
**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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Geneva, 1-5 December 2014

Item 7 of the agenda

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

Update on Australia's Implementation of BWC Article X

Submitted by Australia

1. Australia places great importance on the implementation of Article X of the BWC, because 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 its commitment to strengthening assistance and cooperation under the BWC, Australia submitted its report on national implementation of Article X of the BWC at the Meeting of Experts in 2012 (MSP/2012/MX/INF.8). This was 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 the 2013 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 2012 report on national implementation of Article X.

General perspectives on implementation of Article X

3. As expressed in our earlier report (MSP/2012/MX/INF.8), 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. Discussion at the 2013 MXP on challenges and obstacles to developing international cooperation and assistance highlighted the need

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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 industry and academic and research institutions.

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 original BWC Article X implementation report, 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 report (MSP/2012/MX/INF.8), 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:

- In 2012, Australia co-sponsored a regional workshop focused on enhancing dynamic public health strategies to strengthen health systems infrastructure as they relate to the preparedness and response to a biological event.
- Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with the support of other government agencies, has funded a number of initiatives in biological safety and security.
- Within the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum, Australia joined the Philippines and the United States in supporting a series of ARF biosecurity workshops.
- The Australian Federal Police, through the Technical and Forensic Intelligence unit continues to engage regional partners on a range of CBRN issues including countering bioterrorism.
- Recent activities included CBRN awareness training for First Responder, Law Enforcement, and Public Health communities in South and South-East Asia, as well as participation in exercises.

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 our earlier report, 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. Addressing pandemics and emerging infectious diseases is part of Australia's role in tackling current and emerging public health threats in the region, as these threats could potentially reverse development gains in partner countries and directly impact on Australia's own health security. Australia has played a leading role in the international response to pandemics and emerging infectious diseases, and has provided over \$200 million since 2003 to assist partner countries in the Asia Pacific region to prepare for and combat these diseases.

11. 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:

- \$100 million over four years (2006-2010) for influenza and pandemic preparedness in the Asia Pacific region under Australia's Pandemics and Emerging Infectious Diseases Strategy 2006-2010;
- \$52 million from other aid program funds contributed to combating infectious diseases;
- \$7.58 million committed in 2009 for the H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak; and
- \$22 million to the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Emerging Infectious Diseases – Animal Health through which the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is assisting the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture to strengthen veterinary services.
- Former Prime Minister Gillard's commitment of \$32 million at the 2010 East Asia Summit which has been allocated as follows:
 - \$12 million through WHO to the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases from 2010-11 to 2013-14 to assist countries in the Asia Pacific to strengthen their core capacities to detect, report and respond to acute public health events;
 - \$12.7 million for the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Stop Transboundary Animal Diseases and Zoonoses (STANDZ) initiative from 2011-12 to 2015-16, which aims to strengthen countries' veterinary services systems in line with international animal health standards; and
 - \$6 million from 2011-12 to 2015-16 to support projects in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam which aims to reduce the risk of transmission of disease arising from frequent and high-risk contacts between people and animals.

12. Australia provides support through the Pandemics and Emerging Infectious Diseases Framework 2010-2015. The goal of the Framework is to assist partner countries to reduce the risks and impacts of emerging infectious diseases, including possible pandemic, in the Asia Pacific region. The Framework promotes adherence to international standards of animal and human health and strengthens systems for the prevention, detection and control of EIDs, and responds to outbreaks using evidence based information.

13. This is only a partial snapshot of the collaborative work Australia is doing with partners in its region, which intended to compliment other examples detailed in Australia's 2012 report on Implementation of Article X. Australia's continuing commitment to build capacities which can be applied to outbreaks of disease (whether natural or deliberate in cause) remains a practical and mutually beneficial effort within the scope of Article X toward better health, social and economic outcomes and better security. 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.
