

# Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of Australia and Latvia

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On 8 August, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator the Hon Penny Wong and Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkēvičs met in Canberra.

Ministers emphasised the historic moment in the bilateral relationship and the deepening engagement offered by the opening of Latvia's first ever Embassy in Canberra. Ministers noted that Australia's and Latvia's shared values were deeply rooted in strong people to people links, including post-Second World War migration. They recognised the significant contributions made by Australians of Latvian heritage to contemporary Australia, including in culture, education, and business.

Ministers firmly committed to uphold human rights, the rule of law and the rules-based international order. Latvia and Australia agreed to work together to address challenges to our shared values and interests in Europe and in the Indo-Pacific. Minister Rinkēvičs expressed Latvia's support for a robust implementation of the European Union's Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and readiness to partner with Australia in this regard. Minister Wong welcomed Latvia's and the EU's commitment to contribute to stability, security, prosperity and sustainable development in the region.

The Ministers strongly condemned Russia's illegal, unprovoked and brutal war against Ukraine and its people that has serious implications for international security and stability. They reaffirmed their steadfast support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, denounced the grave violations by Russia of international law, including the United Nations Charter. Latvia and Australia called on Russia to immediately withdraw its armed forces from Ukraine, and affirmed their robust support to the international efforts to hold Russia accountable for its actions. Both ministers noted the significant challenges associated with rebuilding Ukraine, which will require sustained international cooperation.

Ministers welcomed the outcomes from the NATO Leaders' Summit in Madrid, noting the inclusion of the Indo-Pacific in NATO's Strategic Concept and, efforts to strengthen security in the Baltic region. They recognised the strong capabilities that Sweden and Finland would bring as members. Ministers shared views on cyber cooperation and opportunities with NATO to address

ongoing threats and new challenges, including in the Indo-Pacific. Minister Rinkēvičs welcomed Australia's commitment to deepen joint efforts to counter disinformation and foreign interference, including its decision to become a contributing partner to NATO's Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga.

Ministers underscored the importance of Europe-Asia cooperation and welcomed the EU's longstanding engagement in regional architecture, including the ASEAN Regional Forum and its upcoming observership of the 2022 East Asia Summit. Ministers acknowledged the need to work together on multilateral issues including disarmament, non-proliferation, the fight against disinformation, human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Ministers also reiterated commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, including the full, equal, and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all stages of peace processes. Ministers discussed the urgent challenge of addressing climate change, including the need to accelerate clean energy transition, and to maintain and enhance energy security.

Ministers welcomed the growth in Australia and Latvia's trade ties in the past five years. They agreed trade would be boosted through the swift conclusion of an ambitious Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the EU, which should include avenues for cooperation on energy and climate. Both sides committed to progress negotiations on an Air Services Agreement, and a Work and Holiday Visa Arrangement to foster economic and people-to-people links.

Ministers agreed Australia and Latvia would continue to work closely on issues of mutual interest to tackle the complexity of global challenges.

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