

**Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention
on the Prohibition of the Development,
Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological
(Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their
Destruction**

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English only

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Meeting of Experts**Geneva, 10-14 August 2015**

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**Standing agenda item: cooperation and assistance,
with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation
and assistance under Article X**

**2014 Implementation of BWC Article X (Cooperation and
Assistance)**

Submitted by Australia

1. Australia places great importance on the implementation of Article X of the BWC. We consider that implementation of Article X reinforces the security objectives of the BWC, as well as encouraging peaceful uses of biological science and technology. As part of our commitment to strengthening assistance and cooperation under the BWC, Australia strives to submit an annual report on national implementation of Article X of the BWC. This is in keeping with the agreement by States Parties at the Seventh Review Conference — and subsequent MSP and MXP meetings — on the importance of submitting clear, specific and timely national reports on implementation of Article X. We now provide Australia's 2014 update of the report.

2. Consistent with this agreement by States Parties, Australia continues to encourage other States Parties to share details on national efforts to implement Article X and we welcomed the reports already provided by a number of States Parties. The Seventh Review Conference also agreed that States Parties should provide regular updates — at least biannually — on how they implement this Article. This paper therefore offers an update to Australia's 2012¹ and 2013² report on national implementation of Article X.

¹ MSP/2012/MX/INF.8

² MSP/2014/INF.5



General perspectives on implementation of Article X

3. As expressed previously, facilitating international exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful use of the life sciences helps to prevent the global spread of infectious diseases. It also builds capacity to respond to disease outbreaks (whether caused naturally or through the hostile use of biological agents or toxins) and can provide incentives for States to accede to the BWC.

4. In fulfilling our obligations under Article X, Australia considers that a broad range of activities fit within the scope of that article. At the various BWC meetings, discussion on the challenges and obstacles to developing international cooperation and assistance highlighted the need for States Parties to work across sectors within their governments to identify and address logistical, legal and regulatory barriers. In Australia's case, such whole-of-government arrangements underpin the facilitation of international exchange, as described in Article X. These legislative, regulatory and policy arrangements allow for legitimate and beneficial activities and innovation in the life sciences, notably by academic and research institutions, and industry.

5. The Australian Government provides a range of non-sector specific programs and initiatives that support research, development and commercialisation in the life sciences industry and other forms of biotechnology such as industrial and agricultural biotechnology. Many Australian Government activities and international programs directly reflect and/or support exchanges in biological sciences and the peaceful use of biotechnologies. These activities and programs complement the commercial, educative and collaborative activities of Australian industry and academic and research institutions internationally. In its annual BWC Confidence Building Measures submission (form C), Australia provides information on relevant research and other activities undertaken within Australian Government agencies. This information is made publicly available. As set out in Australia's previous BWC Article X implementation reports, many of these programs and activities focus on Australia's contribution to building capacity to counter biological terrorism and to combat emerging infectious diseases and pandemics.

Countering biological terrorism

6. In our earlier reports, Australia outlined efforts in countering biological terrorism that fall within the scope of Article X and help to strengthen cooperation and protection. In particular, Australia's collaboration with partners has focussed on strengthening regional capacity in counter-terrorism within the Asia-Pacific region.

7. Some recent examples include:

- Australia is participating in two of the 11 Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) packages as a contributing country. The first is the "Linkages and Multi-sectoral Rapid Response Action" package which aims to enable a country to conduct a rapid whole of government response, including the capacity to link public health and law enforcement, and to provide or request effective and timely international assistance in the event of a biological incident that is suspected or confirmed to be deliberate.
- Australia continues to participate in international and domestic counter-terrorism CBR capability building exercises and training programmes.

8. In this collaboration with partners, Australia continues to underline the need to strike an appropriate balance between enabling peaceful biological research consistent with the objectives of the BWC, and minimising the possibility of misuse of this research and associated biological materials, equipment and technology.

Addressing pandemics and emerging infectious diseases

9. As emphasised in earlier reports, Australia takes efforts to build capacity for addressing pandemics and emerging infectious diseases in our region seriously. These efforts support Australia's implementation of BWC Article X, and recognise that the prevention, detection and control of pandemics and emerging infectious diseases are a global public good which no one country can provide on its own.

10. Australia's efforts in building capacity to combat infectious diseases involves a range of Australian Government agencies and close collaboration with regional partners and multilateral organisations (such as the World Health Organisation, WHO). Some practical examples of Australia's funding for this capacity building include:

- As of 15 December 2014, Australia had committed \$45 million to the international Ebola response. This includes funding to manage and operate a 100 bed Ebola Treatment Centre near Freetown in Sierra Leone as part of the UK's operation; the provision of up to 16 technical experts to serve in non-clinical roles with UN agencies, including in Liberia, Guinea and Ghana; and a regional preparedness and response package to train health professionals in Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Pacific Island countries.
- Australia is also contributing to the GHSA package focussing on preventing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and is developing a 'One Health' approach to coordinate Australia's efforts across human health, agriculture and food sectors to reduce, monitor and respond to AMR. The strategy will address: infection prevention and control; surveillance; antimicrobial stewardship; international engagement; communication and education; research and development; and governance.

Offers of Assistance

11. As Chair of the Australia Group (AG) we have submitted to the BWC Implementation Support Unit an 'offer of assistance', on behalf of the AG membership, enabling States Parties to request assistance from the AG membership about the implementation of export controls for chemical and biological transfers.

12. Australia has been a longstanding advocate of universality of the BWC and has provided support to Myanmar to facilitate their attendance at various BWC meetings, most recently at the 2013 Meeting of Experts.

13. This report is a summary of the collaborative work Australia has undertaken in 2014, and compliments our previous reports on Implementation of Article X. Australia's commitment to capacity building remains a practical and mutually beneficial effort within the scope of Article X toward better health, social and economic outcomes and improvements in biosecurity. Australia's continuing commitment to meeting its Article X obligations, as demonstrated by the examples selected for inclusion in this report, further helps demonstrate the way enhanced international cooperation and assistance can reinforce the security objectives of the BWC.
