

**Statement by Ambassador David Stuart**

**Head of Delegation for Australia**

**21<sup>st</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council, Basel**

**5 December 2014**

**Long version – please check against delivery**

We congratulate Switzerland on their chairmanship of the OSCE in what has been a most difficult year. Australia has appreciated Chairperson-in-Office Burkhalter's leadership during the chairmanship, and thank you for your hospitality in Basel. We would also like to thank Ukraine for its chairmanship of the Asian Partners Contact Group in 2014, especially during such a challenging time for their country. We wish Serbia well as it takes up the OSCE Chair for 2015.

The **Ukraine** crisis has been a severe test for the OSCE. But it is far more acute for the people and Government of Ukraine. We congratulate them for the elections successfully held there in May and October. Let us all recognise their resilience in the face of widespread suffering and loss of life. Australia has put its position clearly in the UN Security Council. We have urged the Russian Federation to abide by its international obligations, respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and to halt its campaign of destabilisation in eastern Ukraine. We will not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea.

Australia may be geographically distant from Ukraine, but events have shown that no country is immune from the effects of the ongoing crisis. 298 innocent people aboard MH17, including 38 who called Australia home, lost their lives when the plane was shot down. The international community must remain focused on finding, prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators of this cowardly attack on civilians, and provide full support and cooperation for the investigations led by our Dutch colleagues. The

implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2166 must remain at the forefront of the international response.

We would like to reiterate to the Ministerial Council our gratitude to the OSCE. Your role in facilitating access to the crash site was essential to the recovery of victims' remains and beginning investigations. In particular, we thank Ambassador Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, for his ongoing efforts and cooperation. We also thank Ambassador Tagliavini for her efforts to secure a peaceful resolution to this crisis. Australia fully supports the work of the SMM in Ukraine, and we were pleased to have been contributed financially.

Australia appreciated the opportunity to address the threat of **foreign terrorist fighters** during its presentation at the Asian Partners for Cooperation Contact Group Meeting on 7 November. The situation that has developed in Syria and Iraq poses possibly the most serious global terrorist threat since 9/11. This is a shared security threat, and the international community must combat it together. The OSCE can, and should, contribute to this effort, and Australia would welcome ongoing dialogue and cooperation on this issue.

Australia participated in the **Asian Partners Conference in Japan** in June. We welcomed the Conference's focus on improving gender equality, and the security of women and girls, which were the themes of the Asian Partner's conference hosted by Australia in 2013.

**Women** are particularly susceptible to violence during times of conflict, emergencies and crisis. So we applaud, and will continue to champion, **the United Kingdom's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative**; including the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, which was launched in June at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

We encourage all participating States to give priority to these issues in the OSCE.

Australia congratulates President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Dr Abdullah on the peaceful formation of the National Unity Government in **Afghanistan**. We look forward to working with the National Unity Government as it leads on security and on efforts to reform the economy, fight corruption and reinforce the rule of law.

Australia remains committed to support the sustainment of Afghanistan's security forces and institutions, and welcomes OSCE engagement and support for Afghanistan through OSCE regional training initiatives.

Australia deplores the signing of a so-called agreement on an alliance and strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and those who purport to represent Abkhazia. We call on the Russian Federation to engage in constructive dialogue with **Georgia**, and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

Finally, there is an aspect of the OSCE's work which we believe to be particularly valuable: the role of **the OSCE's field missions**. I have mentioned the work of the SMM in Ukraine, but we also appreciate the efforts of the OSCE field missions to support political dialogue and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its constructive role in Kosovo.