

Joint Ministerial media release: inaugural German-Australian 2+2 Ministerial Meeting in Berlin on September 6, 2016

Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Federal Foreign Minister
Dr Ursula von der Leyen, Federal Minister of Defence
The Hon Julie Bishop MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs
Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Australian Minister for Defence

Berlin, 6 September 2016

The Australia-Germany 2+2 Ministerial Meeting, which we convened in Berlin today, marks a significant milestone in the bilateral relationship. With the first 2+2 meeting between our countries, Germany and Australia take their Strategic Partnership of the 2013 Berlin-Canberra Declaration to a new level, also building on the work of the Australian-German Advisory Group.

Our agenda focused on foreign policy and defence and security matters, such as the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, as well as strategic issues in the Asia-Pacific region. Australia and Germany called for urgent agreement on a cessation of hostilities to enable humanitarian access in Syria and for a political resolution of the crisis. Ministers called on all relevant actors to work towards a political resolution of the conflict in Ukraine. To that end, they underscored the importance of the speedy and comprehensive implementation of the Minsk agreements. Ministers recognised that peace and stability in the South China Sea is an issue of global concern. They urged all parties to exercise restraint, ease tensions and resolve disputes peacefully in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS. They reaffirmed the importance to all countries of upholding the existing rules-based international order.

In the framework of the Working Group on Stabilization of the C-ISIL coalition, Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, Federal Minister of Defence Dr. Ursula von der Leyen and Australian Minister for Defence Senator the Hon. Marise Payne agreed on the importance of stabilisation in liberated areas to achieve stability in the long-term. Australian Ministers commended the leading role played by Germany on post-liberation stabilisation efforts. German Ministers recognized Australia's strong commitment to degrading and defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

The Defence White Papers, which our countries released in February and July this year, were another focus of the discussion. Both Defence Ministers agreed to continue the good level of bilateral defence cooperation in different areas of mutual interest, such as interoperability issues, exercise participation and closer people-to-people relationships. In addition, our countries will continue their close cooperation within the framework of NATO.

In Afghanistan, Germany and Australia will continue to train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces through the Resolute Support Mission. They will continue to cooperate in supporting development and stabilization in Afghanistan.

Australia and Germany will explore opportunities to strengthen cooperation on counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism, including through identifying and potentially collaborating on activities aimed at combating the growing threat from international terrorism and violent extremism.

On the basis of shared values and our strong ties, Australia is a strategic partner of the European Union. The European Union and Australia are planning to sign a political Framework Agreement by the end of 2016 and are working towards negotiations for a Free-Trade Agreement. Australia supports active European Union engagement in the Asia-Pacific security system, including through all relevant ASEAN-led processes.

In the framework of our dialogue on migration and refugees, we welcome the political momentum generated by the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants on September 19 and the Leaders' Summit on Refugees on September 20. We are jointly committed to improving the situation of refugees worldwide and to promoting increased international responsibility sharing, as well as more efficient global migration governance. Australia and Germany are committed to continuing dialogue on migration and integration of refugees and migrants.

We welcomed the dynamic ongoing cooperation between Germany and Australia on a broad range of issues, such as think-tank cooperation, security matters and exchange of diplomatic personnel.

Germany and Australia wish to conclude negotiations to update the Agreement on the mutual Protection of Classified Information swiftly to reflect political, technological and practical developments in the exchange of classified information since the existing Agreement was signed in 1979.

Our meeting reflected the high quality of bilateral engagement under the German-Australian Strategic Partnership. We look forward to the next round of 2+2 consultations in Australia in 2018.