The following report on Australia’s implementation of Article X is provided in response to the request from the Secretariat of the BWC Implementation Support Unit of 25 May 2016 for background information for the Eighth Review Conference. This also represents Australia’s 2015 update of its annually provided Article X report.

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.

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 welcome the reports already provided by a number of States Parties. This paper provides an update to Australia’s 2012, 2013 and 2014 report on national implementation of Article X.

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

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1 MSP/2012/MX/INF.8
2 MSP/2014/INF.5
3 MSP/2015/MX/INF.1
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 and counter-proliferation**

6. In our earlier reports, Australia outlined efforts in countering biological terrorism and counter-proliferation 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. One of these 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 and counter-proliferation CBR capability building exercises and training programmes including the ongoing provision of funding for the delivery of a quality assurance program to enhance laboratory capacity and capability to test for biological agents of security concern within Australia and within specified overseas laboratories.

- Australia continues to develop a medical countermeasures development capability that benefits from collaboration with like-minded partners in the quadrilateral defence and public health community.

- In 2015, Australia revised and exercised its Health, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Incidences of National Consequences (CBRNINC) Plan in order to refine response arrangements. Other related plans for the Health sector, such as response plans for incidences of smallpox and biological toxins (abrin and ricin) are currently being revised with a view to finalisation in late 2016.

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.
• Australia’s Health for Development Strategy 2015-2020 aims to improve regional health security through promoting strengthened health systems that can address emerging infectious diseases and drug resistance, and assisting regional collaboration.

• In July 2016 at the Southwest Pacific Dialogue Australia announced investment of AUD100 million in a Health Security Partnerships Initiative to apply Australian expertise and research to regional health and development outcomes, including new technologies and medicines for our region.

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:

• In 2015 Australia voluntarily contributed funding of AUD6 million to the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, including AUD1 million to the Emergency Medical Teams initiative; and AUD8 million over 3 years to the World Bank to establish a Multi Donor Trust Fund to support national governments’ financing of health systems to address a range of infectious diseases and health threats.

• Australia is also contributing to the GHSA package focussing on preventing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and has a ‘One Health’ approach to coordinate Australia’s efforts across animal and human health, agriculture and food sectors to reduce, monitor and respond to AMR. The objectives of Australia’s National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019 focus on: infection prevention and control; surveillance; antimicrobial stewardship; international engagement; communication and education; research and development; and governance.

• Australian experts are participating in the Joint External Evaluations (JEE) which assess country capacity to meet International Health Regulations and GHSA competencies.

• In recognition of the reduced number of new cases of Ebola in West Africa, Australia downscaled its border screening measures on 13 November 2015.

• Australian aid also has a long history in addressing the spread of diseases from animals to humans in South-East Asia. Australia has contributed to the Stop Trans boundary Animal Disease and Zoonoses (STANDZ) Initiative through the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) (AUD12.79 million 2011-2017); and to working with the Government of Indonesia through the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Emerging Infectious Diseases (AIPEID) to strengthen human and animal health systems (AUD9.9 million 2015-2018).

• Through its OIE Reference Laboratory delegations, the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) within the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) provides assistance to the south-east Asian, south Asian and Pacific regions for diagnosis and characterisation...
of a range of emergency animal diseases (including zoonoses) in terrestrial and aquatic species. In 2015 this included identification and characterisation of highly pathogenic avian influenza viruses from outbreaks of disease in Myanmar and Laos and avian paramyxovirus from outbreaks in the Philippines. AAHL also contributes to research and diagnostic preparedness for a range of emergency animal diseases (including zoonoses) through various national and international collaborations, including with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), OIE, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), and Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

**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 its attendance at various BWC meetings, most recently at the 2015 Meeting of Experts. Australia supported the 2016 BWC sponsorship programme which will enable experts from 25 States Parties to attend the August BWC Preparatory Committee meeting and the November BWC Review Conference. Australia also supported participation in the 2015 Global Parliamentary Campaign for Universality and National Implementation of the BWC, organised by the Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA).

13. This report is a summary of the collaborative work Australia has recently undertaken, and complements 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.