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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Statement to opening of intergovernmental negotiations (IGN) on Security Council reform

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

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

I thank you for your ongoing efforts to progress meaningful reform in the United Nations Security Council.

It is important work, so as to ensure the Security Council remains integral to the rules-based international order. But it is also difficult work, as evidenced by the many years of intergovernmental negotiations (IGN) on this issue.

Regrettably, despite continued efforts at reform – including through the IGN – progress has once again stalled, having barely made it off the mark. We can, we must, do more.

In the last year, Security Council reform took on a new dimension. The global pandemic has compounded many of the underlying causes of instability, such as poverty and extreme need, in some cases leading to hostility and conflict.

With the impacts of COVID-19 likely to be felt in the international peace and security landscape for years to come, Security Council reform is more pressing than ever.

Against this backdrop, I thank the President of the General Assembly and the IGN Co-Chairs for recognising the urgent need to move from ambition to action.

Co-Chairs,

Noting your request for Member States to clarify their position on the issue of regional representation, let me restate Australia's long-standing support for greater representation on the Council for Asia, Africa and Latin America.

It remains our firm view that in order to remain relevant, accountable and effective, the Council must more accurately reflect current geopolitical realities, including evolving dynamics for the Indo-Pacific.

Security Council reform must also look at improving the Council's working methods – including the unconstrained use of the veto. The Council, and the international community it serves, would benefit greatly from better standards governing its use. The veto is a powerful instrument, its use must be transparent and limited.

As a founding member of the United Nations, Australia did not support the veto. And we will not support its expansion to new permanent members on the Security Council.

Australia has also been a consistent voice on the need to make meaningful progress in reform discussions and to move beyond the repetition of entrenched positions.

For this reason, negotiations should be transparent and accurately documented. We must give due consideration to text-based negotiations – a tool we know can help accelerate consensus. As Australia has said before in this forum, 'it is time we moved from statements to drafts.'

Australia has affirmed these positions on Security Council reform on several occasions over the years and I restate them here at the outset of this IGN cycle.

It is time to redouble our efforts to achieve consensus and urgently deliver a Council that is relevant and effective in addressing emerging global challenges.

Australia stands ready to participate actively and constructively in text-based negotiations on this issue.

Thank you Co-Chairs.