



THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

AUSTRALIA'S COMMITMENT TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

The Australian Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the United Nations (UN) and the system of multilateral engagement that supports a peaceful world order.

“The new Defence White Paper recognises our commitment to the UN and highlights the importance of Australia’s contribution to multilateral security”, said the Minister for Defence, the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP.

Australia has a proud history of contributing to the UN, highlighted by our bid for a seat on the Security Council for 2013-14. At least 30,000 Australian peacekeepers have taken part in over fifty operations since 1947. Australia is the twelfth largest contributor to UN peacekeeping budgets and Australian Defence Force personnel are currently serving in six UN operations around the world.

“Strong and activist engagement with the United Nations will be integral to promoting global security. The UN lends weight to our peace and security efforts when we operate directly under UN auspices or in UN mandated operations such as in Afghanistan and East Timor,” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Australia is also deeply engaged in other multilateral efforts to promote global stability and security. The Government recently established the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) seeking to shape a global consensus ahead of the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference; Australia is an active member of the international Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which seeks to promote practical cooperation between states to stop global trafficking in Weapons of Mass Destruction; and remains committed to assisting regional states to implement arms control and non-proliferation treaties, and promote effective national export control regimes.

“Australia will continue to lead and participate in efforts to promote disarmament and counter-proliferation through practical and cooperative measures, such as those managed through the UN,” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

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Australia's strong practical relationship with NATO reflects our overlapping security interests in global stability. Our growing cooperation has been marked by access to planning and training activities previously only available to NATO members and partner countries. In June 2008, NATO participated for the first time in ADF Exercise PITCH BLACK, our highest level of air combat exercise, and a NATO naval task group is scheduled to visit Australia in May 2009.

The Government is also promoting engagement with other multilateral bodies with which Australia shares security interests. This includes the recently announced package of targeted support to African Union (AU) peace operations involving the establishment of a Defence Attaché position in Africa, training in Australia for AU-nominated peacekeepers and the co-hosting of a peacekeeping symposium in Africa.

The Minister stated that "Ongoing humanitarian and security crises in Africa adversely affect international stability, and it is in Australia's interest to contribute to the development of African capacity to respond to these crises."

The 2009 Defence White Paper represents the most comprehensive statement on Defence ever produced. It affirms the Government's commitment to the defence of Australia, the protection of our sovereign interests and the security and stability of our region.

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