The Minister for External Affairs (Mr Paul Hasluck) today made the following statement:

"The calling of the Emergency Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, which will probably begin on June 19, moves the discussion of Middle Eastern questions into a new forum. Australia will be represented at the meeting.

The primary responsibilities in this difficult matter fall on the countries of the region and on those in a position to bring their influence to bear on them. Although Australia is not directly involved as a party we will be glad to play our part in furthering constructive efforts for peace and will give careful attention to the views of all countries of the region.

The recent fighting was an episode in a long history of tension in the Middle East. The fighting did not settle any of the old problems but may have created some new ones. The underlying problems and the interest of other nations in peace and stability in the region are still there.

Our objective now that fighting has ceased is not only to ensure that hostilities do not start again but to seek the commencement of an effort to build a long-term peace. It is to be hoped that the General Assembly will keep this objective clearly in mind and not engage in recriminations or in diplomatic hostilities but seek to reach a greater sense of magnanimity and tolerance than has existed in the past. Arguments about who is to blame will not carry us far.

Among the issues that can be clearly identified are recognition of Israel as having a national existence and status; respect and
support for the territorial integrity and political independence of states, be they Arab or Israeli; an assurance of security by both Arab and Israeli states; the position of Palestinian Arab refugees; the right of transit of ships of all nations through the Suez Canal and Gulf of Aqaba; the future status of Jerusalem; the possibility of limiting the supply of arms to various countries of the region; and co-operation over the use of Jordan waters. These are difficult and serious matters. They require new approaches and will not be made easier if the debates are used to inflame feelings and harden attitudes. Our efforts will be used wherever possible first to prevent a recurrence of fighting and second to bring a constructive approach to the discussion of the basic causes of the struggle."