

Joint Declaration on relations between Australia and the European Union

Introduction

A Joint Declaration on Relations between Australia and the European Union was signed on 26 June 1997. The Joint Declaration formalised the two sides' commitment to a wide-ranging bilateral cooperation agenda, which had been developing over the previous few years. The Declaration outlines mutual objectives for cooperation across a wide range of areas including science and technology, employment, mutual recognition of standards, competition and consumer policy, education and the environment. It also formalises arrangements for Ministerial and officials-level dialogue on key bilateral and international political, economic and trade issues. The Declaration underlines both sides' commitment to enhanced cooperation in international fora to support common goals such as further multilateral trade liberalisation and the international promotion and protection of human rights.

Australia shares with the EU a deeply held commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights. The two sides have an established record of international cooperation on human rights in such bodies as the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly.

1. Preamble

We, Australia, on the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, on the other, having regard to:

our close historical, political, economic and cultural ties;

our shared commitments to the respect and promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law which underpin our internal and international policies;

the achievements already accomplished in the consolidation and development of our long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationship;

the need for heightened international cooperation in an increasingly interdependent world;

our common interest in international peace, security and stability, and in sustainable development;

our common commitment to free and open market principles and the strengthening of the multilateral trading system in accordance with the aims and principles of the WTO, and the development of a healthy and prosperous world economy;

the progress and accomplishments of the European Union and the growing importance of the Asia-Pacific region and Australia's position as a major country in that region;

have further decided to strengthen our relations and to cooperate across the many areas in which we have shared interests, to the mutual benefit of our peoples, and to endow our mutual relations with a long-term perspective.

2. Common Goals

We reaffirm our determination to build upon our partnership in order to:

support democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

support peace and promote international security in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations;

support international efforts in the areas of the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, the non-proliferation of missile technology and the international transfer of conventional weapons;

pursue policies aimed at achieving a sound world economy marked by sustained economic growth with low inflation, a high level of employment, environmental protection, equitable social conditions and a stable international financial system;

promote free market principles, improve market access in conformity with the WTO rules, and expand, promote and strengthen the multilateral trade system;

foster mutual knowledge and understanding between our people and of our cultures;

reaffirm our commitment to help developing countries in their pursuit of sustainable development and their efforts towards implementing political and economic reforms by improving development assistance, broadening market access and encouraging the efficient use of foreign assistance and national resources.

3. Dialogue and cooperation

To further these goals, we will inform and consult each other with the objective to seek closer cooperation. We will enhance our dialogue, both bilaterally and in the relevant international fora, in particular on the following areas:

the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this respect we will consult bilaterally and within the framework of the relevant bodies of the UN, especially the UN Commission on Human Rights, on human rights issues in general and, in particular, on how to advance our shared objectives of promoting human rights internationally;

issues which affect world peace and security, including non-military threats to security such as terrorism, the fight against organised crime, and the illicit trade in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;

means of strengthening the United Nations and other international organisations and improving their effectiveness;

the promotion, in full respect of international laws and treaties, of peace, stability and prosperity in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region;

migration, asylum and refugee protection issues;

questions concerning the information society, including the protection of personal data, and ways of preventing the use of the Internet to spread child pornography and other information which encourages child abuse.

Trade and economic cooperation

We recognise the importance of strengthening the multilateral trading system and will continue to work together to support further trade liberalisation, greater transparency and the implementation of the WTO and OECD principles concerning both trade in goods and services and investment.

We will pursue our dialogue on multilateral trade issues in the light of developments in the WTO, including the outcomes of WTO Ministerial meetings.

We declare our intention to strengthen, expand and diversify our bilateral trade in goods and services as well as investments including through mutual efforts to improve market access and the flow of goods and services, in accordance with our respective international commitments.

To those ends we will:

devote attention, in the area of services, to examine opportunities in the sectors of telecommunications, financial, maritime and professional services, on the basis of liberal and non-discriminatory principles;

strengthen our bilateral dialogue on matters such as barriers to trade and trade facilitation, the protection of traditional expressions as provided for in the Wine Agreement, customs cooperation, standards and certification, public procurement access, the protection of geographical indications in conformity with the WTO TRIPS Agreement, as well as on veterinary, sanitary and phytosanitary matters;

promote contacts and cooperation on agriculture and fisheries, and examine in a spirit of cooperation and good will the opportunities in our trade in agricultural and fisheries products;

exchange information and encourage cooperation on industry, including information technology, mining, transport and energy, and, as appropriate, on aspects of our policies such as those related to competition and consumer protection.

The existing consultative mechanisms will continue to play an active role in this respect through regular exchanges and meetings.

Employment

Having in mind the similar challenges faced by our respective societies and our role as partners in the world economy, we underline the importance of creating employment opportunities.

We will exchange views on our experience and ideas in this respect and will endeavour to strengthen our cooperation in the relevant fora such as OECD and ILO.

Scientific and cultural cooperation, education and training.

With due respect to the existing linguistic and cultural diversity, we recognise the importance to promote better understanding and interaction between the peoples of the Member States of the EU and the people of Australia, including broader knowledge of their languages, cultures and institutions.

Having that in mind, we will also promote dialogue aimed at:

strengthening our mutual cooperation in the fields of education and training, science and technology including the information society;

providing support to actions that further develop our links in the fields of communication, information, culture and education, including academic and youth exchanges;

exchanging expertise and information including on the recognition of academic qualifications, new educational technologies, and partnerships between education and training institutions and practitioners.

Environment

We confirm that we will continue and strengthen our cooperation on environmental matters, both bilaterally and through international agreements and conventions.

Development cooperation

We attach a high priority to our respective policies to help developing countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable development and to alleviate poverty. In order to better achieve our common objectives, we will, as far as possible, coordinate our efforts and exchange pertinent information to this effect, in particular as regards the South Pacific region.

4. Framework for Dialogue and Consultations

We believe that our partnership will greatly benefit from the mutual knowledge and understanding, in particular through:

consultations at ministerial level between Australia, the President of the Council, the European Commission;

consultations as appropriate between officials of both sides to cover relevant aspects of the relationship, including briefings, as necessary, to Australian representatives on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) meetings, and by Australia to the Presidency and the European Commission on Australia's foreign policy, including in relation to developments in the Asia Pacific region.

Summit meetings between the Prime Minister of Australia, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission could also be considered if necessary.

We welcome the action taken by the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia and the European Parliament to improve their dialogue and thereby bring our respective peoples closer together.

We resolve to develop and deepen the existing procedures for consultation in the light of the evolution of our relationship.

Done at Luxembourg on the twenty-sixth day of June in the year one thousand nine hundred and ninety seven.