

**Joint press release from Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and Florence Parly, Minister for the Armed Forces**

Paris, 16/09/2021

France acknowledges the decision just announced by the Australian government to stop the “Future Submarine Program” ocean-class submarine programme and to launch a cooperation with the United States on nuclear powered submarines.

It is a decision contrary to the letter and the spirit of the cooperation which prevailed between France and Australia, based on a relationship of political trust and on the development of a very high level industrial and technological defence base in Australia.

The American choice, which leads to the removal of an ally and a European partner such as France from a structuring partnership with Australia, at a time when we are facing unprecedented challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, whether on our values or on respect for multilateralism based on the rule of law, marks an absence of coherence that France can only observe and regret.

While the joint communication on the European strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region is published today, France confirms its desire for a very ambitious action in this region aimed at preserving everyone's “freedom of sovereignty”. The only European nation present in the Indo-Pacific, with nearly two million of its nationals and more than 7,000 soldiers, France is a reliable partner that will continue to keep its commitments there, as it has always done.

The regrettable decision just announced on the FSP programme only reinforces the need to raise the issue of European strategic autonomy loud and clear. There is no other credible way to defend our interests and values in the world, including the Indo-Pacific.