



JOINT STATEMENT ON SPACE SECURITY 8 November 2010

As part of the 25th Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations on 8 November 2010, Minister for Foreign Affairs Kevin Rudd, Minister for Defence Stephen Smith, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, considered a range of new and emerging security challenges of the 21st century. In that context, they discussed challenges to international and national security in the space domain.

Australia and the United States both recognise that space systems have become critical national infrastructure. The benefits from the free use of space permeate almost every facet of our daily lives: from aircraft and ship navigation to weather forecasting; from natural resource management to disaster recovery; and from global telecommunication connectivity to expedited search and rescue. Much of our defence capability is also dependent on satellites. The two Governments reaffirmed that cooperating with other like-minded nations to maintain the freedom of use of space for peaceful purposes is critical to our nations' security and economic prosperity.

Australia and the United States share a deep concern that the space environment is becoming increasingly congested and contested. Currently there are an estimated 500,000 pieces of space debris of 1 centimetre diameter or larger in orbit around the Earth. Such debris is capable of damaging or destroying satellites and space vehicles, and harming human spaceflight. In this regard, the development and testing of counter-space weapons that create more long-lived space debris pose a direct and immediate threat to the rights of all nations to explore and use space for peaceful purposes. The two countries therefore recognized that working together to promote approaches for responsible activity in space is a high priority. They also endorsed intensified bilateral, regional and international cooperation to meet this challenge.

Australia welcomed the U.S. decision, reflected in the June 2010 U.S. National Space Policy, to consider space arms control measures that are equitable, verifiable and in the national interest of the United States and its allies. Australia intends to work with the United States to progress efforts to prevent long-lived debris-creating behaviour, and develop and implement transparency and confidence-building measures for enhanced stability and safety in space activities.

During AUSMIN, Defence Minister Smith and Defense Secretary Gates signed a Space Situational Awareness Partnership Statement of Principles. This Partnership would further strengthen already significant Australia-U.S. defence space cooperation. The Partnership would examine opportunities to establish and operate sensors in Australia to increase surveillance of orbital objects passing over the Asia-Pacific region, thereby enabling Australia to support the United States in providing more accurate warning of potential collisions in space, and tracking of objects falling to earth over Australia or our immediate region.

Australia and the United States intend to continue to grow their history of defence space cooperation, building upon recent initiatives such as investment in the US Wideband Global Satellite (WGS) program and Ultra High Frequency communications satellite sharing.

Complementing this work, Australia and the United States also noted the ongoing discussions on developing an Australia-United States Civil Space Cooperation Framework Agreement to take the long-standing civil space cooperation between the two countries to a higher level, strengthen collaboration and provide opportunities for early discussions on new developments.

Australia and the United States reaffirmed their commitment to intensify space cooperation across a range of common interests and decided to review progress in this field at AUSMIN 2011.