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## India-Australia First 2+2 Dialogue

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### Why in News

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Recently, the foreign and defence ministers of India and Australia held the first India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in New Delhi.

The inaugural dialogue is held in pursuant to the elevation of India-Australia bilateral relations to **comprehensive strategic partnership** during the India-Australia **Leaders' virtual summit** in 2021.



### Key Points

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- **Focus on Indo-Pacific:** To maintain an open, free, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific region (in line with the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**).
  - To support India's **Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative**.
  - Need for renewed efforts by the **Quad member countries** to expand cooperation in the region.

- **Focus on Supply Chain Resilience Initiative:** To work together through multilateral, regional and plurilateral mechanisms to diversify supply chains between trusted and reliable trading partners for critical health, technology and other goods and services.  
In this context, they welcomed the launch of the **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative** by the Trade Ministers of India, Australia and Japan.
- **Keeping-up with the Momentum:** Decided to meet at least once every two years in this format to keep up the momentum.
- **Shared Vision on Afghanistan:** Displayed a common approach to the Afghan crisis, after the recent **Taliban takeover of Afghanistan**.
  - India held that the policy is summed up by the **United Nations Security Council Resolution 2593**.
  - UNSC Resolution 2593, emphasises most of all, that Afghanistan must not allow its soil to be used in any manner by any body for terrorism.
- **Countering Terrorism:** To continue to work together on counter terrorism; countering of radicalization and on the proposed UN **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism**.
- **Strengthening Bilateral Relationship:** Discussed strengthening their relationship in bilateral trade, vaccines, defence production, community links, maritime security, cyber and climate cooperation.
- **Cooperation on Covid-19:** Agreement was reached to deepen cooperation in vaccine manufacturing, including under the Quad framework, and to deliver high quality vaccines to their Indo-Pacific partners.  
Researchers of both countries are working together to advance Covid-19 screening and study the future health effects of the virus through projects funded by the **Australia-India Strategic Research Fund**.
- **Defence Relationship:** Australia has invited India for participation in future **Talisman Sabre exercises** which will raise interoperability while both sides explore longer term reciprocal arrangements in logistics support.
- **Economic Agreements:** There was renewed support expressed for finalization of bilateral **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement**.  
Apart from this, both countries also pitched for early resolution of the issue of taxation of offshore income of Indian firms under the India Australia **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement**.
- **Others:** While reaffirming support for the Indian candidacy for permanent membership of the UNSC, grants of Australian \$ 1 million to the **International Solar Alliance**, and Australian \$10 million to the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient infrastructure** (both India-led initiatives).

## **'2+2' Dialogue**

- 2+2 Ministerial is the highest-level institutional mechanism between the two countries.
- It is a format of dialogue where the defence/foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country.

- India holds such talks with Australia, Japan and the USA.

## India-Australia Relations

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- **Geo-Political Relations:** Over the past few years, China's actions– including extensive island building in the **South China Sea** has heightened concerns in a number of countries around the world.

This has led to formation of **Quad (India, Australia, Japan and US) grouping.**

- **Defence Relations:** Bilateral naval exercise (**AUSINDEX**), Ex AUSTRALIA HIND (Bilateral Exercise with Army), **EX PITCH BLACK** (Australia's multilateral air combat training exercise) and multilateral **Malabar Exercise** (comprising Quad countries).

The countries have signed the **Mutual Logistic Support Arrangement (MLSA).**

- **Multilateral Cooperation:**

- Both are members of the **Quad**, Commonwealth, **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**, **ASEAN Regional Forum**, Asia Pacific Partnership on Climate and Clean Development, and have participated in the **East Asia Summits.**
- Both countries have also been cooperating as members of the Five Interested Parties (FIP) in the **World Trade Organization** context.
- Australia is an important player in **Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)** and supports India's membership of the organisation.

- **Other Diplomatic Engagements:** A Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement was signed in September 2014.
  - The **Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT)** and the **Extradition Treaty**, which were signed in June 2008.
  - Further, recently **India-Australia Circular Economy Hackathon (I-ACE)** was also organised.

**Source: IE**