



The Hon Julie Bishop MP

Minister for Foreign Affairs

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MEDIA DOORSTOP,
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Subjects: APEC, Greenpeace, Trilateral Strategic Dialogue.

E&OE...

JULIE BISHOP Good morning, I'm delighted to be here at the APEC Foreign Ministers Meeting in Bali. This has been an opportunity to review the progress of APEC over recent years and that's clearly evidenced by the number of Free Trade Agreements, bilateral and regional that have been established or under negotiation between APEC economies.

It's also evidenced by the increasing trade and investment intra APEC amongst the economies of the region. And there are other tangible signs of economic integration in this region, whether it be through supply chains in the region, through connections between our institutions, in particular our higher education institutions and I've taken the opportunity to inform members of the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan, which will provide an opportunity for Australian students to live and study at universities in the region.

I think the economic integration has also been evidenced by the increase in cross-border arrangements by our financial institutions and also the use of regional hubs for business and travel and the like.

Australia sees economic integration, economic interdependence as a form of strategic stabiliser. And regions that have integrated economies and economic interdependence are more likely, history shows, to be stable, peaceful and prosperous. And so we support the APEC agenda and we've been pleased to take part in a number of sessions focusing on issues like infrastructure, on education, student mobility as well as increased trade and investment.

I've also found it an exceedingly useful meeting as I've been able to hold a number of bilateral meetings with colleagues in the region in addition to the bilateral meetings I've been able to hold during the United Nations General Assembly Leaders' Week in New York.

And the meetings that I've held since I've returned from New York in Jakarta accompanying Prime Minister Abbott to Indonesia, in New Zealand where I met

Foreign Minister McCully, in Singapore where I met with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, and now here in Bali.

The bilaterals have included meetings with my colleague from Papua New Guinea, and from Canada and I was also able to take part in a Trilateral Strategic Dialogue with Secretary Kerry from the United States and Foreign Minister Kishida from Japan.

That Trilateral Strategic Dialogue was established back in 2002 but the Foreign Ministers had not met since 2009 so this was a very good opportunity for three close friends to catch up and talk about issues of international and regional significance at a high level.

I have also taken the opportunity while here at APEC to meet with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Igor Morgulov. And I want to make this point because there has been much publicity in Australia about an Australian citizen Colin Russell who has been detained by the Russian Government in relation to Greenpeace activities and the Greenpeace vessel Arctic Sunrise.

I raised with Deputy Foreign Minister Morgulov Australia's concern about the case. I registered our interest in the case and I discussed with him arrangements that had been made for consular assistance that's been in place for some time as also our concerns about the charges of piracy that has been directed at Mr Russell and other citizens.

More specifically, I want to confirm that I have been taking a very close interest in this case. I have been following it exceedingly closely. I have ensured that our consular officials have been in touch with Mr Russell, that they have reported to me on a regular basis and that I have asked the consular officials to provide a public statement which they did on 30 September and they will continue to do so as this matter develops.

Specifically, Mr Russell is represented by a Greenpeace appointed lawyer. He has had access to an interpreter, he is currently in custody while this preliminary investigation period continues. I understand that Mr Russell's lawyers have lodged an appeal against his detention.

We have extended all consular assistance. I understand he is well; his conditions of detention are adequate and he does have access to funds he is receiving support from Greenpeace, including a Greenpeace care package. And our consular officials will continue to monitor this situation closely; they have had one visit on the 30th of September, another visit is planned shortly subject to approval from Russian authorities.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra is in direct contact with Mr Russell's next of kin in Australia and I understand there is an Australian dual national

and an Australian permanent residence, both UK citizens, and they are receiving consular support from British consular officials. There's also a New Zealand citizen resident in Adelaide who's being assisted by the New Zealand Government and that's a matter I've also raised with Foreign Minister McCully.

We expect and I asked Deputy Foreign Minister Morgulov that Russian authorities afford due legal processes for Mr Russell and the other detainees throughout the investigative period and in other proceedings, and I have ensured that a senior Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade official will be holding talks in Russia this week and we will continue to reiterate to relevant Russian officials our interest and concern about this case.

Finally I understand that the Dutch, because this was a Dutch-flagged vessel, the Arctic Sunrise, lodged some form of legal action with the authorities on the basis that it was a Dutch-flagged ship and that legal action could well have implications for all of the crew, which would include Mr Russell.

JOURNALIST Minister, do you think the piracy charge is too extreme?

JULIE BISHOP I'm seeking advice on the details of the piracy charges. I understand they were brought under a Russian law but we're seeking advice as to whether this charge is appropriate.

I do note that President Putin has said in one press conference that they were clearly not pirates. But we are getting advice on the full implications of the law. I understand it is a very serious charge so we'll be seeking advice as to whether it is appropriate. Of course Mr Russell has lawyers who can assist him as well.

JOURNALIST What is your new government's adjustment in Asian Policy?

JULIE BISHOP Adjustment? The new Australian Government will focus our foreign policy assets, whether they be military and defence capability or economic and trade capacity, diplomatic and overseas development assistance, unmistakably on our region.

And we will be focussing on the Indian Ocean, Asia-Pacific and that's why we're here at APEC and Prime Minister Abbott will also be coming to APEC and moving on the East Asia Summit because we want to see Australia deeply engaged in the region.

Our New Colombo Plan is evidence of our commitment to this region.

JOURNALIST Minister, in your trilateral meeting, you spoke about Iran, North Korea and Syria, can you tell us about that.

JULIE BISHOP We had a very robust discussion about contemporary issues. All three of the participants in that meeting, Secretary Kerry, Foreign Minister Kishida

and I were in New York during the UN General Assembly Leaders' Week so we took part in one form or another in debates and discussions about Syria.

I was pleased that there was a unanimous resolution on the question of the prohibition of chemical weapons and the dismantling of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles.

I was also pleased to note that Australia was able to co-author a Presidential Statement on humanitarian access and humanitarian aid into Syria. We encouraged the United States and Russia to find a political solution to the ongoing conflict in Syria, through Geneva too.

All these matters were discussed in the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue yesterday as they were in New York.

JOURNALIST Minister, is the credibility of the US pivot to Asia diminished at all by President Obama's absence and did you discuss that with the Secretary of State?

JULIE BISHOP Not at all. We discussed the matter in general terms about the challenges facing President Obama and it's entirely understandable that he has to make that a priority. But the presence of Secretary Kerry here underscores the US commitment to the region and I don't for a moment think that President Obama's decision to stay in the United States during a very challenging time for the US reflects at all on the rebalance, and I think the member economies here appreciate the fact that the US is so committed to APEC and has demonstrated that by being here, taking part actively in the debates and sharing the views of the United States on APEC and related issues.

JOURNALIST Minister, is Prime Minister Abbott going to be a little disappointed that he won't get to have a photo with the President?

JULIE BISHOP Well I've had my photograph taken with the President so Mr Abbott will just have to wait for another meeting! He understands that.

JOURNALIST Minister, during your time in Indonesia, have you been able to discuss the Corby parole and also the plight of the Bali 9?

JULIE BISHOP That's a matter that was raised in Jakarta when Prime Minister Abbott and Minister Robb and I were in Jakarta. Those consular matters were raised. I'm not going into detail about them because I can't see at this point it will be any use to the individuals involved for me to make comment, but they were raised.

JOURNALIST Minister, just on a trade issue, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a very important negotiation that's taking place, has that progressed at all and the fact that Mr Obama isn't coming means it's not going to go forward as fast as they are moving?

JULIE BISHOP There's been a great deal of enthusiasm expressed for the Trans-Pacific Partnership here in Bali and I know that the United States is very keen to progress negotiations on the TPP and that's the message we've been receiving from Secretary Kerry and many of the economies present here have also expressed their enthusiasm for the TPP.

Yes it's challenging but anything worth doing is often challenging and there are a number of negotiations underway between the parties to the TPP for bilateral trade agreements; Australia for example has made it a priority to conclude Free Trade Agreements with South Korea, Japan and China, hopefully within 12 months. And so these negotiations will run in parallel with the TPP, we don't see that as competing, we see them as complementary.

JOURNALIST Minister, back on Colin Russell, what did the Russian side say to you about their views and your intentions on that matter, and secondly, there's been more unrest in Egypt. I'm wondering if you could give us your assessment there?

JULIE BISHOP In relation to Mr Russell, I've arranged this meeting with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia specifically to express our interest in the case as one of our citizens was directly involved and has been detained. I registered our concern about the charges and also our desire that he's afforded due legal process and consular assistance and those issues were discussed and I was given that assurance.

In relation to the charge of piracy, clearly the Russian authorities have a view that this was in breach of the relevant law; that the activities around the oil rig platform amounted to that. These are matters that will obviously have to be challenged and I'm seeking advice on it and Mr Russell is seeking advice from a lawyer.

JOURNALIST And in Egypt? I'm sorry, and on Egypt, do you have a view?

JULIE BISHOP At this stage we are obviously deeply concerned about any increasing unrest in Egypt. The whole area is increasingly volatile and it's something that I'll be getting advice from our consular officials and missions in the region.

At this, I'll need to go back to a plenary session. Thank you very much.

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