Julie Bishop Distances Australia From Global Statement on Israel-Palestine Peace

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Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has distanced the Turnbull government from a communique agreed by ministers and diplomats of 70 nations, including Australia, concerning the pathways to peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

The concluding statement called on both sides to "take urgent steps in order to reverse the current negative trends on the ground", including acts of violence and the construction of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories.

The communique specifically welcomed resolution 2334, [passed by the UN Security Council last month](https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12657.doc.htm), which declared the settlements violated international law and called on Israel to immediately cease all settlement activity.

Following the conference, Ms Bishop distanced the Australian government from the contents of the concluding statement, insisting the government did not necessarily agree with everything its diplomats had agreed to in Paris.

"Australia was represented at the conference by diplomatic officials from the Australian embassy in Paris," Ms Bishop told Fairfax Media.

"While the Australian government was represented at the Paris conference this does not mean we agree with every element of the final statement."

Without specifically mentioning the conference's endorsement of resolution 2334, Ms Bishop noted the Coalition did not support "one-sided resolutions targeting Israel".

"The most important priority must be a resumption of direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians for a two-state solution as soon as possible," she said.

Australia became one of the few countries other than Israel to [condemn the New Zealand-sponsored resolution 2334](http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/julie-bishop-backs-israel-rather-than-the-us-over-un-resolution-20161229-gtjitf.html), with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull labelling it "one-sided" and "deeply unsettling".

Crucially, the resolution was allowed to pass because the US - Israel's foremost ally on the security council - did not use its veto power and instead chose to abstain.

Sunday's meeting in Paris did not involve Israel or the Palestinians and was [dismissed in advance by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/15/middleeast/paris-peace-conference-israeli-palestinian-conflict/) as "futile" and "rigged".

Chairman of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas [welcomed the communique](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/223333) and said the endorsement of resolution 2334 was among a number of "positive elements" in the text, Israeli media reported.

But Britain, attending the conference as an observer, also [expressed reservations about the final agreement](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/paris-peace-talks-israel-palestine-britain-refuses-back-benjamin-netanyahu-john-kerry-a7528846.html), arguing it was a time to "encourage conditions for peace" rather than entrench hardened positions.

"We have particular reservations about an international conference intended to advance peace between the parties that does not involve them," the British Foreign Office said in a statement.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault used the summit to warn Mr Trump against his proposal to relocate the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, calling it a provocative and unilateral move.

Ms Bishop would not comment on Mr Trump's pronouncement but reiterated the Australian government had no plans to move its own embassy in Israel, despite the [call from former prime minister Tony Abbott](http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/tony-abbott-calls-for-palestinian-aid-cut-and-embassy-relocation-to-jerusalem-20170101-gtkk4d.html).