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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

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Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Strengthening Multilateralism and the Role of the United Nations

**Statement by H.E. Tegan Brink
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations**

Thank you Mr President, and may I thank China for convening this debate.

This is a challenging period for global cooperation. Geo-political competition, propelled by rapid and accelerating change, as well as rising nationalism, pose powerful challenges to the core tenets of multilateralism.

Australia recognises the reality that great states have a significant role in shaping the international system. Australia considers the world is safer and more prosperous when differences are managed, and challenges met, by agreed rules and not by the exercise of power alone.

Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper contends that there are few issues of greater significance than the continued success of a rules-

based international order. By extension, the role of the United Nations is paramount.

A rules-based order provides the foundation for our common security and prosperity, including for our region, the Indo-Pacific. It benefits all of us – from the smallest to the largest states. It plays an important role in managing security challenges, such as the proliferation of weapons and terrorism.

Australia believes firmly that global security and prosperity is best served when countries behave in accordance with international rules and norms; when open markets facilitate the free flow of trade, capital and ideas; when rights of freedom of navigation and overflight are upheld; and when disputes are resolved peacefully, without the threat or use of force.

As an island nation located at the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans we place particular importance on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Maritime Boundary Treaty agreed between Australia and Timor-Leste in 2018 is a testament to the way in which UNCLOS reinforces stability and allows countries to resolve disputes peacefully and without coercion. It is an example of the rules-based order in action.

Other examples are the rules-based trading system centred on the World Trade Organization, which strongly advances the prosperity of all Members. And rules and institutions which promote responses to global challenges like climate change or health security.

The rules-based order also provides the framework for our efforts to support universal human rights. Just as peace and development are mutually reinforcing, respect for human rights is a foundation for peace and security. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges to the rules-based order is posed by states that question the universality of human rights.

Australia is committed to a strong multilateral human rights system. We are committed to reforms that strengthen the UN Human Rights Council's credibility and effectiveness. We need stronger processes to ensure HRC members uphold the highest human rights standards.

Australia also supports UN Secretary-General Guterres' reform agenda. We see it as a key means to strengthen UN effectiveness, and with it, multilateralism, to promote sustaining peace and to achieve the 2030 Agenda. We welcome the UN General Assembly's adoption of resolutions on the mutually reinforcing pillars of reform, including on the UN development system. But there is more to do.

In conclusion, protecting and strengthening the rules-based order benefits all of us and is a shared responsibility. We must work together to ensure multilateral institutions are best equipped to engage effectively in the contemporary world.