

Readout of AUKUS Joint Steering Group Meetings

Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America recently held the inaugural meetings of the AUKUS Trilateral Joint Steering Groups, which were established as part of the governance structure of AUKUS in September 2021. The Joint Steering Group for Advanced Capabilities met on December 9 and the Joint Steering Group for Australia's Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program met on December 14. Both meetings were held at the Pentagon.

The delegations reaffirmed the Leaders' vision that was laid out in September 2021 and discussed the intensive work underway across the governments and the significant progress made in the three months since the announcement of AUKUS.

The meetings were productive and the participants outlined next steps to continue the positive trajectory in implementation.

During the Joint Steering Group meeting on Advanced Capabilities, participants identified opportunities for collaboration on a range of critical capabilities and technologies. They committed to significantly deepen cooperation and enhance interoperability, and in so doing strengthen security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. In particular, participants committed to finalising a program of work in relation to advanced capabilities by early 2022. Beyond the four initial areas of focus outlined in the Joint Leaders' Statement on AUKUS—cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities—participants also discussed other additional capabilities and agreed to identify potential opportunities for collaboration in those areas.

During the Joint Steering Group meeting on Australia's Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program, the participants reaffirmed the trilateral commitment to bring the Australian capability into service at the earliest possible date. The delegations agreed on the next steps over the 18-month consultation period to define the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, and for the Working Groups to examine in detail the critical actions necessary to establish an enduring program in Australia. The participants reviewed achievements since September, including the signing of the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information Agreement and the path forward to bring that into force, which will enable full and effective consultation between the governments over the 18-month period.

The participants also discussed how they will work to ensure that the submarine program upholds their longstanding leadership in global non-proliferation, including through continued close consultation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The participants underscored that the three countries remain steadfast in support of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and its cornerstone, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. They reaffirmed that the three governments will comply with their respective non-

proliferation obligations and commitments and that they intend to implement the strongest possible non-proliferation standards.

Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States look forward to continuing to build on this momentum as they work together to deliver advanced defence and technology capabilities, including an Australian nuclear-powered submarine capability.