

**Australian Government****Defence**

Joint Statement on Australia-UK Ministerial Consultations (AUKMIN) 2024

 Joint statement

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On 22 March 2024, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator the Hon Penny Wong and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence the Hon Richard Marles MP hosted the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs the Rt Hon Lord David Cameron and the Secretary of State for Defence the Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP for the Australia-UK Ministerial Consultations (AUKMIN) in Adelaide.

Ministers were welcomed onto the lands of the Kurna people by Ngarrindjeri and Kurna Elder Major 'Moogy' Sumner. All four Ministers acknowledged the enduring connection to Country of Australia's First Nations peoples, and the importance of Indigenous perspectives and experiences in addressing shared challenges. Ministers reaffirmed support for inclusive economic growth and the enhanced participation of First Nations peoples in the global economy and international forums that affect them.

Ministers reflected on the modernisation and transformation of the Australia-UK relationship. They agreed the contemporary relationship is responding in an agile and coordinated way to global challenges. 

Collaborating to address global challenges

Ministers reiterated our commitment to agreed rules and norms, where sovereignty and human rights are respected. Recognising that the security and prosperity of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific are inseparable, Ministers welcomed the UK's enduring Indo-Pacific strategic engagement as well as our shared commitment to support openness, stability and prosperity in the region.

Ministers unequivocally condemned Russia's full-scale, illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine and demanded Russia immediately withdraws its forces from Ukraine's internationally recognised territory. The UK welcomed Australia's contribution to training of Ukrainian personnel through Operation Kudu, and its recent contribution to the UK-administered International Fund for Ukraine. The UK also welcomed Australia's decision to join the UK and Latvia's jointly led Drone Capability Coalition, which is providing critical support to Ukraine. Ministers underscored the value of these contributions which demonstrate Australia's unwavering commitment to enabling Ukraine to end the war on its own terms. Ministers reiterated their agreement to coordinate on sanctions and other measures to escalate the costs on Russia for its aggression. Ministers called on all those with close relationships with Russia, particularly China, to refrain from helping Russia to continue its war in any way and to convince Russia to end its illegal war.

Ministers welcomed Ukraine's military success in the Black Sea and efforts to export goods through the Black Sea in support of global food security. They called on any country supporting Russia's aggression in Ukraine to cease immediately and support a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, consistent with international law, including fully respecting the United Nations Charter and Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ministers expressed deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza. They unequivocally condemned the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel as abhorrent acts of terror against innocent civilians, including heinous acts of sexual violence. They stressed that all parties must act within international humanitarian law and reiterated their calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and the protection of civilians at all times. Ministers called on Israel to allow immediate, safe, unimpeded and increased humanitarian relief to reach Palestinians in Gaza. Ministers recognised the vital role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). They noted the progress of the UN Office for Internal Oversight Services investigation and the investigation on UNRWA neutrality policies, as well as steps to date by the UN and UNRWA on management reform. Given the large number of displaced persons taking refuge in the area and lack of safe spaces in Gaza, Ministers shared deep concern at the potentially devastating consequences for the civilian population of an expanded Israeli military operation in Rafah. They expressed the urgency of an immediate cessation of fighting in Gaza to allow aid to flow and hostages to be released as a crucial step toward a permanent, sustainable ceasefire. Ministers support ongoing diplomatic efforts to achieve this. Ministers confirmed their commitment to provide increased support for humanitarian relief in Gaza. Ministers reaffirmed both nations' commitment to a two-state solution in which Israel and a future Palestinian state coexist, in peace and security, based on the 1967 lines, and discussed how recognition might assist in giving momentum toward that goal.

Ministers underscored the vital importance of the maritime domain to global security, prosperity and stability. Recalling the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the comprehensive legal framework for all activities in the maritime domain, Ministers called on all nations to adhere to UNCLOS and respect freedom of navigation. Ministers condemned the Houthi's attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, which threaten the safety of seafarers of all nations and international trade. Australia reaffirmed its support for the UK-US joint response to these attacks.

Ministers condemned in the strongest terms Iran's destabilising activities in the region, including its continued provision of missiles, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and other military and financial support to non-state actors. Ministers called on Iran to stop assisting Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, reiterating that any transfer of ballistic missiles would be a serious escalation. Ministers reaffirmed their determination that Iran must never develop a nuclear weapon, noting that the ongoing escalation of its nuclear programme has no credible civilian justification. Ministers expressed continued concern over the human rights situation in Iran, particularly the repression of political opposition and the persecution of women, girls and minority groups. They called on Iran to cease both arbitrarily detaining foreign nationals and the unacceptable targeting of individuals outside the country, including journalists and dissidents.

Ministers reiterated their strong opposition to any coercive or destabilising activities in the South China Sea. Ministers 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 UNCLOS, including freedom of navigation and overflight. Ministers expressed serious concern regarding recent unsafe and destabilising behaviour by China's vessels against Philippine vessels and crew near Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea, including the use of water cannons and unsafe manoeuvres resulting in collisions. Ministers agreed

this behaviour endangered lives, was destabilising and created risks of miscalculation and escalation. They called on all countries to refrain from the militarisation of disputed features, the dangerous use of coastguard vessels and maritime militia, and efforts to disrupt other countries' lawful offshore resource development. Ministers reiterated that the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal decision is final and binding on the parties. Ministers also emphasised that any Code of Conduct must fully accord with international law, in particular UNCLOS, not prejudice the rights or interests of States under international law or undermine existing inclusive regional architecture.

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.

Ministers expressed serious concerns about human rights restrictions throughout China, including the persecution and arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and Tibetans and the erosion of their religious, cultural, educational and linguistic rights and freedoms.

On Hong Kong, they raised deep concerns about the continuing systemic erosion of autonomy, freedoms and rights there and the impact the newly passed Safeguarding National Security Ordinance will have on the city, and recognised the potential impact of these laws on individuals outside of Hong Kong.

Ministers strongly condemned the DPRK's provocative and escalatory actions which pose a serious threat to international peace and security. Ministers called on the DPRK to abide by UN Security Council Resolutions and to cease the unlawful pursuit of weapons of mass destruction programmes, launches using ballistic missile technology, malicious cyber activity and export of ballistic missiles and munitions to Russia. They expressed their grave concerns over the dire human rights situation.

Ministers agreed to enhance information sharing to support sanctions designations, monitoring and enforcement.

Ministers agreed the Deputy Secretary/Director General led UK-Australia Strategic Dialogue would expand and deepen foreign and security policy cooperation to address global challenges.

Acknowledging the unstable global environment, Ministers signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Crisis Support for Diplomatic Operations. This formalised our mechanisms to support one another to meet our diplomatic and consular responsibilities during a crisis to keep our people safe.

Ministers strongly supported counter terrorism collaboration between the UK and Australia. Terrorist networks know no borders, so countering them requires an internationally aligned approach underpinned by strong partnerships.

Partners in the Indo-Pacific

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to contributing to a strategic balance that maintains peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. They emphasised the importance of responsible management of strategic competition, and the need for all countries to commit anew to promoting dialogue and practical measures to reduce risks of miscalculation, escalation and conflict.

Ministers highlighted their commitment to ASEAN centrality, reaffirming the importance of the ASEAN-led regional architecture in protecting peace and stability. Ministers maintained their commitment to supporting the practical implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific across maritime cooperation, connectivity, the Sustainable Development Goals and economic cooperation.

Ministers expressed deep concern at the deteriorating political, security and humanitarian crisis and the grave impact on the people of Myanmar and neighbouring countries. Ministers urged the regime to implement the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus, cease all violence, release those unjustly detained, allow safe and unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and return to the path of inclusive democracy. Ministers welcomed ASEAN's leadership in responding to the crisis in Myanmar.



Ministers agreed to coordinate on economic engagement and trade and investment diversification in Southeast Asia to support delivery of Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040, the UK's enhanced economic engagement, including through the ASEAN-UK Plan of Action, and regional needs and priorities. Ministers agreed the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) strengthened the UK's engagement in the Indo-Pacific and would boost the prosperity of all members. Ministers reaffirmed their aim to ratify the UK's accession as soon as possible this year so that the UK could become a full Party to the CPTPP before the end of 2024.

Ministers emphasised their commitment to working with Pacific island countries through existing regional architecture, recognising the centrality of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). They discussed the importance of pursuing engagement that is transparent and focused on Pacific priorities, as set out in the PIF's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Ministers acknowledged climate change as the single greatest threat to Pacific Island countries. They agreed to jointly support Pacific countries' access to international climate finance, including through the Green Climate Fund. Ministers expressed their commitment to the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP) initiative delivering tangible outcomes in support of Pacific priorities.

Ministers committed to expand cooperation and coordination on cyber security capacity building and assistance in the Pacific following the inaugural Pacific Cyber Capacity Building and Coordination Conference in October 2023.

Ministers reiterated their commitment to the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as the premier ministerial-level forum spanning the Indian Ocean region. They agreed to explore collaboration in IORA on shared priorities including maritime security.

Defence and security cooperation

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to a comprehensive and modern defence relationship, underpinned by the signing of the updated *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for Defence and Security Cooperation*. Ministers welcomed the addition of a status of forces agreement, making it easier for our forces to operate in each other's countries, and in support of our shared commitment to global and regional security. Ministers welcomed the inclusion of a clause elevating and codifying the established practice of consulting on issues affecting our sovereignty and regional security. Acknowledging the strategic depth of the relationship, Ministers agreed to comprehensively review sub-treaty level agreements across the breadth of defence cooperation and ensure their alignment with the refreshed *Defence and Security Cooperation Agreement*. Ministers agreed to establish elevated joint staff talks to ensure our operational cooperation meets contemporary challenges.

Ministers reaffirmed their enduring commitment to the AUKUS partnership, which is strengthening security and stability in the Indo-Pacific. They welcomed the progress made by all AUKUS partners to support Australia's acquisition of a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability. They reaffirmed their commitment to upholding the highest non-proliferation standards, and agreed on the importance of ongoing engagement with other Indo-Pacific partners to promote a region that is safe, peaceful and prosperous for all. They also welcomed progress on cooperation on advanced military technologies including steps to remove barriers to the free and seamless exchange of defence goods and technologies between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Ministers welcomed steps to enhance the UK's presence in the region, particularly through the UK Carrier Strike Group's (CSG) participation in Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, as part of its flagship 2025 Indo-Pacific deployment. Ministers welcomed the arrival of the UK's Littoral Response Group South in the Indo-Pacific as a demonstration of the UK's enduring commitment to the region.

Ministers agreed to deepen cooperation on science and technology and to closer cooperation on undersea warfare, including establishing a bilateral theatre undersea warfare series, and to enhance cooperation on amphibious and littoral manoeuvre. They agreed to collaborate on capability concepts and requirements as both Australia and the UK look to replace their current fleets of destroyers and to continue collaboration on the development and introduction into service of the UK's Type 26 frigates and Australia's Hunter Class frigates, which are optimised for anti-submarine warfare operations. They agreed to enhance the strategic amphibious and littoral manoeuvre relationship, including through UK Royal Commando participation in Exercise Predator's Run 2024.

Ministers acknowledged the importance of Pacific-led responses to Pacific security challenges. Ministers committed to enhance interoperability with the militaries of the Pacific, including through continued engagement in bilateral and regional exercises, and as guided by the priorities of Pacific partners. They agreed to expand cooperation on explosive ordnance disposal through

Operation Render Safe and to keep collaborating with Pacific partners to enhance the security of the Blue Pacific Continent, including through the ongoing deployment of the UK's offshore patrol vessels to the region.

Ministers reaffirmed the value of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), which remain key anchors of peace and stability in the region, and their joint commitment to the FPDA.

Ministers agreed that the UK would contribute to the Combined Intelligence Centre-Australia within Australia's Defence Intelligence Organisation.

Ministers committed to develop a defence Joint Climate Action Plan ahead of AUKMIN 2025, with a focus on climate adaptation, resilience and emissions reduction initiatives.

Strengthening the multilateral and international system

Ministers committed to working together in shaping multilateral reform for the betterment of all states' security, and prosperity, and respect for universal human rights. Ministers agreed to use the 2024 Strategic Infrastructure and Development Dialogue to further collaboration on shared development priorities, including international financial institution reform and coordination of support to the Pacific and Southeast Asia. Ministers welcomed the signing, by senior officials in March 2024, of the DFAT-FCDO Humanitarian Partnership Arrangement, which will strengthen coordination and cooperation.

Ministers reaffirmed their shared commitment to the modern Commonwealth as a vibrant, diverse network which can address global challenges and deliver tangible benefits to all its members. Ministers looked forward to Samoa hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in October 2024, the first time a Pacific island country has hosted CHOGM. They committed to providing support to Samoa to hold a successful meeting under the theme 'One Resilient Common Future: Transforming our Common Wealth'.

Ministers signed a new Memorandum of Understanding to Collaborate on Ending Gender-Based Violence (GBV), including to implement joint actions on GBV prevention and response. They announced the formalisation of the annual Australia-UK Strategic Dialogue on Gender Equality, following the successful inaugural Dialogue in October 2023. Ministers committed to operationalise the gender equality chapter of the Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement.

Economic security and energy transition

Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, to economic security and prosperity. Ministers welcomed the progress made through the UK-Australia Economic Security Dialogue which deepened cooperation on supply chain resilience, collective responses and resilience to economic coercion and enhancing business engagement. Ministers looked forward to Australia hosting the next Dialogue in 2024.

Ministers welcomed the UAE consensus agreed at COP28, in particular the call for next nationally determined contribution to be aligned with 1.5 degrees, the agreement to transition globally away from fossil fuels, the new Framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation and progress to operationalise the new fund for responding to loss and damage that will provide support to developing countries who are particularly vulnerable to climate impacts, including Small Island Developing States in the Pacific. They agreed that working together to limit warming to 1.5 degrees and achieve net-zero by 2050 would help minimise the economic, security and developmental impacts of climate change. Australian-UK co-operation under the Umbrella Group will continue to support ambitious outcomes in the lead up to COP29 in Azerbaijan and COP30 in Brazil.

Ministers recognised the opportunities for new jobs and economic growth afforded by the global clean energy transition, and welcomed the global pledge to triple renewable energy generation capacity and double annual energy efficiency improvements. Ministers reiterated their commitment to align international investments with net zero priorities under the Clean Energy Transition Partnership, and further cooperation to deliver the transition to clean energy.

Ministers welcomed progress under the UK-Australia Clean Technology Partnership, noting the broad interest from companies in the first key deliverable, the Australia-UK Renewable Hydrogen Innovation Partnership Program. The joint funding call, worth up to A\$10 million from Australia and £5.1 million from the UK. This will support research, development and demonstration projects in clean hydrogen. Ministers looked forward to announcement of successful companies in the second quarter of 2024.

Ministers also welcomed Australia's upcoming hosting of the Global Nature Positive Summit in Sydney 8-10 October 2024 to drive private investment into nature and maintain momentum ahead of the Convention on Biological Diversity COP16 in Colombia in October. Ministers emphasised the Summit would support wider efforts to mobilise finance from all sources, and to align financial flows, to support delivery of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. They agreed on the need to protect, conserve and restore nature as an essential contributor to the global economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and global health and wellbeing.

Ministers commended the positive impact of the Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement (A-UKFTA) since it entered into force on 31 May 2023. They welcomed the establishment of a mutual recognition agreement for architects and the ongoing opportunities for Australian and UK businesses, including through the innovation and early careers skills exchange pilot and economic cooperation to support First Nations business aspirations.

Ministers recognised the role critical minerals play in meeting our Net Zero commitments and energy transition, and the need to diversify supply. Ministers agreed to further our cooperation, including to support critical mineral projects and specific business-to-business engagement through the Joint Working Group. Ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to the promotion of high environmental and social governance standards and responsible supply chains for critical minerals.

Cyber and countering foreign information manipulation

Ministers committed to expanding coordination to address cyber-attacks. They agreed to continuing close coordination on cyber attributions and sanctions, including potential targets. Ministers commissioned joint research on how we can most effectively work together to provide cybersecurity incident responses to nations under threat.

Ministers commended the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between DFAT and FCDO on Cyber and IT Security Information Sharing.

Ministers remain committed to actions aimed at reducing the spread and impact of foreign information manipulation and working together to build resilient information ecosystems, including through international cooperation.

Other related releases

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[The Hon Richard Marles MP | Senator the Hon Penny Wong & others](#)

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AUKUS Defence Ministers' Joint Statement

[The Hon Richard Marles MP](#)

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Australia-Japan-Philippines-United States Maritime Cooperative Activity

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