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COVER NOTE

From: European External Action Service (EEAS)

To: Delegations

Subject: Security and Defence Partnership between the European Union and the Commonwealth of Australia

SECURITY AND DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP
BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION
AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Preface

1. The European Union (EU) and the Commonwealth of Australia (Australia) recognise the challenges posed by an increasingly uncertain global security environment and common threats. Shared security challenges are multidimensional and broad reaching, encompassing both military and civilian domains, including cyber, maritime, hybrid, space, and economic security, among others. The EU and Australia recognise that Europe and the Indo-Pacific are interconnected and interdependent and that this has geopolitical, economic and security dimensions.
2. The EU and Australia are committed to democratic principles, human rights, gender equality, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, as expressed in the 2022 Framework Agreement between the EU and Australia. The need to uphold and strengthen the international rules-based order, with the United Nations (UN) Charter at its core, is fundamental to the common ambition, interests, and objectives of the EU-Australia partnership.
3. The EU and Australia's mutual commitment to peace and security across respective regions is reflected in both strategy and action. The EU's Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific adopted in 2021 and the EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence adopted in 2022 affirm the EU's intent to play a more robust role in security and defence, underpinned by strong tailored and mutually beneficial partnerships. The Strategic Compass highlights the EU's crucial geopolitical and economic interest in stability and security in the Indo-Pacific. Similarly, and alongside the EU, Australia continues its strong and steadfast support to Ukraine as it defends itself against Russia's illegal full-scale invasion, reflective of a shared belief in the importance of international law, including the UN Charter, and respect for sovereignty.
4. The cooperation between the EU and Australia supports shared strategic objectives. The

Agreement between the EU and Australia establishing a Framework for the Participation of Australia in EU crisis management operations (FPA) has been in effect since 2015. The Agreement between Australia and the EU on the Security of Classified Information was concluded in 2010.

5. The EU and Australia have a long track record of mutual coordination and alignment in the multilateral system, based on UN Charter implementation.

General Framework

6. The EU and Australia have decided to establish and implement a tailor-made, mutually beneficial Security and Defence Partnership that will frame bilateral dialogue and cooperation across the full security and defence spectrum. Building on regular exchanges between the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, and Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, in conjunction with other relevant participants as appropriate, this Security and Defence Partnership will be underpinned through dialogue and consultation mechanisms in pursuit of their mutual interests and objectives.
 - a. The annual EU-Australia Security and Defence Dialogue (the Dialogue) will be elevated to the level of the European External Action Service (EEAS) Managing Director for Peace, Security and Defence, and Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Department of Defence First Assistant Secretary level, to discuss broad strategic and thematic security and defence issues. The EU and Australia will make full use of the Dialogue to monitor the development and implementation of the Security and Defence Partnership and oversee operational cooperation.
 - b. Existing and new thematic dialogues on specific domains of shared interest will be used to coordinate respective approaches and facilitate joint action. This interaction will inform the Dialogue.

Areas of Cooperation

7. The EU and Australia will expand exchanges and cooperation in areas including those set out below:

Consultations on global and regional security issues

8. The EU and Australia will have regular exchanges on global and respective regional security developments.

Support to Ukraine

9. The EU and Australia will strengthen and enhance their collaboration to provide long-term support to Ukraine and increase pressure on Russia. The EU and Australia will work together to promote a comprehensive, just and sustainable peace, based on international law, including the UN Charter and the relevant UN General Assembly Resolutions.
10. The EU and Australia will explore options in support of Ukraine to cooperate on civil reconstruction, financial assistance and alignment on restrictive measures.
11. EU-Australia cooperation in support of Ukraine will fully respect the security and defence policy and interests of EU Member States and Australia.

Maritime security, including operational cooperation and exercises

12. The EU and Australia are committed to expanding their engagement on maritime security issues affecting peace, stability and security across the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic regions.
13. The EU and Australia will seek opportunities to deepen engagement, aimed at promoting a peaceful, open and rules-based regional maritime security architecture, including secure sea lines of communication and freedoms of navigation and overflight, in accordance with international law, in particular the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
14. The EU and Australia will work together to uphold international standards and regulations on maritime safety and the environment, including in the framework of the International Maritime Organization.
15. The EU and Australia will seek to increase operational cooperation and coordination, including through joint activities at sea.
16. The EU and Australia will enhance cooperation on the protection of critical maritime infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific, including through capacity building initiatives for coastal states, exchanging best practices on relevant regulatory and legislative regimes and conducting training activities.

17. The EU and Australia will look for opportunities to reinforce sharing of information on respective maritime security capacity building initiatives with partner countries. They will engage in cooperation on the protection of submarine cables and other critical maritime infrastructure.
18. Recognising that the Russian shadow fleet poses both security and environmental risks, the EU and Australia will work together promoting action to address the challenge.

Cyber issues

19. The EU and Australia will continue to enhance cooperation on cyber issues by leveraging EU-Australia cyber consultations and exchanging on topics including the cyber threat landscape, artificial intelligence (AI), as well as on their respective policy frameworks and new legislation, and coordination of cyber capacity building efforts with regional partners.
20. The EU and Australia will share expertise on their respective cyber security frameworks, including through enhanced information sharing to prevent, deter, and respond to malicious cyber activities and will seek opportunities to coordinate responses to such activities.
21. The EU and Australia will continue to coordinate and cooperate at multilateral, regional, and bilateral levels on cyber-related international initiatives, in particular to advance the implementation of the UN framework for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace under the new UN Global Mechanism, as well as in the context of the UN Convention against Cybercrime.

Countering hybrid threats and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI)

22. The EU and Australia will explore further exchanges on hybrid threats, including through information sharing and collaboration between EU and Australian academic institutions, research entities, think tanks, and centres of excellence.
23. The EU and Australia will continue to share best practices in developing strategies and policies to counter foreign interference and hybrid threats, including coordinating responses, cooperating on capacity building and awareness raising in the Indo-Pacific, shaping narrative through strategic communication initiatives, as well as exploring cross-participation in exercises and scenario-based discussions, as appropriate.

24. The EU and Australia will deepen exchanges on approaches to countering hybrid threats, foreign interference, and other malign actions, including on respective legislative and regulatory measures, as well as measures to address vulnerabilities across critical domains (including protection of critical infrastructure, energy production, transport and aviation security, and democratic institutions).
25. The EU and Australia will continue bilateral and multilateral exchanges on FIMI, threat assessment and mitigation options (including strategic communication) with a focus on more structured and impactful cooperation.
26. As appropriate, the EU and Australia will consider joint responses to FIMI, either bilaterally or via relevant multilateral mechanisms such as the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism.

Emerging and disruptive technologies, including AI

27. The EU and Australia will exchange information on the security and resilience of emerging disruptive technologies, including on research security.
28. The EU and Australia will consult on the responsible use of AI in security and defence, including in multilateral fora.

Situational awareness and information exchange, including intelligence and classified information

29. The EU and Australia will strengthen cooperation through exchanges on situational awareness and threat assessments in areas of common interest, including classified information.
30. The EU and Australia will continue to ensure the security of the exchanges of classified information and will revise the current Security of Information Agreement.

Defence initiatives, including exchange of information on defence industry related matters

31. The EU and Australia will consult on their respective defence initiatives, tools and instruments related to security and defence. The EU and Australia will explore possible mutual involvement in respective defence initiatives in accordance with respective legal frameworks. Discussions may explore interest and possibilities for participation in EU

defence capability initiatives such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework, in accordance with the general conditions under which third States could exceptionally be invited to participate in individual PESCO projects.

32. The EU and Australia will explore further exchanges on the development of respective security and defence initiatives, including on enhancing defence readiness, enhancing interoperability and exchanging information on defence industry-related matters.
33. The possibility to establish mutually beneficial cooperation between Australia and the European Defence Agency (EDA) could also be explored, in line with respective processes.

Exercises, training and education in security and defence

34. The EU and Australia will explore cooperation in the field of training and education related to security and defence, in particular related to Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and crisis management, including developing cooperation with the European Security and Defence College (ESDC).

Space security

35. The EU and Australia will build cooperation in areas of space security to ensure a safe, secure, and sustainable space, including stand-alone dialogue, in conjunction with the EU-Australia Space Dialogue.
36. The EU and Australia will coordinate in bilateral and multilateral fora (including at the UN) to promote norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour in outer space, and will engage with third countries to advance this goal.

Arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, including conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons (SALW), and demining

37. The EU and Australia will continue consultations on arms control and disarmament, non-proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction, and the international transfer of conventional weapons, as well as in the area of responsible AI in the military domain and lethal autonomous weapon systems. Consultations will also cover exchanges and coordinated action on existing and emerging proliferation and arms control challenges.
38. The EU and Australia will promote shared awareness on key issues related to disarmament

and non-proliferation.

39. The EU and Australia will maintain close coordination within the frameworks of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and other key multilateral instruments and export control regimes.
40. The EU and Australia will work to strengthen global adherence to core international non-proliferation instruments, as well as export control regimes including the Australia Group, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), and the Global Framework for Through-Life Conventional Ammunition Management, without prejudging national positions.
41. The EU and Australia will also look to promote support for relevant multilateral institutions, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

Counterterrorism (CT) and preventing/countering violent extremism

42. The EU and Australia will continue to strengthen exchanges and cooperation on counterterrorism through their regular Counterterrorism Dialogue. They will further explore the potential for cooperation and interaction in matters such as the online dimension of radicalisation, the misuse of new and emerging technologies, countering terrorist financing, and combating all forms of hatred, discrimination and violence on any grounds.
43. The EU and Australia will continue to work collaboratively on CT and preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) in multilateral and regional fora, including in the UN framework, to promote an approach to counterterrorism based on human rights and respect for the rule of law.

Climate change and security nexus

44. The EU and Australia will strengthen their cooperation on the climate change and security nexus by addressing the security implications of climate-related impacts on infrastructure, equipment, training and readiness, operations, policy, and planning, including defence, security, and civil protection strategies, without compromising operational capabilities and

effectiveness.

45. The EU and Australia will enhance exchanges and coordination on climate and security in relevant multilateral fora in which they are active, including on fragile and conflict-affected settings vulnerable to climate change.

Capacity building for partners in security and defence

46. The EU and Australia will explore opportunities for coordination, cooperation and synergies in support of capacity building for partners in the field of security and defence, including through potential Australian engagement with dedicated EU instruments. The European Peace Facility (EPF) enables the possibility for third states to provide voluntary contributions.

Cooperation in third countries and in multilateral fora

47. EU Delegations and Australian Missions in third countries will seek opportunities to further strengthen bilateral cooperation, as well as cooperation within like-minded groups, in areas relevant to the Security and Defence Partnership.
48. The EU and Australia will engage with like-minded countries on security and defence matters where this is in their mutual interest. The EU and Australia will also regularly invite their representatives to high-level security and defence policy events. The EU and Australia will further strengthen cooperation and regular consultations on multilateral affairs, including on matters related to the United Nations and other institutions in which both are active members.

International peace and crisis management, especially peacekeeping operations and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations

49. The EU and Australia will further strengthen their longstanding cooperation in the field of security and crisis management. Australia will expand its participation in the EU CSDP civilian and military missions and operations, making full use of its FPA with the EU.
50. Australia will be invited to observe and/or participate in EU crisis management exercises, including exercises involving CSDP, and Australia will invite the EU, including the EU Military Staff (EUMS), to observe and/or participate in relevant crisis management

exercises, as appropriate.

51. The EU and Australia will exchange information on respective contributions and support to UN peacekeeping operations.
52. The EU and Australia will strengthen cooperation in emergency planning and international crisis management between their respective headquarters, including their crisis response centres (the EEAS Crisis Response Centre and Australia's DFAT Crisis Centre), and across their networks of diplomatic missions abroad.
53. The EU and Australia will deepen their cooperation and coordination on consular matters affecting the safety and security of their citizens in third countries, including on consular crisis preparedness and response. They will continue to hold their yearly dialogue on consular matters.
54. The EU and Australia will seek to cooperate on consular assistance to their citizens, which may include facilitating assistance to those who cannot be represented locally by their country of nationality.

Peace mediation and conflict prevention

55. The EU and Australia will cooperate on early warning, conflict prevention and peace mediation by sharing methodologies, best practices and coordinating support to peacebuilding initiatives in the Indo-Pacific region.
56. The EU and Australia will enhance their coordination on shared priorities in peace, conflict prevention and crisis management in multilateral fora, including UN bodies, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Organisation for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), where Australia is a Partner for Cooperation.

External aspects of economic security

57. The EU and Australia will build on the Australia – EU Strategic Trade, Investment and Economic Dialogue to exchange views on external aspects of their respective economic security policies, with the aim of addressing shared risks while maintaining and improving a well-functioning international rules-based system to continue to benefit from an open economy.

58. The EU and Australia will continue to build secure and sustainable critical and strategic minerals value chains between the EU and Australia that support key industrial sectors, including defence, in line with the 2024 Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and Australia on a Strategic Partnership on Sustainable Critical and Strategic Minerals.

External aspects of human security

59. The EU and Australia will strengthen cooperation in the external dimension of fighting transnational organised crime, and work together in breaking the business model of global criminal networks engaged in drugs trafficking, online scam operations, migrant smuggling, and trafficking in persons, including for forced criminality.

Women, Peace, and Security

60. The EU and Australia are committed to the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which is rooted in UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and its nine follow-up resolutions.

61. The EU and Australia will ensure that gender equality is integrated in all areas and at all levels of cooperation on security and defence. The EU and Australia will exchange best practices and lessons learned on implementing the WPS agenda.

62. The EU and Australia will continue close collaboration, including in response to emerging security and geopolitical shifts, to ensure gender equality remains a political and security related priority. This includes collaborating to counter efforts to reverse global progress on gender equality and the rights of women and girls.

Way Forward

63. The areas identified in the Security and Defence Partnership will be reviewed regularly in the framework of the annual EU Australia Security and Defence Dialogue, taking stock of progress made and providing impetus, with a view to further strengthening and developing cooperation.

64. The content of the Security and Defence Partnership will be reviewed as appropriate.
