



## **Australia – Malaysia Joint Declaration of Strategic Partnership**

**Kuala Lumpur, 22 November 2015**

Australia and Malaysia have a long-standing and substantial partnership that was anchored by cooperation during World War II, the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation, and consolidated by strong people to people links fostered through education, business, migration and tourism. Our nations have shown each other unwavering friendship in times of adversity, evidenced by the compassionate responses to the disappearance of MH370 and the shooting down of MH17. Our business and trading relationship is broad-based. Our prosperous, harmonious and multicultural societies celebrate diversity and value moderation and tolerance. We have a shared determination to counter terrorism, violent extremism, human trafficking and people smuggling. We are committed to greater regional economic integration and a secure, stable and prosperous region.

Recognising that 2015 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Australia's diplomatic presence in Malaysia, looking forward to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Australia – Malaysia diplomatic relations in 2017 and acknowledging the enduring nature of our bilateral ties, the Prime Ministers have agreed to elevate the relationship to a Strategic Partnership.

### **Political and Strategic Engagement**

The Prime Ministers agreed to strengthen political engagement through annual meetings of Foreign Ministers to be underpinned by Senior Officials Talks and a Strategic Dialogue (alternating annually) and augmented by enhanced defence dialogue. These meetings will allow exchanges of views, ideas and initiatives in order to develop a shared understanding of the strategic issues in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

The Prime Ministers directed officials to explore areas for further practical cooperation, including policy planning, consular policy and practice, development cooperation and disaster preparedness and response.

Prime Minister Turnbull congratulated Malaysia on its achievements as 2015 Chair of ASEAN. The Prime Ministers emphasised their commitment to strengthening the ASEAN – Australia Strategic Partnership and welcomed the commitment to biennial Summits from 2016. The Prime Ministers affirmed the importance of the East Asia Summit as the premier regional forum for discussion of strategic, political and economic issues of common interest and concern. They expressed support for strengthening the East Asia Summit and building up its political-security agenda.

The Prime Ministers committed to continue collaboration between Australia and Malaysia on regional matters of common interest, including through the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus, APEC, Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). They welcomed the formation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as a means of boosting economic growth and promoting trade in the region.

The Prime Ministers emphasised the importance of promoting a rules-based international order, respect for international law, ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight, and unimpeded lawful commerce. They expressed concerns about recent and ongoing

developments in the South China Sea which have eroded trust and confidence and increased tensions. They agreed on the critical importance of refraining from the use or threat of force, of exercising self-restraint and avoiding actions that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability in the South China Sea. They emphasised that disputes should be settled through peaceful means, in accordance with international law including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). They stressed the need to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea in its entirety and urged the early establishment of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

### **Collaboration in Defence and Security**

The Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangements and the Malaysia Australia Joint Defence Program which provide a sound basis for ongoing collaboration on defence matters. They underscored their support for United Nations' efforts towards global peace through the Joint Malaysia-Australian Peacekeeping Training Initiative.

The Prime Ministers expressed grave concern at the rise of non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, violent extremism, radicalisation, foreign terrorist fighters and cyber security challenges. The Prime Ministers praised the existing excellent cooperation between Australian and Malaysian police, maritime and border authorities and agreed to strengthen further security cooperation, including through enhanced exchange of intelligence and analysis. The Prime Ministers directed the Joint Working Group on Transnational Crime to enhance engagement under the 2014 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Transnational Crime.

The Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to bilateral cooperation in combating irregular migration, human trafficking and people smuggling, particularly through the Bali Process and exchange of views on practices and norms relevant to providing international protection to persons in need.

### **Consolidating links: trade, investment and education**

The Prime Ministers noted the importance of the Malaysia Australia Free Trade Agreement as a springboard to growth in economic and trade relations. They directed their Ministers responsible for trade to convene the Joint Trade Committee Meeting at least once every 2 years. They looked forward to greater business and investment opportunities with the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community and the recently concluded Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The Prime Ministers welcomed the finalisation of the Film Co-production Agreement and MoUs on Sports Cooperation and Marine Conservation and Management. These new initiatives highlight the ever-evolving nature of our cooperation.

The Prime Ministers reaffirmed that education is a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship and has been a source of mutual understanding and personal friendships between Malaysians and Australians. Malaysians formed the greatest numbers of original Colombo Plan participants and thousands of Malaysians still study in Australia. The August 2015 launch of the New Colombo Plan is increasing the number of young Australians travelling to Malaysia. The Prime Ministers directed the annual Joint Working Groups on Education to expand exchanges and cooperation in line with MoUs on cooperation in the field of education.

In declaring a strategic partnership between Australia and Malaysia, the Prime Ministers pledged their commitment to deepening cooperation and mutual understanding in order to contribute to the security and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region, and to strengthen further the bilateral relationship.