Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Australia-UK Ministerial Consultations: Communique

2012-01-24

Full text of the Communique:

The close partnership between the UK and Australia helps to safeguard national security and foster economic prosperity in both countries. The links between our two nations are profound, underscored by frequent high-level dialogue and wide-ranging people-to-people links. We continue to cooperate and coordinate closely on a wide range of global security, foreign policy and economic issues.

The UK and Australia reaffirmed today the importance of our collaboration. In a globalised and interconnected world, our partnership is as important today as it was for previous generations. These talks highlighted the enduring importance and the current practical value of our long-standing relationship. In the twelve months since the last AUKMIN there have been momentous political, security and economic developments, including in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Asia, in cyberspace, and in the global financial system. These events, and the uncertainty which they can cause, have reinforced the value of a strong and trusting UK-Australia strategic partnership. On these global issues, the UK and Australia have a shared agenda: promoting peace and security, encouraging openness in trade and investment, and seeking to protect the vulnerable. We have been working towards these goals together during this year, and will keep doing so.

Our discussions today covered North Asia, South-East Asia, the events that are unfolding in the Gulf region, building our relationships with emerging powers, the evolving political and security architecture in Asia Pacific and developments in the Indian Ocean region. Ministers discussed progress towards the transition to Afghan-led security and agreed on the importance of the international community agreeing to their long-term post-transition commitment at the NATO/ISAF Summit in Chicago in May. Ministers also agreed on the importance of continued international support to Pakistan. Our dialogue and cooperation on these issues reinforce the value of our bilateral relations - based on our shared history and values, and mutual respect.

In today’s AUKMIN talks, we discussed Asia, recognising the central importance of this region for UK and Australian economic and security interests. Australia welcomed the UK’s commitment to practical and effective engagement in Asia and the Pacific, including through

the FPDA. Ministers welcomed the expansion of the East Asia Summit as a substantial step forward in the security and economic architecture of the Asia Pacific.

We discussed the need to engage constructively with China and other countries in the region to help address shared priorities, such as climate change, good governance, security challenges, sustainable economic development, development assistance, human rights and key foreign policy issues such as Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK). We discussed the situation on the Korean Peninsula and agreed that the succession to Kim Jong-Un presents an opportunity for the DPRK to change, to reform its economy so it can feed its people, to cease its nuclear and missile programs and address its human rights record.

We discussed the role the UK and Australia can play together to contribute to regional stability and security, including through diplomatic, development and defence engagement. We underscored the increasing significance of India's role for maritime security in the Indian Ocean. We also discussed more broadly the security challenges facing the Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific regions, including piracy and terrorism, and look forward to the UK's upcoming conference on Somalia, and Australia's conference on piracy. We committed ourselves to sharing strategic insights and aligning our thinking with like-minded partners on key regional security issues. We also considered how developments and relations in the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions could best contribute to the maintenance of security and stability.

Ministers welcomed recent positive developments in Burma, and underlined that the UK and Australia both stand ready to support Burma's reform process. We welcomed Aung San Suu Kyi's participation in Burma's political process, the recent release of a substantial number of political prisoners and ceasefire agreements in a number of ethnic conflict areas. We underlined the need for Burma's up-coming by-elections to be free and fair and for all stakeholders to continue to work towards the peaceful resolution of ethnic conflicts. Australia and the UK discussed recent developments in Fiji and agreed on the importance of continuing to work together to encourage Fiji's return to democracy and rule of law as soon as possible.

We reflected that AUKMIN III in January 2011 had been held just days before the events in the Arab world began to unfold. The past year has witnessed upheaval and change across much of the Middle East and North Africa. The UK and Australia worked together to protect civilians and promote our democratic values. In our discussions today, we also considered the challenges that the Arab Awakening had presented for neighbouring countries, particularly the Gulf States. We considered the expectations of people of the region, particularly on good governance, accountability, employment opportunities and economic and structural reforms. We agreed on the importance of economic, social and political reforms across the region.

Australia and the UK agreed on the need to increase pressure on Iran, even as we maintain our commitment to a negotiated solution to the Iran nuclear situation. The regime needs to hear very clearly from the international community that its present course is unacceptable and that it needs to abide by its obligations under multiple UN Security Council and International Atomic Energy Agency Resolutions.

We also agreed on the need to maintain pressure on the Assad regime in Syria; to put an end to the bloodshed and for Assad to step aside so that peaceful political reform can occur. Australia and the UK continue to register our support for the efforts of the Arab League to bring a resolution to this crisis.

During the discussions, we reiterated our serious concern about the current stalemate in the Middle East Peace Process and our commitment to continue to work for a just and lasting resolution to the conflict. We welcomed Jordanian efforts to bring the parties together under the Quartet framework but shared concern about developments in 2011 that threatened the peace process. We call on Israel to cease settlement activity. We also shared concern about escalations of violence and call for an end to threats to security including rocket attacks on Israeli civilians.

The UK and Australia have a special and enduring relationship and we are committed to working together in concrete and practical ways to promote security and prosperity. We look forward to the next AUKMIN talks, to be held in Australia in early 2013.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/australia-uk-ministerial-consultations-communique