

# Britain and Australia: Sharing Global Responsibility

Mr Bill Rammell MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs, UK

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Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs**

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Responsibility'*

**National Europe Centre  
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## *Introduction*

Professor Elim Papadakis, Director of the National Europe Centre, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues.

I was honoured and pleased to receive an invitation to address the National Europe Centre here at one of Australia's most distinguished centres of learning – the Australian National University.

Having spent much of my working life in and around universities before entering Parliament, and as Chair of my party's Labour Movement for Europe, I am delighted to see that the study of Europe, its institutions, peoples and cultures is alive and well here in Australia.

I am especially pleased that the UK is represented here in such an active way, including through the presence of Visiting Fellows such as Professor Castles from Edinburgh.

Of course, for the speaker there is a down side to addressing such an august group. Just as the House of Commons leaves a new Member in no doubt that the Chamber is not the place to deliver a “lecture”, with my university experience I know that lecturing a group of academics is a sure

fire way of receiving an unfavourable assessment! This is all the more so, as it is just 24 hours into my first official visit to Australia.

So today, I would like to limit myself to speaking about our bilateral relationship and how the UK and Australia are responding to the global and regional challenges we face. While relations between the UK and Australia have undoubtedly changed and evolved over time, I am confident that the traditional links that exist between our two countries and peoples can only make us stronger in meeting the manifold challenges we face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### ***UK-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT***

The close and long-standing relationship between the UK and Australia is based on our shared history, institutions, language and outlook. Our political, defence and intelligence relationships are excellent, as is our co-operation and exchange in the fields of law, education, medicine and science and technology. And in the area of international affairs, we have a long tradition of co-operation, rooted in our shared values and internationalist outlook.

Australia has a long and honourable tradition of looking well beyond its own immense coastline and region in determining where its national interests lie. Australia continues to be a respected voice on the world stage today.

We in Britain have profound cause for remembering, and a duty never to forget, how that tradition was sustained at critical moments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The visit by Prime Minister John Howard to the UK later this year for the inauguration of the Australian War Memorial in London, will be a powerful reminder of Australia's role.

The strong and evolving ties between our two countries and governments are underpinned by the close personal ties that exist between ordinary Britons and Australians. I only have to look at the number of Australians that flock to the UK to enjoy the British weather, or the number of Britons back-packing around Australia, to see the closeness of our ties!

Without doubt, the UK-Australia relationship remains in excellent health. In recent times, this relationship has of course also evolved to reflect new strategic realities we live in. Australia has forged new links with partners

in the Far East and Pacific; the UK is part of the European Union. Our bilateral relationship is now exists in the broader context of our regional relationships.

For the UK, thirty years on as members of the EU, we have seen prosperity, security and stability spread across our continent. We have gained tremendously from EU membership. This Labour Government firmly believes that Britain's future lies in being at the heart of Europe.

We also believe that for Europe's future success, it must reform to be the modern, relevant union its people demand. An organisation able to deliver on the peoples' priorities: creating jobs and a dynamic economy; tackling crime and protecting the environment; and acting as an outward looking force for good in the world, not as a rival to the United States, but as a partner.

### ***GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITIES: WORLD TRADE***

Perhaps the biggest issue facing both the UK and Australia in the next six months is world trade - an area where Britain's membership of the EU means that our external trade relations are conducted through the European Union.

For too long the EU has been regarded as an irrelevant, wasteful bureaucracy - by its own citizens and outsiders alike. Nowhere has this accusation had more justification than in the area of agriculture. For many Australian farmers, the EU has been criticised for creating an unfair playing field in agriculture, epitomised by the images of wasteful butter-mountains.

The UK would certainly agree with some of these criticisms. We have been a vociferous advocate of agricultural reform in the EU, and that is why we believe we can take some credit for the recent adoption of proposals for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy by EU agricultural ministers. This decision on 26 June was the beginning of a process to remove export subsidies and market access protection within all EU member states.

Let me be clear about the UK Government's objectives:

We want to reduce the overall burden of the CAP: to deliver better value for money to taxpayers and consumers; to encourage animal welfare; to reduce damage to the environment; to give a better deal to farmers, and; to make world trade fairer.

We want to see market price support and production controls phased out, with transitional payments to help farmers to adjust. This should be complemented by a shift towards the ‘second pillar’ of the CAP, thus expanding the resources available to targeted support for wider rural development and agri-environment schemes.

The UK acknowledges that there is more to be done, at both the regional as well as multilateral level.

At the multilateral level, I hope that the UK and Australia can co-operate over the coming months to help ensure a successful outcome for the Doha Trade Rounds, also now known as the ‘Doha Development Agenda’. The 5<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico in less than four weeks is a crucial mid-point in the Round. Agriculture is the most distorted sector and a top priority for developing countries. Although we are a member of the EU and you a member of the Cairns Group, I hope that the UK and Australia can work together in this vital area. Success on the issue of agriculture in the Doha Round will I believe be to the benefit of both developed and developing countries alike.



On many of the major global issues we face, I know that our two countries share common interests and goals. Nowhere is this unity of vision and purpose more needed than in the area of foreign and security policy.

***GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITIES: MAINTAINING PEACE AND SECURITY***

Since 11 September and the rise in terrorist activity worldwide, we have perhaps witnessed one of the most fundamental shifts in the international strategic environment of recent times. One of the problems is that politicians and Government ministers have not done enough to convince ordinary members of the public of that fact. Certainly it is the case that both Prime Minister Tony Blair and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, have spoken publicly about the twin security threats we now face in the twenty-first century: international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Recent events in Iraq have demonstrated to us once again the fact that Australia is a strong and reliable ally in maintaining international security. The political and military support that Australia so readily gave in the build-up to the intervention – and in the intervention itself – was

hugely valued in Britain. As Tony Blair put it, when he last met John Howard in London in May, today's Australia is an immensely staunch ally for Britain.

The closeness of our co-operation and consultation on Iraq has of course continued into the post-conflict situation. We remain in close contact, and again we welcome Australia's engagement, as we work together to with the international community, and the United Nations, build a stable, prosperous and democratic Iraq for all its people.

### ***WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION***

Asides from military action, there are of course a range of other measures, with which we can tackle the threat posed by international terrorism and the proliferation of WMD. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' response. But there is a duty which all responsible members of the international community share. But as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said, effective diplomacy needs to be backed up with the credible threat of force. We must make it unambiguously clear to proliferators that we are prepared to deal with threats to global security.

It is against this background that the UK and Australia have been working together in the Proliferation Security Initiative, a coalition of concerned countries which met for the first time in Madrid in mid-June. We welcomed the enthusiasm and the commitment shown by our Australian colleagues in convening the second meeting of the partners in this initiative in Brisbane last month.

As Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said when he at the Brisbane meeting, there is no room for complacency in the face of the threat of weapons of mass destruction, and the international community has a shared responsibility to hold proliferators to account. I agree. Britain is proud to share that responsibility with Australia.

The continued impetus which Australia's chairmanship gave the initiative at the Brisbane meeting was therefore very welcome. It ensured that we made good progress on translating the political commitment of the initiative's participants into clear principles and practical actions.

Actions that will send the right message to would-be proliferators: you can choose to cooperate and comply. If you do not the we have the will and determination to contain and constrain proliferators.

## ***NORTH KOREA***

That, essentially is our message to North Korea – another issue at the top of the foreign and security policy agenda, on which Britain and Australia share a common view.

I'm sometimes asked why we see North Korea differently from how we saw Iraq. In many respects we don't. With Iraq, there were seventeen UN Security Council resolutions which Saddam Hussein chose to defy. Seventeen invitations to co-operate. All of which were ignored.

In the case of North Korea, the invitation to cooperate still remains open. This was the message I delivered to the North Korean Vice Foreign Minister when I met with him in London earlier this year. I also told him that if we did see North Korea unambiguously and irrevocably renounce nuclear weapons, this could unlock the door to a substantial commitment by the international community to the economic development of his country. If you look at the very real problems of starvation faced by the North Korean people it is a goal worth working toward.

We hope North Korea will take that opportunity. That is why, as Tony Blair made clear on his tour of East Asian capitals last month, we want to see progress in the talks process launched in Beijing in April.

The British government, like the Australian government, welcomes China's role, and salutes their efforts to promote a solution to this issue through co-operative means, through dialogue and agreement. It is an approach that both Tony Blair and John Howard firmly conveyed in Seoul and Tokyo last month.

There has been some positive developments, but at the same time, we think it important to show North Korea that while its approach remains ambiguous and unresponsive, and while it signals intent to continue nuclear weapons development, we are not prepared to do nothing.

We want to see the UN Security Council focused on the issue, and beginning to map out the steps towards a solution without North Korea's co-operation, if that's what we have to do.

North Korea has a choice, to face up to its obligations, including ridding itself of nuclear weapons, and receive help or face a regime of containment and sanctions, although I am not advocating that.

We will also, helped by the momentum of the Proliferation Security Initiative, sharpen up our tools for cracking down on trafficking in weapons of mass destruction and missiles, wherever that threat comes from.

### ***COUNTER-TERRORISM***

There are of course areas of the world where the threat of WMD and the threat of terrorism come menacingly together. The state that defies non-proliferation norms and supports or harbours terrorist organisations is an especially dangerous combination. It adds a particular urgency to the counter-proliferation tasks I described earlier.

But as Australians know only too well, terrorism does not have to come with a WMD threat attached to cause enormous damage and suffering. As the Director General of the UK's Security Service recently told the Royal United Services Institute, while we know that terrorist groups are trying to acquire chemical, biological and radiological weapons – and would most certainly use them - , their most effective tactic will remain the conventional bomb and the suicide bomb.

The international reach of terrorist groups such as Al Qa'ida and Jemaah Islamiyah means that no one State acting in isolation will be able to combat the threat they pose. The world has never been more interdependent and now, more than ever before, security challenges have to be met both internationally and collectively. To fight networks, we need networks.

Since 11 September we have seen unprecedented levels of co-operation against terrorism, particularly on law enforcement and intelligence operations. Many terrorists are behind bars; the remaining Al Qa'ida leadership has been dispersed and their structures damaged.

The UK and Australia, along with a number of other countries, are also working to build the capacities of States around the world to deter, detain or disrupt terrorists groups. This benefits us not only through ensuring that our citizens and interests are better protected overseas, but through ensuring that the world becomes a more hostile environment generally for terrorists to operate within.

We must also address the political, social and economic factors that the conditions in which extremism breeds. I do not think anything justifies terrorism. But in some cases economic deprivation and political

alienation may be direct factors in the emergence of terrorism; but more typically terrorists exploit social and political grievances for their own purposes. That is certainly the case in the Middle East Peace Process – that has acted as a recruiting target for some of those terrorist organisations.

In short we are working with states which share our concerns and are working to address them; working for states which share our concerns but do not possess the means to address them; working on states which need persuasion; and working against regimes which harbour/support terrorists.

The UK and Australia, with our shared values and history, are natural partners in these efforts. We have been working particularly closely in Indonesia, where, in the aftermath of the attacks in Bali in October last year we worked side by side in recovery efforts and in the investigation that has recently led to a number of prosecutions. This, and the South East Asian region more widely, is an area where British and Australian expertise, jointly brought to bear, can – and will – have a real impact.

***REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES: SECURITY AND STABILITY IN  
THE SOUTH PACIFIC***



Before I close my remarks today I would like to turn to security in your own region, which is the primary reason for my own visit. I am on my way to Auckland for the post-Forum Dialogue sessions of the Pacific Islands Forum. And I have just come from an eye-opening four days in the Solomon Islands.

### ***SOLOMON ISLANDS***

I see the Solomon Islands as a lesson and a warning to all of us who care about stability and prosperity in the South Pacific. We have made clear from the outset our support for aims of the policing intervention now under way. We responded to an earlier invitation by the government of the Solomon Islands to find a capable British officer to head the islands' police force. With our colleagues in the European Union, we put together a package of assistance enabling us to meet this request, and to go further to support the recruitment of a an assistant commissioner of police.

But it's been clear to them, just as it has been clear to us and to our Australian friends, that to create the basis on which he can make real progress on restoring public order and security to the islands, something more comprehensive was needed.

In welcoming the Regional Assistance Mission, we took carefully into account the Solomon Islands Parliament's blessing of the initiative. And we were impressed by the solidarity of other Pacific Islands Forum countries in their support for what was planned. On that basis, we were convinced it was right to express our own support, and to encourage our partners in the EU to do the same.

As I made clear when I was in Honiara, we want to see this intervention work. We want to see peace and stability restored to the Solomon Islands so that the people of the Island have a secure future.

I met Nick Warner and the UK Police Commissioner Bill Morrell earlier this week, and my experience over the last few days is that it is early days but there is a palpable sense of optimism with the new degree of security. The regional assistance mission with Government blessing has set a precedent for the region.

So we wish the intervention success, and we salute the initiative of Australia in making it a reality. But I think we would all agree that in the Solomon Islands we see acute symptoms of a malaise it would have been far better to prevent than to have to try to cure.

But we need, of course, to look beyond the maintenance of law and order, and focus too on the root causes of lawlessness and conflict.

With that in mind, our own efforts in the Pacific region focus heavily on the promotion and protection of human and civil rights, particularly the rights of women and children; on the quality and integrity of governance, both in a political and economic sense.

Earlier this year we arranged a visit by the UK's former Parliamentary Ombudsmen to talk to parliamentarians and others in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands about parliamentary standards, we have helped strengthen the judiciary in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, and we are funding a parliamentary website in Fiji and a youth parliament in Tonga. And a couple of days ago I announced a new project for young people in the Solomon Islands to reduce the influence of criminal and ex-militia gangs. These are just a few examples of how we are working to help build stability in the region.

It will be clear to everyone familiar with the South Pacific region that the UK does not play the role it once did. Our presence here is no longer led by governors and administrators. Today, you'll find the UK represented

as much among the dedicated VSO volunteers in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, as in our High Commissions.

And in our work on development you will see from 2004 not a bilateral aid programme but a sustained commitment to ensuring the effectiveness of the EU aid effort, to which the British contribution is [13%].

You'll see us at work in support of shared Commonwealth objectives, and alongside the multilateral agencies. We will need to be flexible and adaptive in sustaining our commitment to the region. But sustain it we will.

### ***CONCLUDING REMARKS***

There is much in the partnership between the UK and Australia that I have not had time to mention today. So many areas in which our shared heritage and our common perspectives help us respond to global challenges.

I have just briefly touched on just a few of the areas in which we work together. But I hope I have illustrated how an old and valued friendship is continuing to respond to new and difficult challenges. How together,

we make an effective shared contribution to helping to build a safer, more peaceful and more prosperous world.

I do believe there is an immense amount in common between our two nations, in terms of government and policy, and even more so between ordinary people, and that should give us the confidence to face global challenges together. The world is a safer place given Australian and UK cooperation.

Thank you.