



# AUSTRALIA



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## **The United Nations Security Council Open Arria Formula Meeting: Preventing terrorism and violent extremism through tackling gender stereotypes, masculinities, and structural gender inequality**

28 July 2021

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

As delivered

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On behalf of Australia, I thank the United Nations Security Council for convening this Open Arria Formula Meeting. This is a good opportunity for open discussion.

Australia is committed to embedding gender-sensitive approaches to countering violent extremism and counter terrorism. Gender analysis has been integrated into CT and Countering Violent Extremism policies and programs for some time, recognising the varied roles that women and girls play across the spectrum of violent extremism and terrorism. As victims of terrorism, actors who prevent violence and counter narratives, to people who sympathise with violent extremist ideologies, and active supporters and perpetrators of violent extremism and abhorrent terrorist acts.

This is a matter of hard-edged, practical CT effectiveness. So it's important that we continue this work to ensure we get it right.

The evolving COVID-19 pandemic has also shifted the nature of global CT efforts as nations weigh up and respond to these competing priorities. Violent extremists have similarly adapted their activities around tightening borders and targeted new audiences online. This demands a gendered CT approach which reduces harmful gender norms and recognises both women and men can take on the role of victim, survivor or perpetrator.

Challenging the institutions and beliefs which seek to minimise this role and make it difficult to identify and counter the drivers of radicalisation unique to women is a critical aspect of Australia's regional and global stance on CT and CVE. Understanding what draws men to terrorist and violent extremist groups in the first place and the barriers to leaving is also an important part of the gender analysis.

Addressing terrorism with a gender bias is dangerous because it blinds us to the full picture. We know that terrorist groups exploit this blindness and use gender stereotypes as a motivator and a recruitment tool.

Australia has a leading role in the Global Counterterrorism Forum as co-chair of the GCTF Countering Violent Extremism Working Group with Indonesia. The CVE Working Group is doing important work supporting the development of a Gender and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Policy Toolkit.

The Toolkit aims to provide the best practical, action-oriented guidance on designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating gender-sensitive CVE policies and programs.

Australia continues to promote gender equality, protect the human rights of women and girls, and secure their full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security processes, reaffirming Australia's commitment to the WPS Agenda.

As global pandemic-related pressure points ease and nations, including Australia, grapple with a vastly changed terrorism landscape, we will continue to lead and prioritise CT and CVE efforts. Australia, with our partners, will continue to modernise our approaches to gender stereotypes and structural inequalities as drivers of terrorism.

Thank you.

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