



# AUSTRALIA



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## UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

19 November 2019

# Open Debate on the Role of Reconciliation in Maintaining International Peace and Security

**Statement by H.E. Mr Mitch Fifield  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the  
United Nations**

(As delivered)

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Thank you President.

We thank the United Kingdom for convening this debate. President, reconciliation is fundamental to building and sustaining peace. And must be seen as central to member States' Sustaining Peace agenda and to the SDGs.

The Security Council and the General Assembly decided in the Sustaining Peace resolutions that sustaining peace is a shared task and responsibility. It is to be fulfilled by Government and all other national stakeholders. It flows through all three pillars of the UN's engagement at all stages of conflict and in all its dimensions.

Further, all nations are working towards the Sustainable Development Goals and particularly SDG16 on the establishment, protection and maintenance of peace, justice and strong institutions. This requires putting reconciliation at

the centre. An inclusive approach to national conversations is essential in efforts to build and sustain peace.

Australia prioritises reconciliation when working with partners in the context of its overseas development program, as well as in our own national policies and strategies, bringing stakeholders and affected communities together.

Reconciliation isn't just a concept or a practice for countries with recent experience of conflict. It is a work in progress in different contexts for all countries.

Domestically, Australia is walking the path of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Australia's framework – known as "Closing the Gap" – includes a number of measures to bridge this divide, including economic opportunities for Indigenous Australians through an Indigenous Procurement Policy. This seeks to leverage the government's annual multi-billion dollar procurement spend. This drives demand for Indigenous goods and services, stimulates Indigenous economic development and grows the Indigenous business sector.

The private sector also plays an important role in reconciliation. The Business Council of Australia and major corporations are to be applauded for creating the 'Raising the Bar' program. This aims to see more than \$3 billion spent by major corporations with Indigenous suppliers over the next five years.

The Australian government also supports work with the corporate sector to deliver Reconciliation Action Plans. These Plans support organisations to consider how they can contribute to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. This delivers jobs, culturally aware workplaces and businesses, and helps to develop future generations of Indigenous leaders.

Reconciliation is a key focus of Australia's international efforts. An example is our support to peacebuilding in Bougainville, as part of our bilateral partnership with Papua New Guinea. Working in partnership, the role of community leaders, faith based organisations, and ensuring women's involvement has been key in advancing reconciliation and building and sustaining peace. For example, the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation has been an important contributor to the ongoing peace and reconciliation process, and Australia has been proud to be a long term supporter.

We urge that UN assistance to member States focuses on and integrates reconciliation needs, including in the context of comprehensive analysis which member States have decided should be delivered under the sustaining peace agenda and UN reform. And we welcome the use of the PBC and other UN forums to learn lessons from national experiences and provide a platform for discussion of effective approaches to reconciliation for the purposes of sustaining peace.

We look forward to continuing to promote reconciliation, nationally and internationally, in partnership with the UN, its member states and civil society, to further efforts to achieve SDG16 and the sustaining peace agenda.