

## Media Release 2012 Australia Group Plenary

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15 June 2012

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 and terrorists.

At the same time, 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.

The 2012 meeting provided an opportunity for Australia Group participants to enhance their licensing and enforcement measures to prevent attempts to proliferate sensitive dual-use chemicals, biological materials and related equipment. The Group shared experiences in the implementation of national export controls in order to meet current and emerging proliferation challenges. It also reviewed proposals to amend the Group's control lists. The Group also agreed to amend the Australia Group Guidelines to enhance controls on brokering services. Agreed changes to the list of biological agents for export control and to the plant pathogen control list, as well as updates for the guidelines will be reflected in subsequent iterations of those documents available at [www.australiagroup.net](http://www.australiagroup.net).

Against the background of ongoing violence in Syria, Australia Group participants noted that Syria continues to be a country of proliferation concern, with active biological and chemical weapons programs. Participants also discussed the extensive tactics – including the use of front companies in third countries – the Syrian government uses to obscure its efforts to obtain items on the Australia Group's common control lists, as well as other dual-use items, for proliferation purposes. Participants agreed on the importance of increased vigilance with regard to dual-use exports to Syria and to subject exports to Syria to particular scrutiny.

The Australia Group reviewed the outcomes of the Wilton Park conference "The Australia Group: Challenges and Future Directions" which took place in the United Kingdom from 29-31 March 2012.

Australia Group participants agreed to deepen cooperation through greater information sharing on enforcement capabilities, approaches to visa vetting, experience in the implementation of catch-all provisions and other measures to further enhance the effectiveness of the Group. Participants also emphasised the ongoing importance of engaging industry and academic sectors in support of the Group's work, including raising awareness of controls on proliferation sensitive transfers of intangible technology and brokering services.

The Group 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. Discussions included consideration of recent advances in the life sciences and nanotechnology, and developments in dual-use chemical and biological production equipment.

No new members were admitted to the Group in 2012. Consideration of formal applications for membership from several countries continues.

The Australia Group plenary noted that the Group's control lists were increasingly being viewed as the international benchmark for best practice controls on dual use, chemical and biological materials, equipment and related intangible technology. Fostering international acceptance of Australia Group controls and practices – and their incorporation into national control lists – are an increasingly important element of the Group's extensive and ongoing engagement with non-members and other international bodies.

The Australia Group plenary agreed to continue an active program of such engagement in 2012-13 with a view to the wider global adoption of the lists as they evolve over time. This outreach will be supported by all Group members in a position to do so.

Further information on the Australia Group is available at [www.australiagroup.net](http://www.australiagroup.net).