

Joint press release: EU-Australia Leaders' virtual meeting

1. The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the Prime Minister of Australia, Scott Morrison, held a Leaders' Virtual Meeting on 26 November 2020.
2. The leaders reconfirmed their resolve to work together to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and underlined their commitment to take effective measures to protect health and build more innovative, sustainable, inclusive and resilient economies.
3. The leaders reaffirmed the shared values that underpin the bilateral relationship as enshrined in the EU-Australia Framework Agreement. The EU and Australia share a commitment to democracy, the rule of law, the protection and promotion of human rights, and gender equality. They are strong supporters of the international rules-based order and an effective multilateral system with the United Nations at its core. The leaders discussed enhancing cooperation in international fora.
4. Underscoring that global cooperation is vital in overcoming COVID-19, the leaders welcomed the outcomes of the G20 Leaders' Summit on 21-22 November. They referred to the significant contributions the EU and Australia have made towards the global response to COVID-19. They welcomed the support provided to each other's citizens affected by travel disruptions.
5. The EU and Australia are committed to ensure universal, equitable and early access to safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics. Both sides have notably committed substantial funding to the almost €16 billion (A\$26 billion) raised through the EU-led Coronavirus Global Response pledging marathon. The leaders stressed the importance of continued international support for the Access to COVID-19 tools (ACT) Accelerator and its COVAX Facility. They agreed to strengthen bilateral research and innovation cooperation and to share research data to combat the pandemic.
6. The leaders agreed that the EU and Australia will continue to work together to strengthen the World Health Organisation and global preparedness and response to health emergencies. They called for continued and timely implementation of the World Health Assembly resolution of 19 May 2020, including with respect to the independent evaluation of the international response to the pandemic.
7. The EU and Australia are stepping up cooperation on post-pandemic socio-economic recovery and are implementing the G20 Action Plan. They will also discuss the recovery at the next Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit. The leaders committed to recovery plans that accelerate emissions reductions, and ensure communities and institutions are more resilient and able to adapt to future impacts of climate change, as well as accelerating the digital transformation. They emphasised that global supply chains need to be more resilient and sustainable. They agreed to further cooperate on critical raw materials and on the promotion of diverse critical technology markets.
8. Both sides reconfirmed their commitment to open and fair trade. They underlined the need to support the multilateral rules-based trading system and to render it fit for current challenges. The EU and Australia will continue to work together, including in the Ottawa Group, to reform and strengthen the WTO, including its negotiating and monitoring function, in particular with regard to level playing field. On reform of the WTO's dispute settlement system, the two sides reiterated their desire that the WTO membership collectively find a timely and long-lasting solution that would restore a binding, two-tier and independent dispute settlement system in the WTO. The EU and Australia will engage constructively in areas of common interest on the WTO agenda, including sustainable development, e-commerce and fisheries subsidies.
9. The Leaders noted good progress in the negotiations for an ambitious and comprehensive bilateral trade agreement. The timely conclusion of such an agreement would create growth opportunities, deepen economic integration and reinforce our shared support for rules-based trading arrangements.
10. The leaders agreed to enhance cooperation to promote shared interests in security and prosperity in Asia and the Pacific, spanning the Indian and Pacific oceans. They recognised the importance of the principles of regional engagement set out in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, including openness, transparency, a rules-based framework, good governance and respect for sovereignty and international law. In this regard, they agreed to work together in the ASEAN Regional Forum and also to continue their dialogue on cooperation in other ASEAN-led processes. The leaders expressed serious concern about the unilateral, and destabilising actions in the South China Sea and underlined the importance of upholding international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. They underlined that dialogue is the only way to achieve peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and urged the DPRK to comply with all relevant UN Security Council resolutions.
11. The leaders stressed that other regional issues should also be resolved through peaceful dialogue and in accordance with international law, including in relation to Belarus and the Eastern Mediterranean.
12. Underlining the importance of assisting the most vulnerable countries, including in Africa, the leaders welcomed the extension of the G20/Paris Club Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and the recently endorsed Common Framework for Debt Treatment beyond the DSSI.
13. The leaders emphasised their commitment to working with Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste to build resilience in line with the Agenda 2030. In 2020 the EU has committed €120 million in support of the COVID-19 response in these countries and will continue to provide development assistance to them. Australia has made an allocation of €188 million to assist the region respond to COVID-19 over the next two years as well as separate funding to support vaccine access.
14. The leaders agreed that resolute and coordinated action is key to tackling the urgent challenge of climate change and environmental degradation. The EU and Australia underlined their commitment to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and to step up global action to tackle climate change in the lead up to COP26 in 2021. The EU highlighted its commitment to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, while Australia will also demonstrate significant ambition on reducing emissions and pursuing a low emissions development strategy in order to achieve climate neutrality as soon as possible in accordance with the Paris Agreement. The leaders recalled the request by UNFCCC COP21 to communicate or update their Nationally Determined Contributions reflecting the highest possible ambition. The EU and Australia have agreed to

collaborate on international technology partnerships. The leaders also underlined their commitment to move towards the circular economy and called for an ambitious global biodiversity framework at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity COP15 in 2021.

15. Committed to promoting digital transformation based on shared values, Australia and the EU have initiated a digital economy and technology dialogue and agreed to cooperate on artificial intelligence, blockchain, the use of digital tools to address climate change and disaster resilience, quantum technology and the role of platforms. Recognising the importance of a fair and sustainable international tax system, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to reach by mid-2021 a global solution that addresses the tax challenges arising from the digitisation of the economy.
16. The leaders welcomed the recent UN resolution on responsible behaviour in space. They also welcomed the establishment of a bilateral space dialogue to advance collaboration.
17. The leaders restated their commitment to promote sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based connectivity and to implementation of the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment. They agreed to explore synergies between their cooperation on connectivity with third countries, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. They confirmed their resolve to launch in the near future an EU-Australia Transport Dialogue.
18. On security and defence issues, the leaders looked forward to strengthened cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism and prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism, cyber and critical technology issues, countering disinformation and foreign interference, protection of critical infrastructure and maritime security. They agreed to continue engagement in crisis management as provided for in the EU-Australia Framework Participation Agreement.

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