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## 2007 Australia – European Commission Ministerial Consultations

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### Joint Statement

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Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, and EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, met in Canberra on 25 June 2007. Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner noted that the Consultations marked the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Joint Declaration on relations between Australia and the European Union on 26 June 1997. They reaffirmed the positive state of the bilateral relationship and the shared commitment to freedom and democratic values, and welcomed the continued broadening and strengthening of bilateral cooperation.

#### Future of the Relationship

Noting the valuable contribution of the Joint Declaration and the subsequent 2003-2008 Agenda for Cooperation to enhancing bilateral cooperation, Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner agreed that it was timely to review and update the framework of the bilateral partnership, and to conclude new arrangements by mid-2008. These new arrangements would deepen the bilateral relationship, which continues to be based on principles of flexibility, practicality and mutual interest.

They agreed that future cooperative action should focus on the priority areas of

- . shared foreign policy and global security interests;
- . the multilateral rules-based trading system, and the bilateral trade and investment relationship;
- . the Asia-Pacific region;
- . energy issues, climate change and other environmental priorities;
- . science and technology, and education and training.

#### International Foreign Policy and Security

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner acknowledged the need for a comprehensive and coordinated international approach to dealing with current and emerging security threats and to promoting global peace, stability and prosperity. They noted the value of ongoing dialogue and cooperation on counter-proliferation and arms control, and intensified engagement in support of shared counter-terrorism objectives, including capacity building and counter-radicalisation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Noting the importance of promoting understanding and encouraging personal links between young leaders of the diverse religious communities in South-East Asia, Australia and Europe, Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner announced their decision that Australia and the European Union will launch a Youth Interfaith Forum of religious and community leaders. The first meeting will be held in Australia in the second half of 2007. The Forum will explore how religious tolerance can be promoted among the younger generation. The inaugural Forum would be followed by a subsequent event within eighteen months.

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner welcomed the recent signature of an operational agreement between Australia and Europol, the European Union's law enforcement agency, to facilitate the exchange of criminal intelligence between Europol and the Australian Federal Police (AFP). The cooperation agreement is expected to make a valuable contribution to the global fight against all forms of serious international organised crime, including terrorism.

Recognising the important contribution of sharing information on international passenger movements to global efforts on combating transnational crime, they agreed that preparations for negotiations on a Passenger Name Record (PNR) Agreement should proceed as a matter of urgency with negotiations to start as soon as the Council of the European Union has agreed negotiation directives.

They noted that the situation in Afghanistan was at a critical juncture and agreed it was vital that the international community remain committed to bringing lasting peace, reconstruction and development to the country. Mr Downer welcomed the European Union's major contribution to rebuilding the Afghan policing and justice sectors and the European Union's strengthened support for capacity-building in Pakistan's strategically-important border provinces. Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner acknowledged Australia's strong contribution to international support for Afghanistan, including through participation in the NATO-led *International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)*.

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner emphasised the importance of the international community's united commitment to addressing concerns about Iran's nuclear programme. Australia expressed appreciation for the efforts of the European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy to mediate a negotiated solution.

Australia welcomed the European Union's contribution as a member of the Quartet to efforts by the international community to re-energise the Middle East Peace Process, which Australia strongly supports, particularly in light of recent developments in the Palestinian Territories. Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner expressed concern about the recent resurgence of violence in Gaza. They underlined Australia and the European Union's support for President Abbas's decision to form an emergency government in the Palestinian Territories and welcomed the opportunity this presented for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner acknowledged the beneficial initiatives that have already been put in place to improve significantly visa reciprocity for short term visitors and agreed to continue to cooperate closely to address mutual concerns on reciprocity matters.

Noting the importance of information sharing to the international community's ability to respond rapidly to disasters and other emergency situations, particularly in the Pacific region, Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner noted the potential for considering ways to enhance communications between the emergency management bodies of Australia and the European Union.

## **International and Bilateral Trade**

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner reaffirmed their commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system and to concluding the WTO Doha Round negotiations as soon as possible. They agreed that a Doha outcome must substantially improve access to agricultural markets and substantially reduce trade distorting domestic support, as well as improving access to non-agricultural markets and services. They also agreed to continue to exchange views on these issues as opportunities arise.

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner noted and welcomed the establishment of a joint expert working group between the Commission and Australia to discuss Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) issues at a technical level. They endorsed regular dialogue to develop stronger ties between institutions and individuals working on animal and plant health, and animal welfare. These talks will provide a valuable forum for sharing information and addressing emerging issues, thereby minimising their impact on the significant positive elements of the broader relationship.

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner warmly welcomed the formal initialling in Canberra on 5 June 2007 of an agreed text of the revised Australia-European Union Wine Agreement. Implementation of the revised Agreement will provide benefits for both European and Australian wine producers and should boost the already lively trade in wine between the two regions.

They agreed to seek to reach an agreement by the end of 2007 on the Amending Agreement to the Australia-EC Agreement on Mutual Recognition in Relation to Conformity Assessment, Certificates and Markings (MRA).

They also welcomed the Australia-EC Agreement on Some Aspects of Air Services (the Horizontal Agreement) and its anticipated signature as a positive step towards closer cooperation in aviation policy. They confirmed their objective of a comprehensive Australia-EC air services agreement and a liberalised Australia-EU aviation market with a high degree of regulatory co-operation.

### **Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner reaffirmed the shared commitment of Australia and the European Union to promoting peace, stability, justice, good governance and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. They agreed that Australia and the European Union would continue to strengthen their policy collaboration to achieve these objectives, as well as program coordination in implementing their respective Pacific policies as set out in Australia's *Aid White Paper* and the European Union's *Pacific Communication*.

Australia welcomed the European Union's cooperation with Indonesia, including the successful Aceh peace monitoring mission, its contribution to funding for the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) and for the Bali Process.

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner welcomed the fact that recent presidential elections in East Timor had reflected the will of the people and took place without any major violent incidents. They expressed the hope that the forthcoming legislative elections would be held in a climate of peace and tranquillity and that all parties would accept the outcome of free and fair elections. They reiterated their ongoing commitment to supporting East Timor's political and economic development at this critical time in its history.

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner discussed the continued instability in parts of the Pacific. Regarding Fiji, they underlined the importance of implementation of the recommendations by the Eminent Persons Group, as endorsed by the Forum Foreign Ministers on 16 March 2007, and of the commitments agreed between Fiji's Interim Government and the European Union on 18 April 2007. They viewed positively the Interim Government's acceptance on 19 June 2007 of the analysis and recommendations of the Pacific Islands Forum's independent election experts, including their agreement in principle that a parliamentary

election could be held in the first quarter of 2009. They reiterated that they stand ready to support the concrete implementation of key commitments including the holding of the election both financially and through provision of expertise. They called on the Interim Government to respect and uphold all human rights.

They acknowledged the continuing contribution made by the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) to security, governance and the creation of conditions for economic stability and development.

They warmly welcomed the establishment of the Pacific regional representative office of the European Investment Bank (EIB) in Sydney, noting the European Union's role as an important provider of development assistance to the region. They agreed that the establishment of the EIB office would help strengthen coordination between the European Union and other donors to the Pacific.

The European Union and Australia agreed to work closely together, and with developing country partners, to include all significant donors in the Pacific region in efforts to improve donor coordination and harmonisation. Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner noted that this would help to promote appropriate standards of transparency, good governance and accountability in economic and financial management with developing country partners in the Pacific.

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner reaffirmed their commitment to continue negotiations to expand the possibilities for Australian firms to participate in procurement opportunities under European Community development assistance programs in line with OECD undertakings. They noted Mr Downer's April 2006 announcement on untying Australia's overseas aid program and the consequent access to procurement for European firms.

## **Energy, Environment**

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner affirmed their commitment to well-functioning energy markets, characterised by clear price signals, open trade and investment frameworks, market transparency, good governance, and effective competition among firms. They agreed that well-functioning global energy markets allow knowledge and resources to flow across borders, supporting investment in new supplies and helping bring forth new technologies and improved energy efficiency.

Recognising the increasing international focus on energy and its relationship to the environment, they agreed to build on existing collaboration by exploring potential areas of further cooperation to implement clean energy technologies and combat climate change in ways which complemented each other's current activities.

They noted the need to take concrete and early action to tackle climate change and noted the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). They recognised the significant mitigation contribution to be made by increased energy efficiency, the development and deployment of low and zero carbon energy technologies and sustainable measures to address greenhouse gas emissions from all sectors. They agreed that the European Union and Australia would continue to collaborate on a broad range of climate change issues and maintain a constructive dialogue on post-2012 international approaches to addressing climate change, including on the use of market based instruments. They noted that a properly designed potential future global carbon market could make a real contribution to addressing climate change.

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner welcomed the outcome of the G8 Summit 2007 in Heiligendamm. They agreed on the need for negotiations on a new truly global post-Kyoto agreement to commence at the UN Climate Convention meeting in Bali in December.

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner also agreed to continue to collaborate on broader environmental issues in ways which complement each other's current activities.

### **Education and Training, Science and Technology**

Mr Downer and Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner agreed to strengthen cooperation in the fields of education and training, science and technology, focusing particularly on joint consortia projects enabling student mobility and policy dialogue in higher education and training, along with collaboration in science and technology, including through the Forum for European-Australian Science and Technology cooperation (FEAST).

They welcomed the signing by the Australian Minister for Education, Science and Training, Julie Bishop, and the EU Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel', on 18 April 2007 of a Joint Declaration reinforcing the existing bilateral partnership in education and training. Under the Declaration, intended to promote greater compatibility between respective education systems, policy dialogue and cooperative projects between higher education and vocational institutions in the European Union and Australia will be further strengthened.