

MINISTERIAL OPENING MESSAGE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Leader of the Australian Government in the Senate



Good morning. I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which this conference takes place – the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples – and I pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Thank you to John Anderson for your introduction and to the team at the Crawford Fund for putting together a thought-provoking conference program. I also acknowledge Dr Cary Fowler, the US Special Envoy for Global food security. It is an honour to have such a prominent voice for global food security action here today. And Professor Wendy Umberger, recently appointed CEO of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research – we are very proud of the work ACIAR does with our partners around the world to strengthen food security. I acknowledge Dr Éliane Ubalijoro, CEO of the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry. And I congratulate Emeritus Professor Kym Anderson AC who received the Crawford Fund Medal last night. I am also so delighted that Crawford Fund Next Gen program participants are attending – our future leaders in agriculture for development.

This year's conference theme 'Global Food Security in a Riskier World' could not be more relevant. As Australia's Foreign Minister, I know the devastation being brought by worsening food insecurity around the world. Up to 783 million people faced hunger in 2022, an increase of 122 million since 2019. No one should go hungry; yet more and more are. And we know why: conflicts, economic shocks, climate change have all affected food security during this time. This includes Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine and its decision to terminate the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which risks destabilising the world's access to grain. The Black Sea Grain Initiative is critical to ensuring predictable supplies of food to many countries, including our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific. In addition, the price of rice, a staple for nearly half the world's population, is also rising; and climate change is affecting every aspect of food availability. These challenges are the most complex our region has faced in living memory.

So that's the 'why', but I am interested in the 'how'. How do we secure a future where no-one goes hungry?

Last month, together with my Ministerial colleagues, I launched a new International Development Policy. The first long-term development policy in Australia in almost ten years, it underpins the Albanese Government's record international development investments of an additional \$1.7 billion over five years. We are delivering for our partners' priorities, including financial and technical assistance, to make food production systems resilient to economic and climate impacts.

We remain dedicated to implementing the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, the internationally agreed blueprint for inclusive sustainable development. Through the World Trade Organization and our leadership of the Cairns Group, we also advocate for the reduction of trade-distorting measures – measures which are often imposed under the false guise of 'food security'



but can actually weaken the resilience of agricultural sectors. And we will continue to work with partners like the World Food Programme to provide emergency food assistance where it is needed most. Australia will continue to support partner governments and communities in our region to build long-term resilience and to lead their own adaptation and disaster-risk-reduction efforts.

But there's always more we could be doing.

During this conference you will test the ideas that will form the foundations of global food security policy: where food supply is adaptive, diversified, nutritious and accessible. We are living in a riskier world, but together we will find solutions. We must find solutions.

So, I hope you enjoy the conference, and I look forward to working with you.

Penny Wong was born in the Malaysian state of Sabah. Her family moved to Australia in 1976, when she was eight years old, and settled in Adelaide. She studied law and arts at The University of Adelaide. After university she worked for the trade union covering furniture industry employees, taking part in campaigns to improve pay and conditions for the union's members, including poorly paid female migrants working in upholstery workshops. She worked as an adviser to the NSW Labor Government where she helped develop forests policy, and then as a barrister, before being elected to the Senate for the Australian Labor Party in 2001. Senator Wong has been re-elected four times – in 2007, 2013, 2016 and 2022. With the election of the Rudd Government in 2007, she was appointed Minister for Climate Change and Water. In this position she significantly expanded the Renewable Energy Target, which has driven significant investment in wind and solar power. She also represented Australia in international climate change negotiations and developed the Rudd Government's emissions trading scheme, a market-based mechanism to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions in the most economically efficient way. After the federal election of 2010, Senator Wong was appointed as Minister for Finance and Deregulation. As Finance Minister she worked with Treasurer Wayne Swan to deliver three Budgets in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis. She also implemented a policy to ensure women are considered for appointments to senior positions in government agencies and corporations. In 2013 Senator Wong was elected Leader of the Government in the Senate and, after the change of government in 2013, became Leader of the Opposition in the Senate – the first woman to hold either of these roles. She served as Shadow Foreign Minister for six years before the election of the Albanese Government in 2022, when she was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs. As Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Wong seeks to rebuild Australia's reputation as partner of choice – drawing on all elements of our national power – to build a stable and prosperous region, where sovereignty is respected and the rules of the road are upheld.