

2004 Review of Australia-EU Agenda for Cooperation

In April 2003, Australia and the European Commission adopted the strategy *Australia and the European Union: an agenda for cooperation*. This initiative identified practical measures to advance high priorities in our partnership over the next five years.

A review of Australia-European Union relations one year on reveals a vigorous work program across the seven headline areas set out in our agenda. We welcome increased dialogue on new issues.

We are committed to pursuing a dynamic bilateral framework that delivers results in areas of common interest and promotes constructive consultation on issues where we have diverging perspectives.

Security and Strategic Issues

Our increased political and officials'-level exchanges over the last year have highlighted our shared resolve to address international security challenges purposefully. The second Strategic Dialogue, held on March 2004 in Brussels, provided a valuable opportunity to share assessments on the strategic landscape, including on regional initiatives. We see value in continuing such a dialogue to increase cooperation on counter-terrorism capacity-building in South East Asia and to consult on a regular basis on the evolving international and regional security environment. The new EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator will provide an important focal point in our consultations on approaches to combating terrorism.

Exchanges on non-proliferation and export control issues, including in the context of the Australia Group, of which Australia is permanent chair, have usefully guided our respective engagement with countries of proliferation concern. Australia will co-operate with the EU to evaluate the membership of the new EU Member States in export control regimes as membership would reinforce the effectiveness of the regimes and foster non-proliferation.

The enhanced role of a much larger European Union in addressing security, justice and home affairs issues will make cooperation between our law enforcement authorities, including mutual sharing of intelligence and operational material, all the more relevant.

Trade

The EU and Australia have remained committed to the WTO system and have worked together to ensure progress in the Doha Development Agenda negotiations with a view to their successful conclusion. Both sides will continue to co-operate closely across the full Doha Development Agenda to achieve ambitious outcomes

In line with our commitment in the agenda for co-operation, both sides are committed to implement fully duty and quota-free market access regimes for least-developed countries and successfully fought to provide access to affordable medicines to developing countries. We

have been active in delivering technical assistance and in contributing to capacity-building activities.

Negotiations on the outstanding issues of the 1994 European Community - Australia Wine Agreement have resumed in April 2004. Progress has been made on issues like oenological practices, co-operation and arbitration. Constructive discussions were held on sensitive questions such as geographical indications and traditional expressions. It is hoped that further discussions will lead to an agreement by the next European summer break.

We are jointly working towards the removal of the "Origin" clause in the Mutual Recognition Agreement, and Australia is exploring options for more streamlined treaty amendment processes for minor changes to sectoral annexes.

Education

Three pilot co-operation projects in higher education, currently at various stages of implementation, are evidence of fruitful collaboration. We are committed to build on our partnership in this important area by developing a regular co-operation, including the possibility of an education agreement.

Science and Technology

Our partnership in science and technology (S&T) cooperation continues to deepen. In 2003, there were over 200 proposals for participation in the Sixth Joint Framework programme involving an Australian partner. We have agreed to conduct a study of Australian and EU research systems to determine possible impediments to increased S&T research cooperation. We have agreed to conduct joint thematic workshops, starting in 2004, in leading-edge fields of science where outcomes will result in common benefits.

Transport

Consultations on a draft Memorandum of Understanding on the Galileo satellite system are continuing.

Our co-operation has also broadened to reflect new issues including arrangements on making available Passenger Name Record (PNR).

In line with our shared commitment to aviation liberalisation, air transport discussions between the Commission and the regional partners (Australia, New Zealand and Singapore) are also in progress towards an agreement. The European Commission envisages seeking shortly a Council mandate to undertake negotiations with the trio on a comprehensive and liberalised air services agreement.

Environment Cooperation

We are committed to stepping up cooperation on the environment agenda. We agree on the key role of global action on climate change and have decided to take forward some concrete bilateral climate change activities on “ways to engage all countries in the fight against climate change”, “mobile air conditioners”, “end use energy efficiency programme in the built environment”. We have held four rounds of high level environment consultations, the most recent in November 2003, and we aim to convene the next meeting at a mutually convenient date, possibly in 2005 and to use that as an opportunity to identify further areas for collaboration and exchange, including promoting sustainable development.

Development Cooperation

Australia and the EU welcome the enhanced level of collaboration over the past year on development cooperation. We have made significant contributions to the recovery and nation-building processes in East Timor and Australia welcomes the full resumption of aid by the EU to the Solomon Islands and Fiji. The inaugural Australia-EU Development Dialogue, held in Brussels in April 2004, has created openings for greater collaboration and partnership, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, and reinforced areas of common interest. This followed on from Commissioner Nielson’s visit to the Pacific region in January-February.

Migration and Asylum

Following a successful two rounds of senior officials’ dialogues on migration and asylum, we will ensure that a particular focus over the coming year will be policy and institutional issues relating to managed migration, including the role and potential influence of Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM). We welcome a third senior officials’ dialogue.