

MH370 TRIPARTITE MEETING

COMMUNIQUE

**CANBERRA
MONDAY, 5 MAY 2014**

Senior Ministers from Australia, Malaysia and China met today to discuss the way forward for the new phase of the search for MH370.

Australia's Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Warren Truss MP chaired the meeting with the Malaysian Minister of Defence and Acting Minister of Transport, Mr Hishamuddin Bin Tun Hussein and the Chinese Minister of Transport, Mr Yang Chuantang on the status of the search for MH370 and future plans for the search.

Ministers acknowledged the outstanding work and contribution of the 26 nations who have helped thus far; from the South China Sea to the Straits of Malacca, the Andaman Sea, the northern and southern corridors and now the southern Indian Ocean.

Ministers reiterated their utmost appreciation to the 5 nations, besides Australia, Malaysia and China, that have provided assets and personnel: Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, for their commitment and dedication in the operations in the southern Indian Ocean, off the West Australian coast. Following the extensive surface search, Ministers confirmed that the search will be a continuous effort with the operation entering a new phase that will now be focused on intensifying the search of the ocean floor over a larger area.

While we are preparing for this new phase, dedicated vessels from Australia, Malaysia and China will continue maritime operations to maintain continuity and momentum, with the Bluefin-21 submersible continuing to be deployed, and an Australian aircraft on standby.

These activities will include analysis of all available data to refine the best search area; acquisition of bathymetric analysis capability to survey the search area; and acquisition of sub-surface search assets to scan the entire agreed search area.

The meeting reiterated that Australia will continue to assist Malaysia in the search efforts for MH370. Steps are currently being undertaken by Australia and Malaysia to conclude a more comprehensive agreement that would clearly define the responsibilities of both Parties for aspects of the search and recovery task and, in particular, financial responsibilities for any contracting of commercial search and recovery capabilities by the Parties.

Malaysia has established an International Investigation Team which also includes representatives from Australia and China to evaluate, investigate and determine the actual cause of the incident so similar incidents could be avoided in the future. Accordingly, the wreckage and flight recorders data (blackbox) once recovered, shall be managed in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation international convention.

A plan was also discussed for a refocused and intensified sub-surface search as part of the arrangements to transition to a new phase in the search for MH370 and reconfirmed the ongoing international maritime search capability.

Ministers agreed to continue senior level discussions on the arrangements for engaging specialist commercial services and equipment to commence a new sub-surface search.

Ministers also discussed the level of ongoing support to the search and agreed to identify the relevant assets based on upcoming discussions.

Ministers unreservedly acknowledged the paramount importance of doing everything possible for the families of the passengers and crew. Ministers agreed to a proposed reception programme for any planned visit for the next of kin to Perth. In the event of confirmation of the final resting place of MH370, or identification of debris related to MH370, it was agreed that:

- any visit will take place between two to four weeks after confirmation;
- Australia will provide support and information to the next of kin in terms of entry requirements to ensure their travel into and out of Australia are well taken care of;
- the Western Australian Government will take a lead role in organising rituals and services according to their traditions and religions, and facilitate arrangements for basic needs of the next of kin during their stay in Australia;
- Malaysia Airlines will be responsible for travel arrangements for the next of kin from Malaysia and all other countries. The airline will also retain broad responsibility for their support during the visit including flights, accommodation, transportation and family support;
- China will actively facilitate and support matters relating to the Chinese next of kin.

Ministers reiterated the positive and productive nature of the joint communications to date and will continue to maintain this strong collaborative approach in the future. Ministers also emphasized that the families of the passengers and crew and the general public will continue to be updated on the development and outcome of the search operation.

To support this, the Joint Agency Coordination Centre will be relocated from Perth to Canberra to ensure ongoing close communication with high level representatives of Malaysia and China. However, the base of operations will remain in Perth.