

Ratification of the Paris Climate agreement

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PRIME MINISTER:

Good morning, I'm here with the Foreign Minister and the Environment Minister and Energy Minister, to announce that Australia has ratified the Paris Agreement on climate change. We look forward to actively and fully implementing our obligations and our commitments under the agreement. We've also ratified the Doha amendment to the Kyoto Protocol.

We join more than 100 other countries in ratifying the Paris Agreement, which entered into force, as you know, on the 4th of November. Each early entry into force is a path, a signal, of nations' intentions to follow through on their Paris commitments.

Almost a year from the Paris Conference, it is clear the agreement was a watershed, a turning point. The adoption of a comprehensive strategy has galvanised the international community and spurred on global action. As you know, we are playing our part with ambitious targets. We are on track to meet and indeed beat our 2020 targets. We will review our climate and energy policies next year to ensure that we meet, as we believe we will and are committed to do, to meet our 2030 targets under the agreement.

FOREIGN MINISTER:

Thank you Prime Minister. The Australian Government tabled the Paris Agreement and the Doha Amendment as soon as possible after the new parliament returned. The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties has recommended ratification after considering the national interest analysis and holding four public hearings and receiving almost 50 submissions. The Australian Government has determined that ratifying the Paris Agreement is in our national interests and will provide great opportunities for Australian businesses.

The global low emissions economy is estimated to be worth around \$6 trillion and is growing at some 4-5 per cent per annum. We believe that through the use of technology and research and science and innovation, there will be many opportunities for Australian businesses, Australian jobs in a low emissions economy.

Australia joins, as the Prime Minister said, 103 other countries at this point in ratifying the Paris Agreement. This accounts for over 70 per cent of the world's emissions, over 75 per cent of the global GDP and 85 per cent of Australia's two-way trade.

As I did last year, I will be leading Australia's delegation to the Climate Change Conference in Marrakesh, joined by the Minister for the Environment and Energy, where we will be promoting Australia's interests and working with other countries to settle the rules that will guide the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT MINISTER:

Thank you Foreign Minister. Thank you Prime Minister.

The Turnbull Government is absolutely focused on the domestic policies to help implement the targets that it agreed on at Paris. A 26-28 per cent reduction on 2005 levels by 2030. On a per capita basis, that is more than 50 per cent and one of the highest targets in the G20. We

have a suite of mechanisms in order to meet that target. That includes the Emissions Reduction Fund which has been very successful to date with the cost of abatement at about \$12.10 a tonne. Our Renewable Energy Target as well as our National Energy Productivity Plan, which is aiming to boost the efficiency of energy use by 40 per cent by 2030.

We are very confident, as we have beaten our first Kyoto target and we are on track to beat our 2020 target, that we will meet our 2030 target with the suite of mechanisms we have if place, together with the review we will conduct next year.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, in the event that America follows through with what Donald Trump has said – that he doesn't agree with the Paris Agreement [inaudible] climate treaty - in the event that America exits the Treaty, will Australia follow suit?

And another question, if I may - as part of the go-stop process, Malcolm Roberts made his position to that inquiry saying that Australia should not ratify the Paris Agreement. One Nation clearly doesn't agree with it. There will be people in your own show who don't agree with it. What do you say to those people?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, we have ratified the agreement. It takes effectively four years to withdraw, if a country sought to withdraw from the agreement. It takes four years. Secondly, this is a global agreement. When Australia makes a commitment to a global agreement, we follow through and that is exactly what we are doing.

JOURNALIST:

Will you try and convince the new President to do more in terms of climate technology, clean energy technology? Will Australia be trying to work closely with his administration on those issues?

PRIME MINISTER:

We will be working closely with the new administration. Indeed we already, as you know the Foreign Minister's described, we have reached out to the teams of both of the contenders in the presidential election. I have had, earlier this morning, a very warm and constructive and practical discussion with President-elect Trump. We canvassed a number of issues. Most importantly, we absolutely agreed on the vital importance of our strong alliance. Mr Trump recognises the solidarity that Australia has shown the United States, and the United States has shown Australia, over 98 years, during which we have fought side-by-side with the United States in every major conflict. Mr Trump recognises that. He has observed the success of our economy and congratulated me on that. We discussed the vital importance of the United States' continued strong presence in our region and we agreed that that presence has been an absolutely essential foundation of the peace and the stability that has enabled the remarkable growth and prosperity, the remarkable economic growth we have seen over the last 40 years.

It was a very warm discussion. I suppose as both being businessmen who found our way into politics somewhat later in life, we come to the problems of our own nations and indeed world problems, with a pragmatic approach. As you know Mr Trump is a deal-maker. He is a businessman, he is a deal-maker and he will - I have no doubt - view the world in a very practical and pragmatic way.

JOURNALIST:

PM, the Trump election has been likened in the US to an uprising. There are clearly a lot of voters who are angry with the status quo - who feel left behind by the status quo. Do you think there is anything like that in Australia? Do you think there are any lessons for Australia out of what we are seeing in the States?

PRIME MINISTER:

It is vitally important - as I have said many times, and indeed as I said last night - that in this time of rapid economic change, that the change is seen to be inclusive. That is to say, no sectors or communities or regions, should be allowed to be left behind. In a time of rapid transition, that obviously can be a cause for great anxiety, a cause of uncertainty. It is vitally important for leaders such as ourselves here, and around the world - and the G20 acknowledged this - to make the case for strong economic growth and above all ensure that in our own nations, in our own communities, everybody is able to benefit from that and that nobody feels left out or overlooked as those changes occur.

JOURNALIST:

Did you canvass the trade issue in your talks? Were your mutual business backgrounds explicitly mentioned? Also, did you talk about a possible meeting at any early date?

PRIME MINISTER:

There's three questions there and that is one more than Murpharoo.

JOURNALIST:

We are very competitive.

PRIME MINISTER:

You are very competitive I'm sure. In terms of the third question yes, Mr Trump did. It was a very warm discussion. It could not have been a warmer discussion I have to say, and he looked forward, as I did, to an early meeting. So that is your third question. In terms of your second question, yes we did reflect on our business backgrounds and business careers as you would expect. Thirdly on trade, yes we did discuss, briefly, the TPP and I explained why Australia supported its ratification to him.

JOURNALIST:

On the TPP, did you get any reaction from Mr Trump? Did he say he was prepared to rethink it?

PRIME MINISTER:

I don't want to quote Mr Trump. We agreed that we could refer to the fact that we had the discussion but I think his views on that treaty are pretty well-known.

JOURNALIST:

Further on defence issues. Did you receive any assurance that the United States wouldn't retreat on some of its defence involvement in the region, including rotation of troops for example in northern Australia?

PRIME MINISTER:

Can I say to you that Mr Trump's commitment to expanding the US military is very well-known and we discussed it. He is proposing a very substantial investment in the United States Navy. I did describe for him our very substantial Naval Ship Building Plan, 54 new vessels, including, of course, 12 regionally superior submarines. We discussed that and what his plans were for the US Navy are. But let me tell you, he is committed to a strong United States - a strong United States with enhanced military power. A strong United States that will continue to be that foundation for peace and stability as it has been for many, many years.

JOURNALIST:

So did you interpret that Prime Minister as an embrace of the Obama pivot?

PRIME MINISTER:

I have just described to you what the conclusion of the meeting was and I will leave you to analysis.

JOURNALIST:

You said the conversation was pragmatic. Do you think practically anything will substantially change between the United States and Australia in the next four years? And Mr Frydenberg do you regret calling Mr Trump a drop-kick?

PRIME MINISTER:

Let me deal with the substantive question first. We could not have had a warmer discussion. It was a very frank discussion about a range of important strategic issues and priorities. Look, nations have enduring national interests and I have no doubt that the commitment of the United States, absolutely no doubt of the commitment of the United States to the alliance. The presence in the region, its commitment to its allies and our neighbours will continue. It is manifestly - nations act, regardless of who leads nations, nations act in their own national interest. There is a reason why the United States has been such a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific for many decades, for many decades. It has been that Pax Americana of the last 40 and more years, that has underpinned the extraordinary growth in prosperity, the raising of billions out of poverty. That has been the foundation of it. That commitment, I am absolutely certain will continue because it is manifestly in America's national interest. As I said, in one of the speeches I gave last night, as I think Paul Keating used to say, quoting Jack Lang; "in the great race of life always back self-interest because you know it is trying". I have no doubt that America will continue to act in its national interest.

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT MINISTER:

In the lead-up to the vote, I think the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister hit the right note. I concede I probably should have followed their lead.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Turnbull some Australian politicians are now saying, based on Mr Trump's personality, we should review the US alliance. What do you think of that? And, secondly, since multiple questions are sneaking in –

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, indeed.

JOURNALIST:

On the trade issue, did you particularly put the case for Australian farmers and for, generally for Australian trade into the US?

PRIME MINISTER:

Let me deal with the first point. The Australian-US Alliance is a fundamental foundation of our security and indeed America's security. Mr Trump recognises that, appreciates that, honours that, admires it. That alliance will be there long after Mr Trump is no longer President, long after I am no longer Prime Minister. It is manifestly, fundamentally in the interests of both nations. That is why it has endured and will continue to endure.

Now, turning to trade and the TPP in particular, I make a point of being consistent in my advocacy and the argument that I have put to American leaders, and I recognise - we all understand the domestic politics of the United States - let's be frank, both candidates, Secretary Clinton and Mr Trump said that they would not support the ratification of the TPP. But my job as Prime Minister, Julie's job as Foreign Minister, Josh's job as Environment Minister, is to advocate the interests of Australia. We believe the ratification of the TPP is in our national interest. It is in Australia's national interests. We believe it makes, and the argument we have put to the United States, is that it is in America's strategic interest to be seen to be the cornerstone of an important trade agreement in our region, which is based on the values we share; commitment to the rules-based order, commitment to the rule of law.

Lee Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister of Singapore made this point very well recently when someone said to him: 'What do you think the Americans should do to underline their strategic commitment to the region?' And he said: 'Ratify the TPP'. I say, we agree with him on that but ultimately, the Congress will make its own decision.

JOURNALIST:

Some respected analysts from the US Studies Centre, including some who would be well-known to you, have questioned what this means for Australia's relationship with Japan, whether we would continue to pursue closer security interests with Japan or whether this would mean a Trump Presidency would mean we would seek to distance ourselves in some way. What is the answer to that question?

PRIME MINISTER:

In the questions you have noted some comments that have been made. Analysts will analyse, they will speculate, they will theorise and that is good, because we should have a healthy debate about these issues. We as leaders, we are not engaged in hypothesising. We have a strong alliance. We have strong relations, strong alliances with important partners like Japan. What we will continue to do is to work to bring our nation and others with common values, like-minded nations, closer together. Our interest, our only interest is the maintenance of the peace and stability, the harmony in our region that has been the foundation for such remarkable growth and prosperity.

That is our commitment but there will be lots of speculation and analysis and we will endeavour to read as much of it as we can - won't we Julie? - for years to come. Some of it will prove to be right, some of it less so but our job is to lead.

So, thank you very much indeed.

[ENDS]