STATEMENT ON RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE AND INTERNATIONAL SPORT

Ministerial and senior representatives from our collective group of nations met on Friday 10 February. We were honoured to be joined by President Zelenskyy, who outlined the ongoing devastation being inflicted on Ukraine, including its sports infrastructure and athletes, due to Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable war of choice, facilitated by the Belarusian government. We reaffirmed our nations' two previous collective statements of 8 March 2022 and 4 July 2022, and discussed the statement of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) of 25 January 2023.

We welcomed the IOC's reaffirmation and reinforcement of their existing sanctions in place, and their statement committing to solidarity and support for Ukrainian athletes and the Ukrainian Olympic Committee.

While recognising the autonomy of sports bodies, given the invasion of Ukraine and its devastation is ongoing, we agreed that the IOC's proposal on exploring a pathway back to competition for individual Russian and Belarusian athletes raises many questions and concerns.

In its statement of 28 February 2022, the IOC recommended that Russian and Belarusian athletes not compete, in part because "many athletes from Ukraine are prevented from doing so [participating in sport events] because of the attack on their country." Wherever such an exclusion was not possible on short notice for organisational or legal reasons, the IOC recommended that Russian or Belarusian nationals should be accepted only as neutral athletes and that no national symbols, colours, flags or anthems should be displayed.
We noted that the situation on the ground in Ukraine has only worsened since this statement. We firmly believe that, given there has been no change in the situation

regarding the Russian aggression in Ukraine, and as an imperative for fairness and solidarity towards the Ukrainian athletes whose facilities have been destroyed and who have had to leave their country (or stay to fight for the defence of Ukraine in which very many have lost their lives), there is no practical reason to move away from the exclusion regime for Russian and Belarusian athletes set by the IOC in their statement of 28 February 2022.

We also noted that through their choices, action and ongoing invasion Russia broke the Olympic Truce that has been continuously supported by the United Nations General Assembly since 1993.

In our collective statement of 4 July 2022, in view of the non-discrimination principle, we recognised that Russian and Belarusian nationals could be allowed to compete as 'neutral' individuals, subject to conditions to ensure they are clearly not representing their states. However, in Russia and Belarus sport and politics are closely intertwined. We have strong concerns on how feasible it is for Russian and Belarusian Olympic athletes to compete as 'neutrals' - under the IOC's conditions of no identification with their country - when they are directly funded and supported by their states (unlike, for example, professional tennis players). The strong links and affiliations between Russian athletes and the Russian military are also of clear concern. Our collective approach throughout has therefore never been one of discrimination simply on the basis of nationality, but these strong concerns need to be dealt with by the IOC.

As long as these fundamental issues and the substantial lack of clarity and concrete detail on a workable 'neutrality' model are not addressed, we do not agree that Russian and Belarusian athletes should be allowed back into competition. Noting the IOC's stated position that no final decisions have been made, we strongly urge the

IOC to address the questions identified by all countries and reconsider its proposal accordingly. We also note that Russia and Belarus have it in their own hands to pave the way for their athletes' full return to the international sports community, namely by ending the war they started.

SIGNED BY:

Australia	The Hon Anika Wells MP, Minister for Sport
Austria	Vice-Chancellor Werner Kogler, Minister of Arts and Culture, Civil Service and Sport
Belgium	Ben Weyts, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Animal Welfare, Brussels Periphery, Education and Sport of the Flemish Government. This signature commits the Flemish Community, the French-speaking Community and the German-speaking Community of Belgium
Canada	The Honourable Pascale St-Onge, Minister of Sport
Croatia	Dr Nikolina Brnjac, Minister of Tourism and Sport
Cyprus	Prodromos Prodromou, Minister of Education, Sport and Youth
Czech Republic	Vladimír Balaš, Minister for Education, Youth and Sports Ondřej Šebek, President of the National Sports Agency
Denmark	Jakob Engel-Schmidt, Minister of Culture
Estonia	Piret Hartman, Minister of Culture

Finland	Petri Honkonen, Minister of Science and Culture
France	Amélie Oudéa-Castéra, Minister of Sports and the Olympic and Paralympic Games
Germany	Mahmut Özdemir MP, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community
Greece	Lefteris Avgenakis, Deputy Minister of Culture and Sport, Responsible for Sport
Iceland	Ásmundur Einar Daðason, Minister of Education and Children
Ireland	Thomas Byrne, Minister of State for Sport and Physical Education
Italy	Andrea Abodi, Minister for Sport and Youth
Japan	H.E. NAGAOKA Keiko, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
Republic of Korea	H.E. PARK Bo Gyoon, Minister of Culture, Sports & Tourism
Latvia	Anda Čakša, Minister of Education and Science
Liechtenstein	H.E. Dominique Hasler, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport
Lithuania	Dr Jurgita Šiugždinienė, Minister of Education, Science and Sport
Luxembourg	Georges Engel, Minister of Sport

Malta	Hon Clifton Grima, Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation.
Netherlands	Conny Helder, Minister for Long-term Care and Sport
New Zealand	Hon Grant Robertson, Minister for Sport and Recreation
Norway	Anette Trettebergstuen, Minister of Culture and Equality
Poland	Kamil Bortniczuk, Minister of Sport and Tourism
Portugal	João Paulo Correia, Secretary of State for Youth and Sport
Romania	Carol-Eduard Novak, Minister of Sports
Slovakia	Ján Horecký, Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic
Slovenia	Matjaž Han, Minister of the Economy, Tourism and Sport
Spain	Miquel Octavi Iceta i Llorens, Minister of Culture and Sport
Sweden	Jakob Forssmed, Minister for Social Affairs and Public Health
United Kingdom	The Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
United States of America	Lee Satterfield, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs