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AUKUS: A Commitment to the Future

REMARKS

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Thank you for the introduction, Markus, and as well as the welcome Matthew. It truly is a pleasure to be here at the Atlantic Council today. This has always been an institution at the forefront of security issues, so it feels fitting to be here having this conversation when not only our country, but the world, remain in such pivotal times.

There is no question that we are facing monumental shifts in geopolitics, safety, and security. Whether it's the PRC's continued posturing alongside its rapid, opaque, and expansive military buildup; Russia's continued war against Ukraine and its dangerous nuclear rhetoric; the DPRK's escalatory and destabilizing actions; or issues of terrorism and violence against citizens. All make the work we do to improve arms control and deterrence, increase diplomacy, enhance stability, and search for strategically resilient routes to peace and prosperity increasingly important.

Prosperity includes a world where all countries are empowered to make their own sovereign decisions free from coercion and intimidation. While competitors use force, disinformation, tech theft, and coercion in what they see as a race for a unipolar world, we are deepening collaborative efforts through transparent multilateralism.

These collaborations are the root of our partnerships and an example of our collective strengths. Our commitment to protecting global stability and security, investments in our long-standing allies and partners, and the belief that the best, most innovative ideas come from open societies remain the building blocks for our most successful relationships.

In the face of a changing global security environment, the Australia-U.S.-UK. enhanced security partnership, or “AUKUS,” is a generational opportunity that exemplifies our commitment to working with our allies and partners to positively contribute to security around the world to include advancing a free and open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient Indo-Pacific.

Announced in September 2021, AUKUS modernizes existing partnerships with two of the United States’ longest-standing and most trusted allies. The initiative is built on two main pillars—

Pillar I: Submarines. The first major initiative of AUKUS was the historic trilateral decision to support Australia in acquiring conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines at the earliest possible date. March 2023, the leaders of the three nations announced an “optimal pathway” to achieving this critical capability while setting the highest non-proliferation standard.

In Pillar II we have advanced capabilities. Recognizing our deep defense ties built over decades, our three nations endeavored to streamline our defense collaboration among our nations while strengthening our ability to protect the sensitive technologies that underpin our security. We committed to trilateral cooperation on emerging tech areas, such as quantum; AI and autonomy; hypersonics and counter-hypersonics; electronic warfare; undersea warfare, and cyber.

It is through both pillars that with transparent collaboration, technological innovation, and interoperability, AUKUS will strengthen integrated deterrence in the Indo-Pacific and our competitive edge there and beyond.

While AUKUS is built on these two pillars— it is an opportunity for us not only to strengthen security, but also to strengthen our partnership; an opportunity to reinvigorate economies; a commitment to the next generation; and ultimately a commitment to the future.

AUKUS strengthens Indo-Pacific Security:

We are centering AUKUS on the promotion of safety and security in the Indo-Pacific, as well as the setting of the highest non-proliferation standard and norms of advanced technology.

Through diplomacy, we are reducing the risk of miscalculation, bolstering understanding, and reducing the likelihood of conflict.

AUKUS is a key line of effort in this Administration's National Security, Defense, and Indo-Pacific Strategies, and we have been busy implementing both pillars of this partnership.

The United States is a leader in risk reduction and deterrence, and, through this partnership, we will not only stick to these national security principles but help to strengthen these principles with our partners and beyond.

Our shared vision of a world that is stable and prosperous, where all thrive, is rooted in our firm belief in the importance of collaboration to address shared challenges, innovation towards the future, and transparency.

AUKUS is a partnership built upon what we stand for, not what we stand against. AUKUS partners have long histories of working together on defense and security issues, and have deep, enduring partnerships based on shared values. AUKUS is a natural extension of these partnerships. This enhanced trilateral security partnership is contributing to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific and in turn the world.

Additionally, AUKUS is part of a broader effort to fortify an international system founded on multilateralism, weaving together our alliances and partnerships in mutually reinforcing ways across issues and continents. It is one of multiple partnerships the United States is pursuing to enhance cooperation on security issues in the region and around the world.

AUKUS is one of multiple tools of statecraft that the United States, and Australia and the UK, are invested in to advance this vision.

AUKUS reaffirms our global engagements. Pillar I and Pillar II efforts enable AUKUS Partners, in collaboration with likeminded countries, to advance a stable and resilient Indo-Pacific and deter potential aggression more effectively than ever.

And by investing in high-end defense capabilities and freedom of navigation through unimpeded sea lanes, as well as making future advancements in emerging technologies like AI and Quantum, we support a more stable region—one where all nations are empowered to make their own

sovereign decisions free from coercion- a world that centers on hope for the opportunity and prosperity of the future.

AUKUS strengthens partnerships and diplomacy:

We recognize that there can be no prosperous future without a recognition of the past. Including the acknowledgement that Australia and the UK are two of our deepest and longest standing relationships.

In recent years, we each realized that while we have broad engagement across a variety of activities, our competitive edge can be further enhanced with a closer integration of our efforts across our three ecosystems, notably in the defense and innovation sectors.

AUKUS partners are working to enhance our collaboration. In the defense sector and beyond, we are committed to creating new relationships in academia, industry, civil society, and more.

In order for us to be innovative and for AUKUS to have long-term success, we recognize that we must take an inclusive approach. One that ensures we attract the best ideas, innovators, and strategists. We must break down barriers and stovepipes and challenge old approaches that led us to face a pacing challenge.

We are pursuing those changes. In July, I had the privilege of sitting down with a group of experts from across the critical and emerging technology field, as well as trilateral government counterparts, at Chatham House to glean insights about how AUKUS can help us to break down these old silos to fully harness the power of increased collaboration. My biggest takeaway was that having a diversity of voices is going to be key to make the partnership all it can be – as our Australian colleagues will often say, this is only going to work if the enterprise is “whole of nation” on all three sides.

I also think it will be critical to channel the insights of our best and brightest in industry. While in London, I conferred with some of the world’s foremost experts on quantum technology. They provided key insights about the need to think about not just the advanced capabilities that we produce today, but the education systems that produce the experts of tomorrow.

We must think about how we are deepening linkages between our education and workforce development systems to ensure that we meet the moment for AUKUS, creating a truly organic,

and innovative ecosystem among our three countries. The education realm provides endless opportunities to explore trilateral collaboration.

We are therefore increasing our outreach to a variety of audiences, ensuring that we put public support of this long-term endeavor at the forefront.

My team traveled to Australia in September for just these sorts of conversations. My AUKUS Senior Advisor, Matt Steinhelfer, met with academics and local government, start-ups and major companies, civil society members and legislators to ensure that we are hearing from the widest variety of voices to understand what a broad cross-section of stakeholder's desire from this partnership. There will inevitably be challenges in realizing the full potential of AUKUS but bolstering public support through diverse consultations and engagements will be critical.

AUKUS means investing in our advancement:

The AUKUS partners are resolute in the importance of working together to meet the inevitable challenges raised. We also realize that when it comes to advanced capabilities and military applications of emerging and critical technologies, some of the blueprint for ethical and responsible use is yet to be drawn.

In this respect, we are making progress within a framework based on norms of responsibility and have ensured that AUKUS work reflects our shared values and international norms. Just earlier this month, Australia and the UK joined a diverse, cross-regional group of 45 other states in endorsing our Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of AI and Autonomy.

The Declaration provides a novel, concrete, and actionable proposal for developing a shared understanding of responsible behavior that applies across the range of military applications of AI, regardless of a system's functionality or scope of potential use. This initiative addresses the crucial need for international dialogue on military use of AI that goes beyond just weapons or the use of AI capabilities in weapon systems.

This Declaration is intended to be the beginning of the effort, and not an end unto itself. And we are moving to the implementation phase of this effort, where we will convene endorsing states to discuss how to implement these practices for the development, deployment, and use of AI in a responsible and lawful manner. The Declaration will provide a foundation for collaboration and

exchanges, such as sharing best practices, expert-level exchanges, and capacity-building activities.

So, Let me be clear – AUKUS is about advancing shared military capabilities with partners and allies. Separately, there are robust fora for norms development in arms control. We look to ensure that norms developed by responsible governments through vigorous debate in these fora are reflected in the work that we do under AUKUS.

This is the democratic vision for how new technologies can be responsibly and transparently integrated into our security and deterrence policies. In this respect, and in our approach to AUKUS, this open and vigorous debate about our shared future is critical and the source of our strength.

For too long, these issues were discussed in narrow circles lacking diversity and the full expression of our citizens' ideas and experiences. However, as I have said AUKUS represents an enterprise that will draw on a diverse group of people and their ingenious, transformational, generational enterprise.

AUKUS means investing in multiple economies and the next generation:

Our commitment to innovation will require an investment in not just the technologies or defense needs, but the people—and the variety of voices that make those investments possible.

Together, we have an opportunity to invest in our respective economies and in the next generation—helping to bring the best and the brightest into our labor force.

Pillar II is building on the AUKUS partners' respective defense innovation ecosystems, industries, and workforce to accelerate and deepen our joint development and delivery of advanced military capabilities.

AUKUS holds the opportunity to elevate our economies, including our industrial bases, in new ways—whether its STEM- education, apprenticeships, people-to-people exchanges, skilled labor education, or blue-collar industries. As President Biden has said, AUKUS presents us with big opportunities for recruitment, retention, and growth.

I was lucky enough to see these opportunities first-hand, when a few weeks ago I visited the Apprentice School and Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia. The Apprentice School is the

country's pre-eminent school for shipbuilding and apprentice trades. There I was able to learn about their investment in not only their current students, but their outreach in attracting students, for STEM starting as early as Pre-K.

Speaking with current students and faculty, it was clear they are excited and invigorated by the skills they are learning. They're ready to innovate and were already asking questions and about how to be the best future stewards of AUKUS.

While I was in Newport News, I met with our dedicated men and women working on the shipyards. Their commitment to excellence was palpable. "They are proud to be working on AUKUS" and as, one team member said, they know our Navy fights for our freedom and they believe "they deliver our freedom" through the work they do on our ships every day.

More broadly, AUKUS is strengthening the U.S. submarine industrial base by growing our industrial workforce and expanding submarine supply chains. These investments in our industrial base and workforce are critical to contributing to a free and open Indo-Pacific and unimpeded sea lanes.

As we continue to train here at home, we are also integrating Australians including—the Australian ship submariners training in our Nuclear Propulsion schools, and the potential for future exchanges across the ecosystem.

AUKUS is not a six- or 12-month partnership. Rather we are making an enduring commitment. These opportunities will help to recruit and retain individuals at multiple levels of U.S. industry, and will build on our leadership and commitment to excellence in service of creating a prosperous next generation.

AUKUS is a commitment to the future:

In short—AUKUS is Defense, Security, and Diplomacy for the future. It's being unafraid to tackle new challenges – an opportunity to engage citizens in robust democracies and offer a clear choice about our shared future.

AUKUS is about enhancing our security capabilities and deterrence in a responsible and transparent manner in line with our long-held shared values, in sharp contrast to those who are engaging in a reckless and non-transparent military build-up outside the view of their citizens.

AUKUS is about investment—as partners we are committed to building new ecosystems, supporting the next generation, embracing our values, and innovating for the free and prosperous future we all deserve.

We are making the moment—and we are looking forward to continuing to share it with all of you. Thank you for listening and I look forward to discussing this more.

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