

Inaugural Australia-France 2+2 Ministerial Consultations

30 August 2021

Joint Statement

- Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France
- Florence Parly, Minister for the Armed Forces of France
- Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women of Australia
- The Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Defence of Australia

1 - At the inaugural Australia-France Foreign and Defence (2+2) Ministerial Consultations, Ministers reflected on the strength of our strategic partnership, in promoting an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region and a rules-based international order that underpins long-term security and prosperity.

2 - These discussions built on Prime Minister Morrison's official visit to Paris in June 2021, at the invitation of President Emmanuel Macron, where the two leaders agreed on common bilateral, regional and global priorities.

3 - Ministers reaffirmed the shared values, interests and principles that underpin the bilateral relationship, as reflected in the Joint Statement of Enhanced Strategic Partnership between Australia and France, and the Vision Statement on the Australia-France Relationship. They agreed to publish a report on the Australia-France initiative (AFiniti) to highlight the depth and breadth of cooperative activities.

4 - Ministers reaffirmed the importance of regional cooperation to overcome the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 and its Delta variant in the Indo-Pacific, and agreed to continue to support regional countries' responses, including through the timely and equitable distribution of safe and effective vaccines to enable comprehensive coverage across the Pacific and globally as soon as possible. They reaffirmed their common support to the ACT Accelerator and to the COVAX facility towards reaching this goal, including through vaccine dose-sharing commitments and increasing production capacities.

5 - Ministers highlighted the importance of strengthening the immediate global response to address climate change and environmental degradation. They recommitted to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and to intensify global action in the lead up to COP26 to decarbonize their economies, pursue collaboration on renewable energies and achieve a fair transition. Ministers especially welcomed collaboration on zero and low emissions technologies, including hydrogen, and looked forward to further investments in the clean energy transition. They also reaffirmed their determination to reach an ambitious framework on biodiversity protection at COP 15 to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

6 - Both sides committed to counter efforts to exploit the COVID-19 crisis to advance geopolitical ambitions, including by addressing escalations in foreign interference, disinformation and malicious cyber activity. Australia and France will cooperate further to

apply international law to digital technologies by developing common rules securing stronger and more stable infrastructure against cyber-attacks. Ministers committed to promoting economic openness and opposing coercive economic practices, which undermine rules-based international trade.

7 - Australia and France agreed to cooperate to uphold the integrity of the multilateral system and protect international rules, norms and values. Ministers committed to ensure multilateral institutions are fit-for-purpose, open and transparent, accountable to member states and free from undue influence and politicisation. They reaffirmed their continued engagement within the Alliance for Multilateralism launched by France and Germany.

8 - Both sides agreed to work together to promote their shared democratic principles and defend the universality of human rights.

International and Regional Security

9 - As partners committed for many years to helping Afghanistan build its future, Ministers expressed concern at the deepening humanitarian crisis. They condemned in the strongest possible terms the attacks carried out on 26 August and joined their Afghan, US and UK friends in mourning their terrible loss. Both sides called on the Taliban to cease all violence against civilians and respect international humanitarian law and the human rights all Afghans are entitled to, including women and girls. They called on the Taliban to fulfil their commitment to allow for the safe and unhindered departure of Afghans and foreign citizens who wish to leave the country, including after 31 August 2021. Both sides strongly supported the international community's statements of 29 August and 15 August, and agreed that any future Afghan government must adhere to Afghanistan's international obligations and commit to protect against terrorism; safeguard the human rights of all Afghans, particularly women, children, and ethnic and religious minorities; uphold the rule of law; allow unhindered and unconditional humanitarian access; and counter human and drug trafficking effectively. Ministers called on all parties in Afghanistan to work in good faith to establish a genuinely inclusive and representative government, including with the meaningful participation of women and minority groups.

10 - Ministers discussed opportunities for closer cooperation on the implementation of their respective Indo-Pacific strategies, including in the context of the updated French strategic framework for the Indo-Pacific. They welcomed the willingness of the European Union to strengthen its participation in regional fora and its role as a cooperative partner to contribute to the stability, security, prosperity and sustainable development of the region in the framework of the upcoming European Union Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

11 - Ministers underscored the importance of the strong and enduring commitment of other partners, including the United States, and Indo-Pacific partners in upholding an open, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific in accordance with international law. They reaffirmed the importance of ASEAN centrality and the critical role of ASEAN-led fora, which sit at the apex of the regional architecture, in promoting peace, stability, security and prosperity. They affirmed their support for the principles of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and to progressing practical cooperation under its four priority areas.

12 - Both sides voiced serious concerns about the situation in the South China Sea. Ministers expressed their strong opposition to destabilising or coercive actions that could increase tensions and called for all disputes to be resolved in a peaceful manner in accordance with international law, particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. They reaffirmed the importance of freedom of navigation and overflight consistent with international law and agreed to closer maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, including through future joint transits.

13 - Ministers underscored the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and encouraged the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues. They expressed support for Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organisations, in accordance with the organisations' statutes, to strengthen global cooperation on relevant issues.

14 - Ministers expressed grave concerns about credible reports of severe human rights abuses against persons belonging to Uyghur and other Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang and about the erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy and freedoms. Ministers renewed their call for China to grant urgent, meaningful and unfettered access to Xinjiang for independent international observers, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

15 - Ministers underscored their serious concerns about the crisis in Myanmar, including the rapidly deteriorating COVID-19 situation, and its implications for regional stability. They called on the military regime in Myanmar to immediately end the violence, cease measures to curtail freedom of expression, release all those arbitrarily detained and revert the country back to its democratic path. Ministers welcomed the appointment of the Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam as the ASEAN Chair's Special Envoy on Myanmar, stressed the need for a political dialogue inclusive of all relevant parties and urged the Myanmar military to engage with ASEAN to implement the "Five Point Consensus" fully and swiftly.

16 - Australia and France reaffirmed their commitment to trilateral cooperation with India on maritime safety and security, marine and environmental issues, and multilateral engagement. They commended India's prominent role in the Indian Ocean. Ministers agreed to work closely in regional fora, including the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, to foster cooperation and ensure Indian Ocean regional architecture has the capacity to address regional challenges.

17 - Ministers underscored the importance of promoting dialogue with Pacific Islands countries as recalled during the 5th France-Oceania Summit, held virtually on 19 July 2021. Ministers noted that as a Pacific nation, France brings a unique perspective to our region while amplifying the Pacific's priorities on the global stage. They agreed to support Pacific Island countries' development and resilience, particularly through coordinated projects, including on critical infrastructure. They also agreed to hold a biennial ministerial meeting on the Pacific with the Foreign Affairs and International Development and Pacific Ministers for Australia and the Foreign Affairs and Overseas Ministers for France. They reaffirmed their continued commitment to providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to our Pacific family in times of need, notably through the France-Australia-New Zealand (FRANZ) partnership, under France's chairmanship for the next two years. Ministers agreed to enhance military interoperability, in support of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, including through exercises *Croix du Sud*, *Equateur* and *Marara*.

Bilateral cooperation

18 - Australia and France welcomed the growing defence relationship and discussed practical ways to strengthen military-to-military cooperation. Ministers welcomed Australia's support for France's participation in Exercise Talisman Sabre 2023, having contributed observers to this year's exercise. Australia will work with the US and France to determine the size and scope of France's participation.

19 - Ministers agreed to begin negotiations on enhancing and diversifying France's military cooperation with Australia, in support of France's force posture in the region. The negotiations demonstrate Australia and France's shared commitment to a secure, stable and inclusive Indo-Pacific, in line with France's 2021 *Indo-Pacific Strategy* and Australia's 2020 *Defence Strategic Update*. Ministers committed to developing the concept for decision by their governments in the first quarter of 2022.

20 - Australia and France agreed to closer cooperation on military exercises in all three services, including exercises *La Perouse*, *Peronne* and *Pitch Black*, and regular information exchanges. They underscored the importance of enhanced cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and endorsed efforts underway to develop a regional plan for closer cooperation between the Australian Defence Force and French Armed Forces in New Caledonia (FANC) and French Polynesia (FAPF). Ministers discussed expanding operational-level cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. Both sides undertook to strengthen their support for Pacific Island countries, in particular through the Western Pacific Naval Symposium and the Pacific Quadrilateral Dialogue in order to enhance participating countries' naval capabilities and support maritime surveillance operations.

21 - Both sides committed to deepen defence industry cooperation and enhance their capability edge in the region. Ministers underlined the importance of the Future Submarine program. They agreed to strengthen military scientific research cooperation through a strategic partnership between the Defence Science and Technology Group and the Directorate General for Armaments.

22 - Ministers agreed to deepen space cooperation, including on the operational management of the space domain and space capabilities, including space science and technology research. They agreed to actively work together in international fora to further promote norms of responsible behaviour in space.

23 - Both countries underscored the importance of building more secure, reliable and sustainable supply chains in critical minerals, including rare earths. With this in mind, the Ministers have established a Critical Mineral Dialogue which would provide a strong basis to support Australia and France's strategic, low carbon and economic security ambition.

24 - Ministers recalled the close and long-standing collaboration of our countries in Antarctica, including our engagement in the Antarctic Treaty system and in Antarctic science and research.

25 - Ministers agreed to hold the next Australia-France 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations in 2022.