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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

9 January 2020

Open Debate: Towards the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations: Upholding the Charter of the United Nations to Maintain International Peace and Security

**Statement by H.E. The Hon. Mitch Fifield,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia
to the United Nations**

Thank you President.

At the outset, can I express sincere condolences to so many countries and families who have lost lives on Ukrainian flight 752.

To quote Australia's Foreign Minister, Senator Payne, "at this time, we know what it feels like to be a country that is searching for lost loved ones".

In that vein, can I also take this opportunity to thank my colleagues in this place, and their governments, for their concern and support during our current bushfire challenge in Australia.

Mr President,

I warmly congratulate Vietnam for taking up its position on the UNSC and for holding the first Presidency of 2020. And I thank you, President, for convening this debate on maintaining international peace and security.

As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the UN, Australia recognises the ongoing importance of the UN Charter on peace and collective security, development and human rights, in what is an ever changing, ever more complex world.

President, the Charter forms a central foundation of the international legal framework, which Member States enjoy the benefits of today. But we can't look at the Charter in isolation. The international rules we have today are built on the Charter.

And the current moment is one where States and civil society need to use their voices to support multilateralism and the rules based order.

From freedom of navigation, to chemical weapons, to accountability for serious international crimes, we need to ensure the norms we have built, on the Charter's foundation, are upheld on land, at sea and in cyberspace.

Built in the shadows of the Second World War, this organisation's central tenets and responsibilities for Member States, as articulated in the preamble, are to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war', to 'practice tolerance and live together in peace' and to 'unite our strength to maintain international peace and security'.

However, in recent years, the strain upon an international rules based order has continued to intensify. This is a collective problem that requires a collective solution.

We need to ensure the fundamental norms reflected in the Charter are protected – for all UN member states, and for the millions of individuals who look to the UN for the protection of their lives and their human rights.

The credibility of the UN system depends on its willingness and capacity to do so.

And this in turn relies upon Member States.

Upon the warning signs, the UN must use its political authority and the preventative tools at its disposal to address potential conflicts and seek de-escalation. And the political will of Member States is central in enabling this.

Members should be alert to these signs and should be able to highlight them, to ensure fundamental norms are respected for the benefit of all.

Australia continues to advocate for the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect principle across the UN, and encourages current and future members of the Security Council to recall it during the Council's deliberations.

President, as we consider the contribution of the UN Charter and the frameworks and norms that have flowed from it, we renew our call. A call for greater cooperation within and outside the United Nations. A call for a better focus on effectiveness at the field level. And a call for the use of preventative tools.

And from Member States, we need a recommitment to collective security that can enable the system to adapt to new challenges.

Against this backdrop, Australia welcomes and urges the fullest possible implementation of the ongoing, system-wide UN reforms to improve the UN's effectiveness in contributing to sustaining development and sustaining peace. In this way, we can demonstrate our practical commitment to the Charter in the world today.

Thank you President.