



8 October 2024

Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Senator for South Australia
Parliament House
Canberra

Building a peaceful world – taking away the occasion of war

Dear Penny Wong

Early Quaker teachings called for us all to lead lives that take away the occasion for all war. This phrase emphasises that avoiding war requires us to invest in the conditions for peace - individually and collectively. In this light, we resonate deeply with many of your words in your speech at the United Nations General Assembly.

We grieve with you the horrific loss of life this past year from armed violence – in Gaza, in Israel, Myanmar, Yemen, Sudan, Ukraine & Russia and now in Lebanon.

We join your calls for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon, Israel and Palestine. We urge our government to redouble our efforts towards this goal. We urge our Government to hold Israel and other parties to account for their military offensives, and ensure no weapons, or weapons components made in Australia are being used against the people of Gaza, Lebanon or in any violation of international law around the world. We are gratified at the recent decisions of Australia to give further humanitarian assistance to Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, and echo your calls for the protection of humanitarian workers and the unimpeded access to aid.

We support your remarks on the need for urgent steps to be taken to recognise a Palestinian state to help build momentum for a peace settlement in the Middle East.

We share your focus on the need for gender equality as a condition for peace and are grateful for noting that even at the highest levels women are still woefully underrepresented. We support Australia challenging the horrific violations of rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.

We are grateful for your affirmation of First Nations wisdom in Australia and throughout the Pacific and that peace will need us to ensure the sovereignty of all people are respected, and that the strongest voices do not dominate.

As a middle power Australia can play an important role in building peace. We commend the Australian Government for the steps it has taken and urge it to go further to make 'taking away the occasion for all war' a reality.

In peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Henry".

Bruce Henry
Presiding Clerk
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia