

# The Australia Group

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## Media Release 2013 Australia Group Plenary

7 June 2013

The mounting evidence of use of chemical weapons in Syria underscores the special importance of the Australia Group, which today concluded its annual Plenary, chaired by Australia and hosted in Paris by the French Government. The Australia Group is a cooperative and voluntary group of countries seeking to counter the spread of technologies and materials that may facilitate the development or acquisition of chemical and biological weapons by states and terrorists.

Following its press statement of 28 January 2013, expressing concern about developments in Syria, the Group reaffirmed its view that chemical weapons in Syria continue to pose a serious threat of further destabilising the Middle East and a challenge to global non-proliferation norms. Australia Group members are gravely concerned by the growing body of evidence pointing to the use of chemical weapons and by the danger of more and larger-scale use. The threat of chemical weapon use on the people of Syria underlines the necessity for the complete eradication of chemical weapons for all time and for the universalisation of the CWC.

The Australia Group underlined that the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances is unacceptable and against the legal norms of the international community. The Group urged support for the UN mission to investigate all allegations of chemical weapon use in Syria.

The Australia Group Plenary urged all parties to the Syrian conflict to renounce chemical weapons and their use in any circumstances, and to take steps to eliminate all stocks of those weapons. In the meantime Syria must assure the international community about the security of its chemical weapons stockpiles.

Building on its appeal at the 2012 Plenary, Australia Group participants emphasised the need for all countries to exercise increased vigilance with regard to dual-use exports to Syria of items potentially relevant to chemical and biological weapons, and to subject such exports to Syria to particular scrutiny.

In the course of the meeting, participating experts continued their review of lists of chemical and biological items which are to be subject to export control. Updated lists as well as the Australia Group guidelines are available at [www.australiagroup.net](http://www.australiagroup.net). Participants noted the Group's control lists were being increasingly used as the benchmark for global best practice controls on sensitive dual-use chemical and biological materials, equipment and related intangible technologies.

The 2013 meeting also allowed licensing and enforcement experts to share experience and information to prevent attempts to proliferate sensitive dual-use chemicals, biological materials and related equipment. At the same time, Australia Group participants affirmed their commitment to ensuring that their export controls did not hinder legitimate trade and technical cooperation in the chemical and biological sectors.

The Group 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. A major focus was developments in chemical agents, as well as recent advances in the life sciences and nanotechnology, and developments in dual-use chemical and biological production equipment.

Australia Group participants agreed to deepen cooperation through greater information sharing on 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 reiterated their commitment to 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.

Consideration was given to potential new members that have formally expressed interest in joining the Australia Group.

The Australia Group agreed to continue an active program of international outreach and engagement in 2013-14, with a view to the wider adoption of AG control lists and practices, to further enhance efforts to prevent the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.

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

This website is funded by participants in the Australia Group and administered by the Government of Australia in its informal role as Chair.  
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