

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**SECRETARY JAN ADAMS AO PSM
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE
OPENING STATEMENT
SENATE ESTIMATES
15 FEBRUARY 2024**

Thank you, Senators, for the opportunity to make opening remarks.

As you know, DFAT continues to operate in a challenging and constantly changing global environment.

The crisis in the Middle East has been a major focus for DFAT in recent months

Since 7 October, more than 2,656 Australians have now departed Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

We also responded to more than 20 other crises in 2023, including supporting the Pacific family to manage the impacts of

tropical cyclones Judy, Kevin and Lola and the Mt Bagana and Ulawan volcanic eruptions.

Crisis work demands dedication, and extraordinary personal resilience, and I would like to pay tribute to those DFAT staff who have volunteered to deploy, often repeatedly.

And I also want to acknowledge the contribution of the many other Departments and agencies across government who contributed to these efforts.

The crisis in the Middle East, in particular, activated the Department's crisis and security mechanisms, which responded quickly and effectively.

It has highlighted the increasingly volatile geopolitical environment in which we operate, and the value of DFAT's whole-of-government presence overseas as the front line in responding to and countering current and emerging threats.

For example, DFAT's cyber security teams defend our IT networks from over 400,000 attacks everyday. We work closely with security agencies to protect our staff and their work so that we are trusted by our international partners.

We have been working to ensure we can support all our staff to do their jobs, and to make DFAT more effective in the long term.

In 2023 we expanded our overseas network by almost 40 Australia-based positions – including through the opening of our High Commission in the Maldives and Consulate-General in Bengaluru.

Australia - with DFAT lead - strengthened its partnerships across the world.

In the Pacific we elevated our Vuvale Partnership with Fiji, supported reunification of the Pacific Islands Forum and

facilitated over eighty incoming and outgoing visits, including Prime Minister Marape's historic address to Parliament last week.

In Southeast Asia, we stepped up our engagement with partners including Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and ASEAN. The release of the 'Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040' provides a pathway to deeper two-way trade and investment with our region.

On the weekend, as the Minister said, we hosted the Indian Ocean Conference, to discuss shared solutions to our shared challenges across the Indian Ocean.

We have kept up the momentum on AUKUS and the Quad.

We have taken a patient, calibrated and deliberated approach to stabilising our ties with China, without changing our strategic national security or foreign policy positions.

Stabilising relations means we cooperate where we can, disagree where we must and engage in national interest, including – indeed, especially – where we have difference and difficulties, such as the recent sentence for Yang Jun, as the Minister has just said - and in advocating for a region that is stable, secure and where rules are respected.

Our negotiators continue to be busy.

We have concluded negotiations on three IPEF agreements focused on important issues such as supply chain security, clean energy, and anti-corruption.

We upgraded the ASEAN - Australia - New Zealand FTA and have launched an FTA with the United Arab Emirates

We launched the France - Australia Roadmap, a significant milestone in our renewed, ambitious bilateral partnership.

DFAT also delivered diplomatic and humanitarian support to Ukraine, and continued to hold Russia to account through sanctions.

We brought the Australia-UK and India ECTA FTAs into force, and managed WTO disputes.

Notwithstanding significant effort on the EU FTA, as yet the commercially meaningful outcome we need is not there.

We ran successful multilateral candidacies – most notably, election of Hillary Charlesworth to a nine-year term as a judge of the International Court of Justice.

Since I have been Secretary, we have implemented nearly 500 new sanctions listings and nearly 600 sanctions relistings.

This includes Australia's first cyber sanction, in response to the Medibank Private significant cyber incident, further sanctions on the Myanmar military regime, as well as sanctions in response to terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas.

In 2023, we delivered the first new international development policy in a decade to wide acclaim, lifting ambition on climate, gender and disability.

All while delivering a \$4.8 billion development program with impact and integrity at its core.

We are now implementing one of our largest-ever health programs, the \$620 million Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative – which will help build resilient and equitable health systems in the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

We have reinvigorated the climate agenda and supported Australia's participation in a successful COP28.

Our new Australian Development Investments program recently closed its first deal – a \$4.5 million investment in Southeast Asia which leverages \$50 million of climate finance for a remarkable 11 to 1 leverage ratio.

And amongst all of this, in 2023 we issued more than 2.6 million passports, and by December 2023, the passport customer satisfaction rate was 95 per cent.

Thank you, Chair and committee.