

2023 AUKMIN Joint Statement

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/countries-economies-and-regions/2023-aukmin-joint-statement>

1. On 2 February 2023, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs the Rt Hon James Cleverly MP and the Secretary of State for Defence the Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP hosted Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator the Hon Penny Wong and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence the Hon Richard Marles MP for the Australia-UK Ministerial Consultations (AUKMIN).

2. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the UK and Australia's modern and enduring partnership, which continues to adapt in the face of a rapidly changing world. Ministers reaffirmed our shared commitment to work together to shape a peaceful and secure world, where disputes are settled by rules, not by power and size. Russia's illegal, immoral and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine demonstrates just how much is at stake, having devastated the Ukrainian people and caused a global crisis in food and energy security.

3. Ministers highlighted the importance of working together to ensure an Indo-Pacific region that is open, stable, prosperous and respectful of sovereignty, human rights and international law. Ministers expressed the need for all countries to manage strategic competition responsibly. Australia welcomed the upcoming refresh of the UK's 2021 Integrated Review and the UK's continued long-term commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. Ministers agreed on the importance of coordinated efforts to bolster Indo-Pacific nations' resilience.

4. In light of the growing strategic economic challenges impacting the Indo-Pacific region and globally, Australia and the UK agreed to establish an officials' level Economic Security Dialogue to enhance collaboration and coordination. Ministers also welcomed closer institutional cooperation, including through secondments, to strengthen our combined resilience.

5. Ministers recognised that economic opportunity will continue to grow as our Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement comes into force, with new opportunities for businesses in both our countries. Australia looked forward to the UK's timely ratification of the FTA. Australia also welcomed the progress made by the UK towards its accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), expressed our interest in setting a strong accession precedent and, noting the high standards set in the bilateral FTA, agreed on the importance of concluding the UK's accession as soon as possible.

6. Ministers reaffirmed their support for ASEAN and its central role in shaping an open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based regional architecture. They also underlined their commitment to the principles outlined in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, and their practical implementation.

7. Ministers reiterated their support for all those working peacefully for an inclusive, democratic future for Myanmar. They welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2669 on Myanmar and reaffirmed their support for ASEAN's leading role in responding to the crisis. They reaffirmed their commitment to stopping the flow of finance, arms and equipment to the Myanmar security forces. They called on the Myanmar military to immediately and fully implement the ASEAN Five Point Consensus, cease violence against civilians, engage in constructive, inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders, and release all those arbitrarily detained.

8. Ministers re-iterated their strong opposition to any coercion or destabilising actions in the South China Sea, including the militarisation of disputed features. They underlined the importance of continuing to work together to support countries being able to exercise their rights and freedoms in the South China Sea, consistent with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including the freedoms of navigation and overflight.

9. Ministers underscored the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and encouraged the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues without the threat or use of force or coercion. They reaffirmed their shared opposition to unilateral changes to the status quo. They committed to working together to support Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organisations, as a member where statehood is not a prerequisite and as an observer or guest where it is. They reiterated their will to continue deepening relations with Taiwan in the economic, scientific, trade, technological and cultural fields.

10. Ministers shared grave concerns about severe human rights violations in Xinjiang following the release of a report on the situation by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. They also expressed deep concern regarding the continuing erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy, rights and freedoms, and urged China to act in accordance with its international obligations.

11. Ministers agreed to refresh the UK-Australia Humanitarian Partnership Agreement over the course of 2023, to strengthen our engagement in responding to future humanitarian crises. They agreed the UK and Australia will continue to enhance crisis cooperation.

12. The UK and Australia reaffirmed commitment to deepen coordination on climate finance and the Glasgow Climate Pact. Ministers agreed to work together to help put the world on a path compatible with the 1.5 degrees target, informed by the latest science , which recommends emissions peak by 2025 and are reduced by at least 43 per cent by 2030. Ministers welcomed the progress made at the UNFCCC COP27 and Conference on Biodiversity COP15 towards addressing the interlinked climate and biodiversity loss crises, including through the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, but agreed more urgent action was needed. Ministers committed to explore how the UK and Australia could better coordinate on efforts to support the climate needs of partner countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

13. Recognising the profound security implications of climate change, Ministers committed to reducing and mitigating the climate impacts of our respective defence activities. A senior defence officials' meeting will be held in 2023 to identify meaningful action to that end, including the suitability of a Joint Action Plan.

14. As part of our joint efforts to enhance security and stability in the Indo-Pacific, Ministers commended the significant progress AUKUS partners have made on developing the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability at the earliest date. They confirmed that AUKUS partners were on track to announce a pathway forward soon. They reaffirmed their commitment to setting the highest non-proliferation standards and to continue to work transparently with the International Atomic Energy Agency towards an approach that will strengthen the non-proliferation regime. They further welcomed efforts through AUKUS to accelerate the trilateral development of advanced military technologies to meet our requirements to enhance capability and increase interoperability in the near term.

15. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of supporting a prosperous and peaceful Pacific. Ministers redoubled their commitment to Pacific island countries in support of Pacific-centred institutions and plans, particularly the Pacific Islands Forum's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. They also committed to jointly progressing the Partners in the Blue Pacific as an initiative which is guided by the needs and priorities of Pacific island countries.

16. Under the pillars of the Australia-UK Strategic Infrastructure and Development Dialogue, the UK and Australia committed to deliver increased investment in the Indo-Pacific, including joint support for renewable energy in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

17. Ministers reiterated unequivocal condemnation of Russia's illegal, immoral and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and called again on Russia to end its war. They reaffirmed their commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the need for continued support for Ukraine. The UK and Australia agreed to continue to coordinate on sanctions and other measures to raise the costs on Russia for its illegal and unjustified aggression.

18. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of a world where all countries can make their own sovereign choices and where people's voices and values are heard and protected by the rule of law. Ministers agreed to enhance collaboration on countering disinformation, including state-sponsored disinformation, given its impact on national security interests. Ministers agreed to work together on comprehensive responses to disinformation in media, multilateral and political environments.

19. Ministers reaffirmed their opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances for all people. The UK and Australia condemned in the strongest possible terms the actions of Iran in its politically motivated execution of British-Iranian national Alireza Akbari. Ministers called on Iran to cease the execution of protestors and the continued suppression of protests. Ministers committed to tackling Iran's provision of weapons which are aiding Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This provides further evidence of the role Iran plays in destabilising global security. Ministers agreed to continue to work with international partners to hold Iran to account, including through multilateral fora and targeted sanctions.

20. Ministers agreed to deepen cooperation to advance gender equality and the human rights of all women and girls, including through a Strategic Dialogue on Gender Equality. The UK and Australia agreed to work together to end sexual and gender-based violence. As members of the International Alliance on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, the UK and Australia stand together to drive progress on tackling conflict related sexual violence. The UK and Australia also agreed to work together on full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

21. Recognising that the complex and changing strategic environment requires an ever closer security relationship, Ministers agreed to undertake a comprehensive refresh of the 2013 bilateral Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty. This will set the overarching conditions for our evolving defence relationship and enable increased engagement by the UK in Australia and across the region.

22. Ministers agreed on the importance of supporting resilience, security, and sovereignty in the Pacific. As part of their commitment, Australia and the UK agreed to focus on regional priorities in maritime security, training and resilience.

23. Ministers agreed to work closely with Pacific partners with a view to identify training that could be provided by the UK under the Pacific Maritime Security Program. They also agreed to explore opportunities to embed UK military engineers and project managers in Australian Defence Force infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific.

24. Ministers restated their commitment to continue addressing priority counter terrorism risks, including in Southeast Asia, as well as developing opportunities to collaborate to mitigate these risks in the Middle East and Africa.

25. Recognising that cyber security underpins our national security and economic growth and ensures our resilience and that of our international partners, Ministers committed to continuing cooperation on cyber and critical technology, collaboration on cyber deterrence, shaping the rules of cyberspace and joint cyber capacity building projects in the Indo-Pacific.

26. Australia looks forward to hosting AUKMIN in 2024.