

**Open Letter from Australian Members of the Asia-Pacific  
Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and  
Disarmament (APLN) to the Australian Prime Minister  
1 November 2023**

The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

We, the undersigned Australian members of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament\*, welcome your personal commitment to the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as you affirmed at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June this year. We also welcome your recognition that the growing range and complexity of nuclear threats and risks in our Indo-Pacific region require dialogue and the development of guardrails.

With eight nuclear armed states actively engaged in the security dynamic of the Indo-Pacific, our region is one of unprecedented strategic complexity and has become the epicentre of global nuclear threats. Potential nuclear flashpoints form an arc ranging from Northeast Asia through East Asia to the South China Sea and on to South Asia. However, in contrast to the many structures that evolved to manage Cold War nuclear relations, our region has yet to develop such mechanisms. Urgent action is required to address this situation.

Australia has committed to major defence efforts to respond to changing regional balances. However, our diplomatic effort has not been proportionately strengthened – expertise is being lost and we have failed to devote resources for the promotion and negotiation of regional arms control frameworks.

Australia, especially under Labor governments, has in the past been a very effective advocate of nuclear and other WMD disarmament measures with very important successes such as the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, as well as the highly influential Canberra Commission and its successor the International Commission on Nuclear Non- proliferation and Disarmament.

We respectfully urge you to uphold this tradition and commit Australia to taking a leadership role in addressing the rising nuclear threats in our region, building on your Shangri-La Dialogue commitments.

Specifically, we ask you to consider appointing a high-level envoy to engage our regional partners on an agenda of nuclear confidence building and preventive diplomacy measures. As an immediate goal, Australia might work with others to have such an agenda adopted by the East Asia Summit, building on its 2016 Statement on Non-Proliferation.

APLN stands ready to offer its expertise to Australia and other regional partners to help develop an agenda for reducing nuclear risks and threats in the Indo-Pacific.

Signed,

**John Carlson** AM, Former Director General of the Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office, and Senior Associate Fellow with the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network

Professor **Simon Chesterman**, Vice Provost and David Marshall Professor of Law at the National University of Singapore, and Senior Director of AI Governance at AI Singapore

Professor the Hon. **Gareth Evans** AC KC, Former Australian Foreign Minister, Founding Convenor of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network, and Distinguished Honorary Professor at the Australian National University

Dr. **Trevor Findlay**, Principal Fellow at the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne, and former chair of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

Dr. **Marianne Hanson**, Associate Professor of International Relations, Honorary Professor, University of Queensland, and member, Asia-Pacific Leadership Network

Dr. **Peter Hayes**, Member of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network, Director of the Nautilus Institute, and Honorary Professor at the Center for International Security Studies, Sydney University

The Hon. **Robert Hill** AC, former Minister for Defence

**John McCarthy** AO, Vice Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne, former Ambassador to Vietnam, Mexico, Thailand, the United States, Indonesia, and Japan, and High Commissioner to India

The Hon. **Melissa Parke**, former Minister for International Development

**Gary Quinlan** AO FAIIA, former Ambassador to the UN and Australian Representative on the UN Security Council, former Ambassador to Indonesia, former Australian Senior Official to ASEAN, and former Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister on International Relations and National Security

**Natalie Sambhi**, Executive Director of Verve Research and member of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network

**Natasha Stott Despoja** AO, former Senator and Leader, Australian Democrats and Professor in the Practice of Politics, ANU

Emeritus Professor **Ramesh Thakur**, Australian National University, and former United Nations Assistant Secretary-General

**John Tilemann**, former diplomat and international civil servant with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and Senior Associate Fellow with the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network

Senator **Larissa Waters**, Australian Greens Leader in the Senate

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\* The Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non- Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN) is a network of former- and currently-serving political, diplomatic and military leaders, as well as senior government officials, scholars and opinion leaders across the Asia-Pacific region. APLN aims to inform and energize public opinion, especially high-level policymakers, to take seriously the very real threats posed by nuclear weapons, and work to achieve a world in which they are contained, diminished, and eventually eliminated.