

Media Release 2011 Australia Group Plenary

10 June 2011

The Australia Group today concluded its annual plenary meeting co-hosted in Paris by the Australian and French Governments. The Australia Group is a cooperative and voluntary group working to counter the spread of technologies and materials that may facilitate the development or acquisition of chemical and biological weapons by states of concern and terrorists.

Australia Group participants are committed to ensuring that their export controls do not hinder legitimate trade and technical cooperation in the chemical and biological sectors.

During their meeting, Australia Group participants worked to enhance best practices and measures to detect and prevent attempts to proliferate sensitive and dual-use chemicals, biological materials and related equipment. The Group shared experience on measures to enhance and refine licensing and export controls in order to meet current and emerging proliferation challenges. In this regard, many participants mentioned Syria as a country of particular proliferation concern.

The Group adopted a number of changes to its chemical and biological control lists, which will be reflected in subsequent iterations of the published lists. It also continued its process of review of the proliferation risk associated with new and emerging technologies, with a view to identifying materials and equipment which might warrant inclusion at some future date in national export control lists.

Recognising that preventing unauthorised transfers of intangible technology remains a priority for preventing the further proliferation of all forms of weapons of mass destruction, the Group reviewed steps that were being taken by several states to enhance such measures. As an additional practical contribution, the Australia Group approved a new manual, generously supported by the Republic of Korea, for use by Australia Group participants in dealing with intangible transfers of technology.

The Australia Group emphasised the ongoing importance of engaging industry and academic sectors in support of the Group's work, including in controlling security-sensitive transfers of intangible technology. It noted the benefits to industry of such outreach in facilitating legitimate trade. The Group shared experience and best practice in such outreach.

No new members were admitted to the Group in 2011. Interest in membership from several countries received appropriate attention and further engagement with them is anticipated.

The Australia Group plenary noted that the Group's control lists continued to be an international benchmark for best practice controls on dual use, chemical and biological materials, equipment and related intangible technology. Growing international acceptance of Australia Group controls and practices – and their incorporation in national control lists – are in part a result of the Group's extensive engagement with non-members and other international bodies. The Australia Group plenary agreed to continue an active program of such engagement in 2011-12 with a view to the wider global adoption of the lists as they evolve over time.

Further information on the Australia Group is available at www.australiagroup.net.