of the campaign will be funded from within the portfolio.

	Fiscal balance (\$m)	Underlying cash balance (\$m)	Operating balance / Net assets (\$m)
2000/01		0.0	
2001/02		0.0	
2002/03		0.0	
2003/04		0.0	
2004/05		0.0	

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. I recommend that the Cabinet agree that:
 - (a) Australia express its interest in election as a candidate of the WEOG to the UN Security Council for the period 2007-2008 and
 - (b) Subject to agreement on (a), I recommend to Cabinet at the outset of 2002 whether to proceed with a firm candidacy.

BACKGROUND

The Security Council is the principal organ of the United Nations and is specifically charged with responsibility for the UN's central role, the maintenance of international peace and security. In contrast to the other organs of the United Nations, and the General Assembly in particular, its decisions are legally binding on member states. While it encourages parties to disputes to settle their differences through negotiation, the Council has the power to enforce its decisions through the application of international sanctions, and if necessary by authorising collective military action. The Council can meet at any time and sits in virtually continuous session. There is great interest in the activities of the Council and most countries attach great importance in, and aspire to, membership. Australia has been no exception.

2. The five permanent members of the Council are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Ten non-permanent members are elected for two-year terms on the following basis: five members from African and Asian states, one from Eastern Europe, two from the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and two from Western European and Other states. Australia has served on the Security Council as a non-permanent member four times; in 1946-47, 1956-57, 1973-74 and most recently in 1985-86. Our last attempt for election, for the term 1997-98, failed when we were defeated by Sweden and Portugal. This bid was an initiative of the previous government, but enjoyed bipartisan support, and culminated in the actual election in 1996 during the term of the present government.

ISSUES

3. Four years have now elapsed since our unsuccessful bid, and fourteen years since we last served on the Council. With Australia's international engagement and interest in the UN underscored by our role in East Timor, it is time to consider whether we should once again seek another term on the Council. If we do decide to run, we would maximise our chances by not entering into slates already being contested. The earliest opportunity would therefore be for the term 2007-8, for which only Belgium has currently nominated. The election would take place in October 2006.

4. Membership of the elite club at the apex of international multilateral affairs brings particular benefits. Most especially, Security Council membership maximises national leverage both before and beyond the actual term served. This enhanced projection of Australia's international role may be brought to bear on the full range of national interests,

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domestic, bilateral and multilateral. Our role as an active and effective member of the Council would consolidate our position as a serious global player, delivering multilateral and bilateral spinoff benefits (including in trade and commerce) and countering any regional attempts to marginalise us. Election to membership of the Security Council is an affirmation of national standing and a confirmation of our confidence in ourselves as committed and effective participants in the international system and in regional sub-systems.

5. There are also potential negatives for the national interest in not pursuing membership of the Security Council on a regular basis. While we were able to pursue our national interests effectively in respect of East Timor, our success was in part dependent on our institutional knowledge of the Council's internal procedures and dynamics flowing from previous experience as a member. This important knowledge is rapidly fading. We also benefited on this occasion from the convergence of Australia's policy goals with those of two dominant players, the United States and the United Kingdom. While we will not always line up with these two countries, our voting pattern on the Council would on balance add more to the convergence side of the ledger.

6. Membership of the Security Council is also seen by most countries throughout the world as part of international burden-sharing. Given Australia's relative wealth in personnel and resources, there is an expectation that we should pull our weight. Failure to do so potentially reflects negatively on our international standing and may in the longer term reduce our ability to call on others for assistance when required.

7. There has also been an expectation within the CANZ group (Canada, Australia and New Zealand) that it serves the national interest of all three countries to promote CANZ membership of the Council on a regular basis. CANZ operates as a very effective caucus group within the UN in New York and elsewhere by leveraging both the resources and the policies (which generally align fairly closely) of each of the three countries. By some pooling of resources we are able to effectively cover a much broader spectrum of the activities of the various organs of the UN with less resources than would otherwise be the case. This relationship is particularly valuable for monitoring developments with potential implications for Australia outside our areas of key focus. Membership of the Council by one member of the group acts to provide enhanced access and insight into the operations of the Council for the others. Canada has served on the Council twice since our last term and has indicated to us unofficially that it will run again for 2011-12 in accordance with its policy of serving approximately every ten years. New Zealand has also served more recently than Australia.

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Both countries have encouraged us to run and could be expected to work actively and commit resources to support our campaign. If we did not run for the 2007-08 slot, taking into account announced and expected candidacies (including Canada in 2011-12), we would probably then have to hold back until 2015-2016.

8. There are some issues that need to be closely considered when deciding whether to run for the Council at any time. Politically we cannot afford a second defeat, but we can be certain of success only if there is an agreed WEOG slate (ie two candidates for two seats). However, WEOG has a poor record for agreeing on slates for the Council. Although there is intensified interest to change this, it is likely that any campaign will be vigorously contested, including by friends. Both the running of a campaign and the servicing of a seat on the Council are resource intensive. One of the principal lessons from our last failed bid is that it is not cost effective to run a cut-price campaign. The campaign would therefore need to be more securely financed to maximise the possibility of success. There is also a cost not just in terms of money and personnel, but also in terms of policy. The desirability of not offending certain constituencies unnecessarily during the course of the election campaign could place some constraints (at least around the edges) on Australian foreign policy positions. We would also need to guard against the possibility of membership of the Council diverting our attention from other pressing issues. Finally, there is always the possibility that we could still lose despite our best efforts.

9. An initial estimate is that the direct cost of running a campaign that would maximise our chances in a contested election would be approximately \$2.5 million over six years, with the bulk of the expenditure in the final two financial years. This would principally be for costs associated with campaign-related travel and representational activity (including the use of special envoys), the holding of thematic conferences (to display our credentials) and for a fairly elaborate cultural promotion. This would have obvious resource implications for the Department. The Department would also plan to place one officer to work on the campaign immediately, increasing to two/three officers for the final two years. Additional staff resources would also be needed towards the end of the campaign in New York.

10. Beyond the direct cost to DFAT, a strategy to address our problems with obtaining support in regions outside our area of core representation would include the diversion of approximately \$6 million of AusAID funds over six years for special aid projects. This would largely be used for the provision of small-scale targeted aid injections, such as scholarships for study in Australian institutions, particularly in countries where we have little aid profile

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(in particular Africa). These sorts of gestures are increasingly the norm in campaigns. While we would not want, nor expect, our campaign to push up the "price" for election, we have to acknowledge that such spending by Sweden and Portugal helped to lose us the last election. Obviously, should it become apparent closer to the election that the two WEOG seats will not be contested we would not need to mount such an expensive campaign, but we think that it is unlikely. If, however, we decide to register an interest now in a bid for 2007-08, we would intensify our efforts to achieve a non-contested slate by capitalising on the growing concern in all groups about the resource costs of campaigning for elections.

11. It follows then that we should announce our intention as soon as possible, even if a final decision is to be left to a later date. An early Australian announcement would almost certainly cause other possible candidates to pause, thus potentially minimising competition from other WEOG states. At the very least it would give us some moral high ground in the face of later announcements and not place us in the position of playing catch-up in terms of seeking endorsements and votes. It would also enable us to lock in votes at an early stage. Belgium, as the only other announced candidate, has also signalled unofficially that they would view an Australian/Belgium slate as very attractive in terms of a balanced West European and Others combination. It is not likely, however, that we would seek a formal arrangement with Belgium along the lines of our agreement with Sweden in 1996, which we believe was successfully exploited by Portugal to our disadvantage. A decision now would allow for a six-year campaign strategy without the need to commit significant resources for some years. The Prime Minister could consider announcing our candidacy during his forthcoming participation in the Millennium Summit in New York this September.

12. We are confident that we have learnt many important lessons from our unsuccessful 1996-97 campaign, and more recently for the position of UNESCO Director-General, that will stand us in good stead for future campaigns. The loss in 1996 was followed by an intensive investigation to identify the reasons, including by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. The valuable knowledge gained from our previous bid would, however, enable us to develop strategies to address these problems. Experience has also shown that there is often a sympathy factor in respect of unsuccessful candidates which carries over into future elections. Although by 2006 ten years will have elapsed since our failed bid, we would still expect to promote this angle in our campaign.

13. Should Cabinet agree to an announcement at this time of our interest in the spot for 2007-8, DFAT would immediately begin preparation of a full strategy blueprint for a six-year

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campaign for further consideration by Ministers at the outset of 2002. This strategy would draw on the lessons learned from previous campaigns while they are still relatively fresh in minds and seek to exploit Australia's present high profile flowing from our efforts in East Timor and elsewhere. Africa, for example, remains a major problem, in terms of potential support, which will not be easily overcome. It was the principal reason we lost in 1996. Of the 54 votes available, we estimate that we only got 11 votes in the first round when our support was at its peak. This might be addressed in part by pursuing issues of concern to the Africans in New York through more active engagement over this period in the committees of interest to them.

14. Among the lessons learned from our failed bid in 1996 is the importance of factoring in the dynamics of the UN system as it operates in New York. Perhaps around 30-40 percent of the Permanent Representatives based in New York have a decisive input into their government's voting positions, including disregarding any instructions from Capitals. Events in New York can thus negate effort expended in capitals, especially in the context of second and subsequent rounds of voting. It would therefore be critical to ensure that we have a strong team, with the right personal qualities, in place in our UN Mission in New York at the right time. Sufficient funding for high profile social and cultural events in New York, including for example an Australia Week in 2006, would also need to be provided. The long lead-time also allows for some fine-tuning of our ongoing cultural program to support the bid.

15. Following the initial registration of our interest in running for the 2007-08 slot, a final decision to run could be postponed until early 2002. This decision should then be based on a hard-nosed assessment of our chances of success taking into account all relevant factors prevailing at that time. Given the political cost of a second loss, we would need to be prepared to pull out if the assessment was that the circumstances were not favourable, or if we found, for budgetary or other reasons, that we were unable to devote sufficient resources to the campaign. The campaign would also need to be assured of active, high-level political support, particularly in its final stages.

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16. An early announcement of interest would maximise the chances of securing an agreed WEOG slate and enable us to gradually build our campaign through our routine diplomacy over an extended period at little or no additional cost. This strategy would build a strong platform from which to launch the final campaign, should the Government then decide to proceed.

ALEXANDER DOWNER

COORDINATION COMMENTS

Defence

The Department of Defence supports the proposal.

Treasury

Treasury supports the recommendations in this proposal.

ONA

ONA does not routinely comment on policy matters and has no comment to offer on this submission.

Attorney-General's Department

This department has no comment.

Prime Minister and Cabinet

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet does not support the recommendations in the submission.

We acknowledge that there may be some benefits – including in our region – to Security Council membership.

However, the submission correctly emphasises the political costs of a second unsuccessful candidacy, and the low likelihood of Australia being part of an uncontested WEOG slate in 2007-08. The department also believes careful attention needs to be given to the factors working against success, including some which have not changed since the last candidacy. These include our poor level of representation and support in Africa, the fact that our natural policy positions at times put us at odds with influential countries or groupings, and the chronic unreliability of voting commitments.

On balance, the department does not believe that the benefits that might flow from a successful bid would warrant the resources required to mount such a campaign, and the risks of another failure. Should a decision be made to proceed with Australian candidacy, PM&C considers the costs of any such campaign would have to be absorbed within existing departmental and administrative appropriations.