MEDIA RELEASE

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Hon Julie Bishop MP

24 April 2013

STRONG AND ENDURING TIES WITH FRANCE

My first official visit to France takes place at a time when our bilateral relationship remains strong and enduring. We are cooperating on international security issues in the UN Security Council and on global economic issues as Australia hosts the G20 this year.

Lasting links were forged between our nations on the battlefields of World War I and this year marks the commencement of a four-year period of shared remembrance. Our joint commemoration of the War's Centenary (2014-18) will further strengthen our bilateral ties. I am honoured to represent Australia at the ANZAC Day Dawn Service at Villers-Bretonneux, and other memorial services in northern France on 25 April.

In Paris, I met my French counterpart, Laurent Fabius, to discuss a broad range of global and regional issues in which our nations have mutual interests, including unfolding developments in Ukraine and the Middle East.

We looked at new ways to deepen cooperation under our bilateral Strategic Partnership and agreed to the establishment of a consular cooperation agreement for crisis response in our respective regions of the world – Francophone Africa and the South Pacific.

This new agreement will benefit both nations with significantly improved consular support networks, such as diplomatic assistance for French citizens in the Pacific and greater support for Australians in need of assistance in Africa.

I also met new appointments to the Hollande Administration, including Ségolène Royal, recently appointed Minister for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, to discuss global energy supply, climate change and the G20 agenda. I met with the Minister for Overseas Territories, George Pau-Langevin, to take forward our shared interests in the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.

France is a significant investment partner and I am promoting Australia as an investment destination to senior representatives of French companies in the defence, shipping and aerospace sectors, as well as to MEDEF – France's peak industry body.

France is also an important tourism market and I am meeting with major airlines and French tour operators to promote Australia as a destination.

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