



MEDIA RELEASE

DR CRAIG EMERSON

Minister for Trade and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs

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Australia Supports the New Libya at International Conference

Speaking at a conference on the new Libya, Acting Foreign Affairs Minister Craig Emerson today pledged Australia's support for international efforts to meet Libya's urgent humanitarian needs and for reconstruction and the transition to democracy.

The International Conference in Support of the New Libya, held in Paris, was co-chaired by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and UK Prime Minister David Cameron.

It brought together key figures of Libya's National Transitional Council (NTC) and leaders and ministers from around 60 countries and 10 international organisations, including US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Addressing the conference, Dr Emerson said: "Australia pays tribute to the courage, determination and sacrifice of the Libyan people since February in their pursuit of freedom and justice.

"And we pay tribute to the National Transitional Council for leading the Libyan people in their struggle to achieve a new and better Libya, in which Libyans can determine their own future."

Dr Emerson joined other speakers in urging Qaddafi to step down and for his forces to lay down their arms to avoid further, senseless bloodshed.

Dr Emerson pointed out that Australia had demonstrated its unwavering commitment to support the Libyan people from very early on in the conflict.

"Australia was one of the first and most vocal countries to call for a no-fly zone and Australia had been the third-largest contributor of humanitarian assistance to Libya," Dr Emerson told the conference.

Dr Emerson advised the conference that that Australia would contribute an additional \$4.6 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross to support immediate humanitarian needs such as urgent medical assistance in conflict areas, food and water in Tripoli and the removal of explosive ordnance.

This extra Red Cross funding would bring Australia's total contribution to Libya from within its existing aid budget Libya to \$41.1 million.

Dr Emerson also informed the conference of Australia's decision to extend financial support to 650 Libyan students in Australia as a demonstration of support for those left without funds because of the conflict.

"It is students such as these who, when they return home, will be invaluable to the rebuilding of Libya," Dr Emerson said.

And he offered Australia's technical support for any revival of Libyan efforts to accede to the World Trade Organization.

"Australia supports aid for trade and what better way of supporting Libya's economic future than assisting the country to join the World Trade Organization if that is its wish," Dr Emerson said.

Dr Emerson welcomed collective international efforts to release Qaddafi assets frozen in offshore accounts to help meet the immediate humanitarian needs of the Libyan people.

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