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SPECIAL SESSION ON ISRAELI ACTIONS IN LEBANON

AUSTRALIAN STATEMENT

Australia is concerned by the one-sided nature of this special session. We encourage ^{members of} the newly established Human Rights Council to act responsibly and to promote and protect human rights in a balanced and even-handed way.

Australia expresses support for ongoing diplomatic initiatives aimed at resolving the conflict, and welcomes the UN Security Council's current consideration of a draft resolution. We do not believe holding a Human Rights Council Special Session in this context will help advance the cause of peace in the Middle East.

Australia shares the international community's deep concern about the impact of the conflict on civilians in Israel and Lebanon. Australia extends its condolences to the Governments of Lebanon and Israel and to the families of all of those affected.

The Australian Government will provide a further \$A2 million to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of thousands of civilians who have been displaced due to the current conflict in the Middle East. This brings

Australia's humanitarian response to date to \$A7.5 million, of which \$A4 million has been earmarked for UN agencies.

Israel has the right to protect itself from terrorist attacks. Its actions are taking place in response to the actions of Hamas and Hezbollah, including hostage taking, and rocket attacks from Gaza and Lebanon into Israel.

Now, out of this crisis, there is the opportunity to achieve a sustainable peace built around a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

For that to occur, all parties must accept Israel's right to exist in peace.

Australia supports a long-term and durable resolution to the conflict.