



# AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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## UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### FIRST PLENARY MEETING

### INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS ON SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

**31 October 2016**

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Gillian Bird**

Mr President,

At the outset, let me join others in welcoming your appointment of the co-chairs for this session, Ambassador Jinga and Ambassador Khiari. And I express Australia's sincere appreciation to Ambassador Lucas of Luxembourg for her stewardship as Chair of the IGN over the last year, and Ambassador Rattray of Jamaica the year before.

Although the last two sessions did not deliver on the scale and pace of reforms that we had hoped for, they nonetheless took important steps towards long overdue reform of the Security Council.

Importantly, the Elements of Convergence paper developed over the last year provides a sound starting point for this current session.

Australia's position on Security Council reform is well known.

We believe that the Council needs to better reflect contemporary geopolitical realities – and that means more representation for Asia, Africa and Latin America.

However, we have also been clear that enlargement must not reduce the ability of the Council to act swiftly and decisively. Accordingly, expansion must take place within limits, and must be accompanied by improvements in the Council's working methods.

On working methods, we have long advocated for greater transparency in the Council's work; better coordination between the Council and the General Assembly; more analytical reporting; and better consultation with troop and police contributing countries.

We are pleased that the elements of convergence identify a range of measures that address these issues. Member States have in these measures the opportunity to take practical steps that can immediately improve the Council's working methods.

We urge Member States to move forward with their implementation without delay. Doing so would build confidence that this process can and will deliver on much needed reforms. And in turn, that momentum will serve us well in

addressing the more challenging issues on our agenda, such as the question of the veto.

Mr President,

Our discussion here takes place at a time when the Security Council is more divided than ever. The growing catastrophe in Syria, its unacceptable human cost, and the Council's inability to act, must imbue us with fresh resolve.

We urge all Member States, and especially the P5, to commit to the ACT Code of Conduct and the complementary French-Mexican Declaration, which calls for restraint on use of the veto in situations of mass atrocity.

More is at stake than simply tweaking the edges of the rulebook. Ultimately, our work here is about creating the conditions of change. It is about ensuring the Security Council fulfils its responsibilities – and acts when needed.

It will be our success in this endeavour – or our failure – that shapes how the Council responds to the crises of tomorrow.