

Preventing CW and BW proliferation:

The Australia Group

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Australia Group [AG] Objectives

- * The AG focus is chemical and biological materials and technology.
- * The AG aim is to stop development of chemical or biological weapons (CBW).
- * In common with the other export control arrangements, aim is to make it harder and more expensive for potential proliferators to obtain the ingredients they need.

AG History

- * Created in 1985 by states concerned that Iraq was diverting legitimate trade in chemicals/equipment to the production of chemical weapons.
- * Now also looks at biological agents.
- * Is helping states meet their CWC and BWC obligations.
- * Grown from 16 to 42 participants, with many others using the control lists.

Photo: UN workers seal leaking Iraqi 122mm rockets for destruction, which were reportedly filled with the chemical nerve agent Sarin, destroyed by Iraq after the Gulf war.



(AAP Image/AP Photo/UK Ministry of Defence, 1998)

How we work

- * Australia is the permanent Chair.
- * Secretariat in Canberra with support from others.
- * Annual plenary meeting in Paris (except for 2015).
- * Technical, policy, information exchange, developing best practices ...
- * All decisions (including on membership) reached by consensus.

AG Control Lists

- * Core work – effective and practical harmonised control lists
 - * Chemical weapons precursors;
 - * Dual-use chemical manufacturing equipment and related technology;
 - * Biological agents;
 - * Dual-use biological equipment and related technology;
 - * Plant pathogens and Animal pathogens.

On-going work

- * Updating the control lists is on-going task
 - * adding and revising to match advances in technology.
 - * culling and clarifying as dictated by experience.
- * Results all published on the AG website and freely available for all to use.
- * AG Handbook shows how to apply export controls.
- * Should not impede the normal trade of materials and equipment used for legitimate purposes.

Current Issues

- * AG plenary meetings are supplemented by specialist forums – on technical aspects of the lists and exchange of experience on implementation & enforcement challenges.
- * Some current issues:
 - * Outreach to industry, academia and non-members
 - * proliferation from intangible technology transfers
 - * technological advances (eg synthetic biology, nanotechnology, additive manufacturing / 3D printing).
 - * non-state actors / terrorism – UNSCR 1540 implementation.

Syria

- * Syria's chemical weapons program and biological activities of concern were a particular focus of the 2014 Plenary
 - * Participants expressed concern about continued reports of use of chemical agents in Syria
 - * Participants considered lessons that could be learned from Syria's chemical weapons program and agreed further measures to strengthen export controls.

2014 AG Plenary Outcomes

- * Mexico was welcomed as a new AG member
- * Agreement on measures to strengthen non-proliferation of chemical and biological weapons (CBW):
 - * Encourage non-participants to adhere to the AG Guidelines
 - * Increase efforts against CBW terrorism in line with UNSCR 1540
 - * Enhance outreach to industry and academia to improve understanding of proliferation risks and how to help prevent it.
- * Agreement on amending the AG Guidelines to increase priority of implementing catch-all controls.
- * Agreement to enhance national efforts to prevent intangible technology transfer.

The role of non-members

- * The effectiveness of the AG's control lists derive from their collective application.
- * Proliferators exploit any openings: need to work with all producers and transit points.
- * Also intangible technology transfer and brokering of concern.
- * Encourage all states to apply AG guidelines and adopt the AG control lists.

AG and Trade

- * The Group has proved to be an important instrument in ongoing international efforts to impede the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.
- * At the same time, the Group remains committed to expanding trade in chemical and biological items for peaceful purposes and maintaining active chemical and biotechnological industries.

Shipping containers at the P&O container yard
at Sydney's Port Botany.
(AAP Image/Mick Tsikas)



AG Outreach

- * Outreach briefings to over 50 countries each year on results of Plenary.
- * Outreach visits so far in 2014-15: Singapore, Myanmar, Indonesia.
- * Outreach to India in March 2015
- * Australia Group Dialogue in November 2013 and June 2015.

Further Information

- * Further information at www.australiagroup.net.
 - * includes the Australia Group Guidelines and Common Control Lists (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Russian, Spanish).
 - * Includes the Australia Group Common Control List Handbook.
- * Or engage any AG partner: we are keen to help.