

Statement to the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting Plenary Session on dealing with ongoing international tensions

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Minister for Finance
Minister for Women
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Date

Wednesday, 21 February 2024

Thank you very much, Chair. And I thank Brazil for leading an ambitious and action-oriented G20 agenda, and for the warm welcome we have received in Rio de Janeiro – one of the world's great cities and the site of Australia's first Embassy in Latin America, established in 1946. At the outset, I want to also welcome the African Union as a permanent G20 member. Australia looks forward to your contributions. Increased African representation is vital to jointly address the most urgent global challenges.

Australia recognises the G20 as the premier forum for global economic cooperation on shared challenges, and for pursuing strong, sustainable, and inclusive growth. Growth which lifts living standards across our societies and creates secure, well-paid jobs. The strongest foundation for this growth is peace and stability. I have heard it said that the G20 is not the right place to discuss geopolitical issues and that it should stick to economic matters. On the contrary, the people in this room – with over 30 country representatives – are exactly the right people to discuss the conflicts and tensions that have significant impact on all our economies, affecting millions of people.

The G20 has a global leadership role, and we can only solve our biggest challenges as a group. By listening to each other and by acting together, all of us can choose to shape the world for the better. I thank our host, Brazil, and the Troika members India and South Africa for their thoughtful contribution.

Australia is deeply alarmed by the conflict in the Middle East. The humanitarian catastrophe is dire and worsening. We repeat our condemnation of Hamas and its abhorrent October 7 attacks. The price of defeating Hamas cannot be the continuous suffering of all Palestinian civilians. Australia reiterates our call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and humanitarian access, the release of hostages and for the protection of civilians. We urge all parties to prevent regional escalation.

We reiterate our grave concerns about the potential of a major Israeli ground offensive in Rafah. This would bring further devastation to more than a million civilians seeking shelter, many there by Israel's direction. Australia believes this would be unjustifiable, and we say again to Israel: do not go down this path.

There is no lasting peace or security for the region that doesn't start with all sides respecting each other's right to exist. There is no lasting peace or security for the region without a Palestinian state alongside an Israeli state.

As we approach two years since Russia's full-scale invasion, Australia repeats our calls for Russia to immediately cease its aggression against Ukraine. The invasion and its associated

suffering must end. If we hesitate in our response, we would be validating the most fundamental of breaches of international law by a P5 member. For this reason, Australia will continue to work with partners to ensure that those providing materiel support to Russia face consequences. Security threats reverberate globally and impact us all. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had far-reaching economic consequences, including for Australia and our Indo-Pacific neighbours.

How we – as the G20 – respond matters.

Australia mourns the tragic death of Alexei Navalny, a courageous force for democracy in Russia, whose treatment was unforgiveable. Our thoughts are with Mr Navalny's family and the people of Russia. We hold the Russian government solely responsible for his mistreatment and death.

More broadly, the risk of sharpening competition between major powers spilling into conflict is increasing. As established international rules and norms that have underwritten stability and prosperity come under growing pressure, the possibility of such conflict is no longer inconceivable. Strategic competition is not a new development, but with unprecedented economic interdependence and the destructive potential of new technologies, never have the stakes been so high.

We need to commit anew to reinforcing preventive architecture to reduce the risk of crisis, conflict, and war by accident. In our region – the Indo-Pacific – there is unprecedented military build-up, yet transparency and strategic reassurance are lacking. It is up to all of us to act to minimise the risk of misunderstanding and miscalculation to prevent catastrophic conflict.

This is why Australia is contributing to a strategic regional balance that keeps the peace in the Indo-Pacific. We seek to strengthen measures for conflict prevention that reinforce the region's existing economic and security architecture. We are helping to maintain the conditions for peace through our diplomacy – while playing our part in contributing, openly and transparently, to collective deterrence of aggression.

We seek a region and a world where no country dominates, and no country is dominated. This is also why Australia remains steadfast in our commitment to the multilateral system with the United Nations at its heart. All countries have a stake in the UN Charter and must exercise their agency to uphold it. Australia has always pursued a world where differences and disputes are settled through institutions and agreed rules and norms – not by power and size.

We must also not lose sight of other global challenges. Climate change is happening faster than our combined efforts to stop it. The Pacific region is on the frontline of climate change. This makes it more important than ever that Pacific leaders are heard to inform global solutions. Australia has substantially increased our support for climate finance. This includes supporting the Pacific's own climate finance solution having announced \$100 million for the Pacific Resilience Facility.

Among other challenges, we know humanitarian needs are increasing. Australia is part of the global response. In the last twelve months we provided humanitarian assistance for more than twenty crises when the UN requested international support.

Australia is steadfastly committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – as the best chance to collectively end poverty and hunger everywhere; combat inequalities; and build just, prosperous, and inclusive societies. With just under seven years left, the time is now to double down on concrete implementation to deliver on what we agreed. That is why Australia is

providing record international development investments to meet partners' needs in line with the SDGs.

I want to thank Brazil again for its leadership and Australia looks forward to continuing the agenda with President Lula throughout Brazil's presidency.

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Media Contact(s)

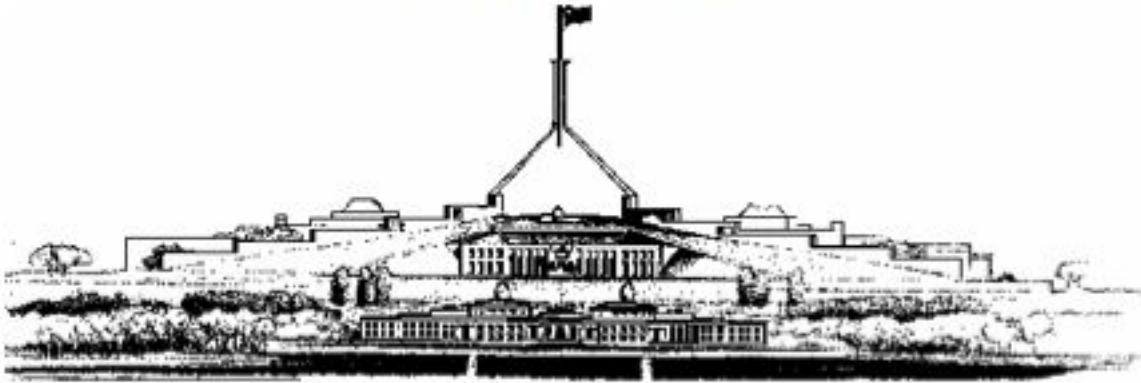
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Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for Finance



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

SPEECH

Monday, 26 February 2024

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 26 February 2024 Page 357 Questioner Speaker Gallagher, Sen Katy</p>	<p>Source Senate Proof No Responder Question No.</p>
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Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (10:27): It's of deep regret that the Senate continues to face suspension motions like this from the Greens political party, who are clearly only looking for ways to use this crisis to whip up anger to gain votes. We heard that in the presentation from Senator Steele-John, who perpetuates incorrect statements. We have not sold arms to Israel. We have increased funding for multiple agencies in Palestine. Don't come in here and try to whip it up, as you have done in previous sittings. How about the Senate work together on a pathway for peace and on keeping our community unified? It's clearly not what you want, but that is the responsible approach from an Australian government and an Australian parliament.

We are a respected voice on the conflict in the Middle East, even if we're not a central player in it. The government is using Australia's voice to advocate for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and humanitarian access, the release of hostages and the protection of civilians. If the Greens were really concerned about the crisis in the Middle East, they would be engaged in the discussions for a pathway to peace and keeping our community unified. They continue to reproduce the conflict here to whip up anger and fear and to perpetuate myths in the Australian community because they think there are votes in it for them. I remind the Greens that right now there are 130 hostages still being held by the terrorist group Hamas. They have been since 7 October, when 1,200 Israelis and foreigners were killed in attacks.

Senator Faruqi: Thirty thousand Palestinians are dead.

Senator GALLAGHER: If you stop yelling at me, I will go on that we are faced with reports from the UN that 400,000 Palestinians in Gaza are starving and a million are at risk of starvation. An estimated 1.7 million people in Gaza are internally displaced, and there are increasingly few safe places for Palestinians to go.

With the humanitarian situation in Gaza already dire, the casualties from an expanded military operation would be devastating. Australia's message to Israel is to not go down this path. Our position on this is consistent with our position the whole way through this conflict, which has been that international humanitarian law must be respected and civilians must be protected. We have communicated this at a senior level. In recognising Israel's right to defend itself, we have said that the way it does so matters. Israel must respect international humanitarian law. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected.

There are more than a million civilians sheltering in and around Rafah. Many civilians who are displaced in Israeli operations in the north have moved to the south to this area, often under Israeli direction. We are not alone in expressing concern at the prospect of an expansive Israeli military operation in Rafah. The United States has said it will be a disaster and should not proceed without a credible plan for ensuring safety for the more than one million people sheltering there. Germany has said it would be a humanitarian catastrophe. Canada has said it would have a devastating impact. We have consistently said there is no place in Australia for antisemitism, Islamophobia or prejudice or hatred of any kind. We must all work together to ensure that the distress in our community does not turn into hatred.

An honourable senator interjecting—

Senator GALLAGHER: Well, the Australian government has made these comments, and I know you say it's just words, Senator Steele-John, but we have made these comments. The foreign minister has made these comments at the highest level. I have made these comments last week at the foreign ministers meeting in Brazil. People are speaking out. People are concerned. What's happening is incredibly distressing. But do you think coming in here and perpetuating myths in this chamber about what the Australian government is doing is going to help one little bit? Do you seriously think so? How about you act like grown-ups and work with us on the serious matters that present in the Middle East—work together on a credible pathway to peace, which is what responsible

international actors are doing, speak out against further civilian loss of life and look at ways that we can support the humanitarian efforts in the Middle East? We have increased funding, not decreased it. We are not selling arms to Israel. You should not repeat those claims in this chamber when you know that they are not true. We should all in this chamber work together on that pathway to peace.