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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL
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UNSC Open Debate on Working Methods

Statement by Mr David Yardley
Counsellor (Political) of the Permanent Mission of Australia to
the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Thank you Mr President

The scale and pace of challenges facing the Security Council today must bolster our resolve to ensure that the Council is as agile and effective as possible.

Australia welcomes the update to Note 507. We thank Japan for its leadership and commitment on this issue, as Chair of the Informal Working Group during its Council term. Australia likewise commends Kuwait for assuming the Chair in 2018 and convening today's debate.

I will focus on three key areas of working methods reform – transparency, sanctions, and use of the veto.

First, as a member of the ACT group, Australia firmly believes transparency is an important element of the Council's effectiveness.

In line with Article 24 of the Charter, enshrining the responsibility of the Security Council to act on behalf of the whole membership, Council

members should engage regularly with the broader membership through briefings, including with regional groups and outreach to affected countries.

We also support greater use of public meetings, open debates, Arria Formula meetings and monthly wrap-up sessions.

Second, much of the Council's work relies on non-members to implement its decisions. So it is imperative that the broader membership is engaged appropriately in Council deliberations. One clear example is in the field of sanctions. We need to continue improving the working methods of the sanctions committees to enable better implementation of sanctions measures. Australia was proud to collaborate with Finland, Germany, Greece and Sweden in launching the High Level Review of UN Sanctions Compendium in November 2015 and its follow-up Assessment Report in October last year.

We are pleased that many of the Compendium's 150 recommendations are now being implemented. But more can be done. Last year's Assessment Report offers further ways in which cooperation, collaboration, transparency and capacity-building on sanctions issues can be enhanced. Both the Compendium and the Assessment report represent sizable contributions toward building a better UN sanctions system and are essential tools for reforming Council working methods.

Finally, we must move urgently, decisively, and in unison to agree on clear restraint on use of the veto. Too often, the Council has failed in its mandate because narrow interests have been allowed to prevail over those of the most vulnerable. We note with concern the observation by Mr Martin that 2017 saw the highest number of vetoes in two decades – which can impede decisive action in response to egregious crimes.

We therefore join others in calling on all Council members – current and incoming – to commit unambiguously to the ACT Code of Conduct and the complementary French-Mexican initiative on restraining the use of the veto in situations of mass atrocity.

Australia also encourages the Secretary-General to make full use of his prerogative, under Article 99 of the Charter, to bring to the Council's attention any matter which may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

As we continue to grapple with multiple, overlapping challenges of terrorism, instability, conflict and fragility, working methods reform is not just a bureaucratic exercise. It is critical – to the ability of the Council to discharge its core mandate – and to the lives that depend on it.

Thank you.