

# THE AUSTRALIA GROUP AT 40: MAKING THE AG FIT FOR AN ERA OF GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In a momentous year for arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament in the areas of chemical and biological weapons, states are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the signing of the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, as well as 50 years since the entry into force of the 1975 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC).<sup>1</sup> The Australia Group (AG) multilateral export control regime is also celebrating 40 years of work since its creation in 1985. The AG is an informal group of states that coordinates and harmonizes export controls on chemical and biological weapons and related dual-use items.<sup>2</sup> In its 40-year history, the AG has significantly expanded its scope and membership, and become increasingly institutionalized. It is a cornerstone of states' efforts to curb the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons (CBW).

The creation of the AG was spurred by a United Nations investigation of allegations of chemical weapon use in the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq war, which revealed that precursor chemicals, equipment and materials had been procured from several western states.<sup>3</sup> Initially focused only on chemical weapons and their precursors, the group significantly increased its scope to include biological weapons and a wide range of equipment, materials and technology relevant for the development, production or use of CBW.<sup>4</sup> In the late

## SUMMARY

The Australia Group (AG) is a cornerstone of states' efforts to curb the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons (CBW). It is an informal group of states that coordinates and harmonizes export controls on CBW and related dual-use items. The AG guidelines and common control lists provide de facto international standards for export controls on CBW and related dual-use items. However, the AG has become the subject of renewed criticism and faces a range of challenges related to implementation of its key functions, rapid scientific and technological advances, and its future role in an era of geopolitical competition. Despite calls for modernization or structural reform of the regime to address structural challenges, the spread of the chemical and biotechnology industry and research and development within the industry, as well as the changing political and geoeconomic context, there has been no major reform of the AG in the past 10 years. To overcome these challenges and maintain the appeal of participating in and engaging with the AG, it needs to be strengthened and undertake meaningful reforms. Building on their like-mindedness, AG participants should develop a vision for membership, adherence and outreach, strengthen transparency and the provision of public goods, including publication of good practices documents, take steps to manage the impact of geopolitics and strengthen perceptions of the legitimacy of the AG.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, *The Biological Weapons Convention at Fifty: Codifying 100 Years of Efforts to Combat Biological Warfare* (United Nations: Geneva, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Australia Group, 'The Australia Group: An introduction', [n.d.]; and Australia Group, 'Objectives of the Group', [n.d.].

<sup>3</sup> Australia Group, 'The origins of the Australia Group', [n.d.].

<sup>4</sup> Australia Group, 'The origins of the Australia Group' (note 3).

1980s, exposure of the Rabta affair, which involved a network of western suppliers enabling the building of a chemical weapons facility in Libya, led to a significant strengthening of export controls on chemical weapons and related precursors.<sup>5</sup> Since its inception, the AG, which is permanently chaired by Australia, has grown from 15 founding participants to include 42 states and the European Union (EU) as participants with full voting rights.<sup>6</sup> Over the same period, the functions of the AG have become increasingly institutionalized and organized in subsidiary meetings and groups of experts.

All the multilateral export control regimes have become the subject of renewed criticism by developing states, notably in three UN General Assembly resolutions on ‘peaceful uses’ of technology tabled by China.<sup>7</sup> While the other regimes have become increasingly bogged down by the continuing repercussions of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, many states and experts have looked to the AG—the only regime in which Russia does not participate—to demonstrate the continued efficacy of multilateral export control coordination.<sup>8</sup> Despite the greater political like-mindedness of AG participants, however, the AG has also struggled with a range of challenges related to implementation of its key functions, rapid scientific and technological advances and determining a vision for the AG’s future role and approach in an era of renewed geopolitical competition and contestation of multilateral regimes.

There is a clear need to explore how the AG can be strengthened and engage in meaningful reforms to overcome the various challenges that it faces and maintain the appeal of participating in and engaging with it. The adequacy and resourcing of the AG’s institutional structure and procedures, the stagnation of AG membership, calls for more transparency in the work of the AG, contestation of the regime’s legitimacy

and the impact of geopolitics on its functioning all require short-, medium- and long-term solutions.

This paper aims to provide a detailed discussion of current arrangements and practices across the different areas and functions of the AG, identify specific challenges and develop possible steps towards reform. Section II unpacks the institutional, procedural and operational structure of the AG, with a focus on its objectives, scope, institutional bodies and related challenges. Section III discusses the AG’s membership, adherence and outreach practices. To consider the issue of AG transparency, section IV explores the public communication of AG activities and guidance materials. Section V discusses how to manage the impact of the debate on peaceful uses, perceptions of the AG’s legitimacy and the effects of geopolitics on its work. The paper concludes by presenting recommendations in section VI on strengthening the AG in each of the areas discussed to make it fit for an era of geopolitical competition and contestation.

## II. THE INSTITUTIONAL, PROCEDURAL AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE AUSTRALIA GROUP

### Objectives and scope

The AG aims ‘to limit the risks of proliferation and terrorism involving chemical and biological weapons (CBW) by controlling tangible and intangible transfers that could contribute to CBW activities by states or non-state actors’.<sup>9</sup> To minimize the risk of assisting CBW proliferation, the participating states commit to: follow the AG’s ‘guidelines for transfers of sensitive chemical or biological items’ (the AG guidelines) and additional provisions on catch-all controls; a ‘no undercut’ policy and brokering services.<sup>10</sup> As all EU member states participate in the AG, there is an explicit provision acknowledging that they will apply the guidelines to intra-EU trade in line with their commitments to the EU single market. From its initial focus on chemical weapons and precursors and state actors, the AG has expanded its scope several times in its 40-year history. The participants expanded its scope to include biological weapons in 1991 and

<sup>5</sup> Zanders, J. P., ‘Chemical weapons proliferation: Mechanisms behind the Imhausen/Rabta affair’, *Vredesonderzoek*, no. 4 (1990).

<sup>6</sup> Australia Group, ‘Australia Group participants’, [n.d.].

<sup>7</sup> Brockmann, K., Bromley, M. and Maletta, G., ‘Implications of the UN resolutions on “international cooperation on peaceful uses”: Balancing non-proliferation and economic development’, SIPRI Topical Backgrounder, 11 Dec. 2024.

<sup>8</sup> The other multilateral export control regimes are the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies. For recent developments in the regimes see Brockmann, K., ‘The multilateral export control regimes’, *SIPRI Yearbook 2025: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2025).

<sup>9</sup> Australia Group, ‘Guidelines for transfers of sensitive chemical or biological items’, [n.d.].

<sup>10</sup> Australia Group, ‘Introduction’, [n.d.]; and Australia Group, ‘Guidelines for transfers of sensitive chemical or biological items’ (note 9).

later introduced controls on dual-use manufacturing facilities, equipment and related technology and software, and provisions for the prevention of proliferation to non-state actors, notably terrorists.<sup>11</sup> The changes to the scope of the AG and the adoption of additional provisions demonstrate its ability to adapt to emerging challenges and respond to revelations of shortcomings in national practices and control frameworks. It also demonstrates the potential to make further changes, particularly if international circumstances create momentum and produce the required political will.

#### *The guidelines for transfers of sensitive chemical or biological items*

The AG guidelines constitute the key provisions and principles that participating states follow through implementation in their national legislation in order to achieve the objectives of the AG, and to which other states can unilaterally decide to adhere. The guidelines note in paragraph 1 that their implementation is consistent with the commitments to CBW non-proliferation and disarmament under article III of the BWC, article I of the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and all relevant UN Security Council resolutions.<sup>12</sup> States that adopt the guidelines further commit not ‘to impede chemical or biological trade or international cooperation that could not contribute to CBW activities or terrorism’ in accordance with article X of the BWC and article XI of the CWC.<sup>13</sup> The guidelines outline an expectation of the application of comprehensive controls to all relevant transfers and the importance of licensing, enforcement and penalties. They also stress that licensing decisions and the application of appropriate expedited licensing measures are under the sovereign control of participating states. A central element of the guidelines is the (non-exhaustive) list of factors for evaluating export licence applications. The guidelines also contain additional clauses on components; controls on non-listed items, including catch-all controls; and

regular information exchange, as well as a call for all states to adhere to the guidelines.<sup>14</sup>

#### *The common control lists and factors for consideration*

The AG currently has five common control lists: (a) chemical weapons precursors; (b) dual-use chemical manufacturing facilities and equipment, and related technology and software; (c) dual-use biological equipment, and related technology and software; (d) human and animal pathogens and toxins; and (e) plant pathogens.<sup>15</sup> The AG maintains a public list of factors for consideration for inclusion of items on its common control lists that guides the participating states in maintaining the control lists.<sup>16</sup> Publishing this information creates transparency and a level of predictability on what non-participants might expect in terms of future additions to control lists. It also provides adherents and non-participants with a reference framework to better understand control list changes and for when non-participants feel compelled to comment or otherwise engage with the AG on specific existing control list items and possible amendments.

### **The institutional structure of the AG**

The AG is structured around the plenary as its main decision-making body (see figure 1). This is supported by several subsidiary groups that provide additional, more specialized, forums through which participants conduct much of the substantive work required to perform the key functions of the regime.

#### *The plenary*

The plenary meeting of the AG is the main body through which the participating states take policy decisions. It takes all decisions by consensus.<sup>17</sup> The plenary meets annually, usually in Paris, co-hosted by France, with occasional exceptions. For example, Australia has hosted the AG plenary in Australia on occasion of major anniversaries.<sup>18</sup> The plenary

<sup>11</sup> Huguley, J., ‘Chokepoints and consensus: The origins and evolution of multilateral export control regimes’, Doctoral Dissertation, Brandeis University, Aug. 2022, pp. 220–24; and Australia Group, ‘History’, [n.d.].

<sup>12</sup> Australia Group, ‘Guidelines for transfers of sensitive chemical or biological items’ (note 9).

<sup>13</sup> Australia Group, ‘Guidelines for transfers of sensitive chemical or biological items’ (note 9).

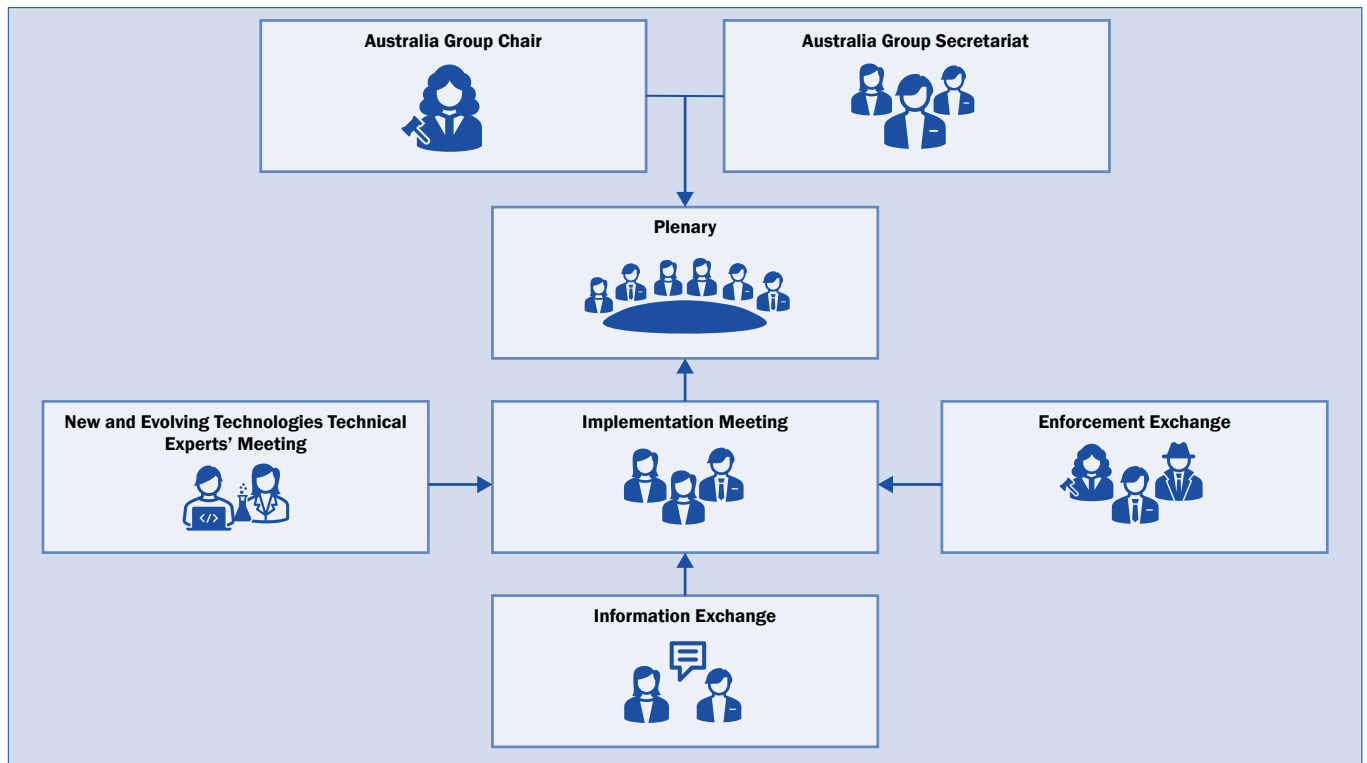
<sup>14</sup> Australia Group, ‘Guidelines for transfers of sensitive chemical or biological items’ (note 9).

<sup>15</sup> Australia Group, ‘Common Control Lists’, [n.d.].

<sup>16</sup> Australia Group, ‘Factors for consideration for the Australia Group Common Control Lists’, [n.d.].

<sup>17</sup> Seevaratnam, J. I., ‘The Australia Group: Origins, accomplishments, and challenges’, *Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 13, no. 2 (July 2006), p. 403.

<sup>18</sup> Australia Group, ‘Statement by the Chair of the 2015 Australia Group plenary’, Perth, 5 June 2015.



**Figure 1.** The institutional structure of the Australia Group

includes all the heads of delegation of the participating states and in most cases the entire delegation of each participant.

#### *The Implementation Meeting*

The Implementation Meeting (IM) is the subgroup in which licensing and policy officials meet to discuss changes to the guidelines and control lists and other proposals. It may also involve enforcement and technical experts or other delegates when their expertise might be beneficial to discussions.<sup>19</sup> The IM considers proposals from other subsidiary groups and takes decisions by consensus, mostly on changes to the common control lists. These decisions usually do not require further approval by the plenary.

#### *The Enforcement Exchange*

The Enforcement Exchange brings together enforcement officers, customs officers, prosecutors and intelligence officers from the participants to share experiences of and good practices on enforcement and the prosecution of export control violations. A particularly valuable feature of meetings of the Enforcement Exchange is presentations on detection-,

enforcement- or prosecution-related topics and case studies on illicit procurement activities.

#### *The New and Evolving Technologies Technical Experts' Meeting*

The New and Evolving Technologies Technical Experts' Meeting (NETTEM) is the main technical working group of the AG. It brings together national technical experts for exchanges on technological developments of relevance to the objectives of the AG. The AG initially relied on an ad hoc technical experts group that only met if relevant technical topics were on the agenda for a plenary week or intersessional meeting. Only later was the NETTEM established as a permanent technical experts body.

#### *The Information Exchange*

The Information Exchange is the main meeting in which AG participants discuss specific country situations and share risk assessments and trends in illicit procurement activities. The participating states usually present assessments of specific developments and proliferation trends of concern in the Information Exchange.

<sup>19</sup> Seevaratnam (note 17), p. 403.

### *The AG secretariat*

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) hosts the AG secretariat, which comprises the head of secretariat and a small group of policy officers who support the work of the AG Chair. It takes on administrative and coordination tasks and facilitates contacts with participating states, adherents and interested non-participants. The head of secretariat also regularly carries out representative functions for the AG during outreach and other dialogue activities to share the burden with the AG Chair.

### *Intersessional meetings*

The AG usually gathers for one intersessional meeting per year, which is hosted on a voluntary basis by a participating state. Intersessional meetings are commonly used to advance substantive discussions on technological developments, risk assessments or other issues to prepare and advance discussions between plenary meetings. The AG has occasionally adopted changes to the common control lists intersessionally, using a silence procedure which involves reaching consensus based on receiving no objections within a specified time period.

### **Institutional, procedural and operational challenges**

One potential challenge that could arise from the decision to have a permanent chair is maintaining the commitment and dedication of all AG participants to help drive the agenda and avoiding states becoming complacent or relying solely on Australia as the chair to do so. It also means that the resource-intensive activities associated with chairing the group and operating a secretariat fall entirely on one state. Various Australian government agencies assume the chair of the AG's technical subsidiary groups, whereas other regimes rely on their participating states to chair their subsidiary groups on a voluntary or rotational basis. The AG Chair and the head of secretariat take on most public engagement roles for the AG. On occasion, other AG participating states may co-chair meetings with Australia, in particular when policy changes are considered through virtual working groups. The United States maintains the unofficial control list handbook. This means there is a certain level of burden-sharing, but the AG relies much more heavily on one state, compared to the other regimes. This is both an opportunity to follow a streamlined approach

and a possible challenge considering the burden placed on one state.

Some analysts and commentators had expected the AG to produce more frequent outcomes because of the like-mindedness of its participants. Despite calls for modernization or structural reform of the regime to address structural challenges, the spread of chemical and biotechnology research and development (R&D) and industry, and the changing political and geoeconomic context, however, there has not been a major reform of the AG in the past 10 years.<sup>20</sup>

One way to begin to address this set of issues would be for the AG and its participants to more clearly represent a modern approach to export controls, including on transfers of technology, in both tangible and intangible form, and to explain the limitations of list-based controls. This could involve a stronger focus in the guidelines, in the information provided on the website and in guidance documents on the opportunities presented by applying non-list-based controls to intangible transfers of technology, as well as on the range of complementary awareness-raising, outreach and guidance tools provided to address the challenges posed by the contemporary export control environment.

One concern that is frequently raised by observers outside the regimes is that the AG and other regimes struggle to identify, discuss and introduce in a timely manner new controls on emerging technologies within their scope. Possible reasons cited for the lack of timely decision making are that the AG—like the other regimes—only meets up to twice a year, relies on consensus and lacks high-level political support.<sup>21</sup> Notably, among the regimes, the AG has demonstrated the most consistent ability to find consensus on changes to its common control lists. Nevertheless, the perceptions and expectations of outside observers may not always align with what the participating states view as an appropriate time or measure to address developments in relevant emerging technology areas. Developing appropriate export controls on emerging technologies is inherently difficult, particularly where the technical characteristics that might lend themselves to be parameters defining a control list

<sup>20</sup> Beck, M. D. and Jones, S., 'The once and future multilateral export control regimes: Innovate or die', *Strategic Trade Review*, vol. 5, no. 8 (winter/spring 2019).

<sup>21</sup> Beck and Jones (note 20), pp. 65–68.



**Box 1. Australia Group membership criteria**

As part of its longstanding policy on membership, the Australia Group has established a list of criteria, based on which, but not limited to, applications to join the regime are assessed.

- ‘A commitment to prevent the spread of CBW proliferation, including being a party, in good standing, to the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.
- Being a manufacturer, exporter or transshipper of AG controlled items.
- Adopting and implementing the AG Guidelines for Transfers of Sensitive Chemical or Biological Items.
- Implementing an effective export control system which provides national controls for all items on the AG common control lists and is supported by adequate licensing and enforcement regimes.
- Creating legal penalties and sanctions for contravention of controls and being willing to enforce them.
- Creating relevant channels for the exchange of information including: accepting the confidentiality of the information exchange; creating liaison channels for expert discussions; and creating a denial notification system protecting commercial confidentiality.
- Agreeing to participate in the AG in a way that will strengthen the effectiveness of the AG in preventing CBW proliferation.’

Source: The Australia Group, ‘Membership’, [n.d.].

item are still rapidly evolving.<sup>22</sup> States may be less willing to commit to controls right away because they might want to support national and international cooperation on scientific work in relevant subject areas and avoid a potential loss of economic opportunities. Considerations on national and foreign availability and a lack of shared risk assessment of the technology make a careful process of consultation and assessment essential before new control list categories can achieve consensus. In this context, many states prefer to rely more heavily on outreach and engagement with relevant parties in such emerging technology areas, and the use of catch-all controls where there is a worry about potential CBW end-use of an export, rather than move too rapidly with the introduction of list-based controls.<sup>23</sup>

AG participants benefit from the technical, licensing and enforcement discussions that take place, particularly in the IM and NETTEM, and can use the information shared to raise awareness in their national licensing and enforcement authorities. The information shared can also support engagement with relevant domestic actors to sensitize them to security concerns and the need for additional scrutiny and to gather input from those involved in the scientific study and commercial development of relevant emerging chemical and biological dual-use technologies. It is

important that states approach the assessment of emerging technologies in a collaborative way and make the results available. States should also devote the necessary resources to these assessments—including, where necessary, by hosting intersessional meetings of the relevant AG subgroups.

### III. MEMBERSHIP, ADHERENCE AND OUTREACH TO NON-PARTICIPANTS

#### Membership

##### *Admission procedure and criteria*

The AG has a clearly outlined multi-step admissions procedure for any state that is interested in applying to become an AG participant.<sup>24</sup>

1. The state is required to submit a ‘third party note’ to the AG Chair with an expression of interest.

2. The AG Chair shares the expression of interest with the AG participants and they consider opening formal application proceedings, decided by a silence procedure.

3. The AG Chair liaises with the candidate state to request a formal application, which should include ‘detailed information on the country’s legislation and policy [on] export controls, relevant to the purposes of the AG’.

4. The applicant state submits a formal application to the AG Chair.

5. The AG participants scrutinize the application for whether it meets all the membership criteria (see

<sup>22</sup> Brockmann, K., ‘Drafting, implementing, and complying with export controls: The challenge presented by emerging technologies’, *Strategic Trade Review*, vol. 4, no. 6 (spring/summer 2018).

<sup>23</sup> Brockmann, K., Héau, L. and Maletta, G., ‘Cloud labs and other new actors in the biotechnology ecosystem: Export control challenges and good practices in outreach’, *EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers*, no. 98 (May 2025).

<sup>24</sup> Australia Group, ‘Membership’, [n.d.].

box 1), without exception or exemptions, and may raise specific issues or questions directly with the applicant state or through the AG Chair.

6. Once the AG Chair has determined that the participants have carried out their scrutiny, a decision is made by consensus and the Chair informs the applicant state of the outcome.

Requiring the additional step of considering an expression of interest seeks to prevent the interested state from devoting significant resources to preparing an application if the AG participants are not ready to consider such an application at that time. It also ensures that if application proceedings are opened, the prospective applicant receives the necessary information and a line of contact to achieve an application that provides all the formally required information in the appropriate format. Assessment of any membership application scrutinizes the information against—but is not necessarily limited to—the list of public membership criteria (see box 1). These criteria include a demonstrable commitment to CBW non-proliferation through treaty commitments, having in place an effective export control and enforcement system and adopting the AG guidelines and control lists, as well as all the mechanisms for information, denial notification and expert exchange required for meaningful participation in the AG. They also require that an applicant must be a manufacturer, exporter or transshipper of AG-controlled items, and a commitment to participate in the regime in a way that strengthens the effectiveness of its pursuit of CBW non-proliferation.

Limiting participation to manufacturers, exporters and transshippers appears to be intended to limit participation to states that would have to apply export controls in practice rather than states that are only recipients of listed items. However, the emphasis on manufacturers does not necessarily reflect how concerns about CBW proliferation have shifted to sensitive transfers of technology and know-how through international scientific cooperation on, and R&D of, dual-use technology, beyond basic scientific research. Although covered by the term ‘exporter’, this wider focus might not be immediately recognized. It is important to recognize this broad understanding of exports and today’s emphasis on intangible transfers of controlled technology, including beyond traditional commercial trade activities, as essential considerations for membership eligibility.

### *AG membership development*

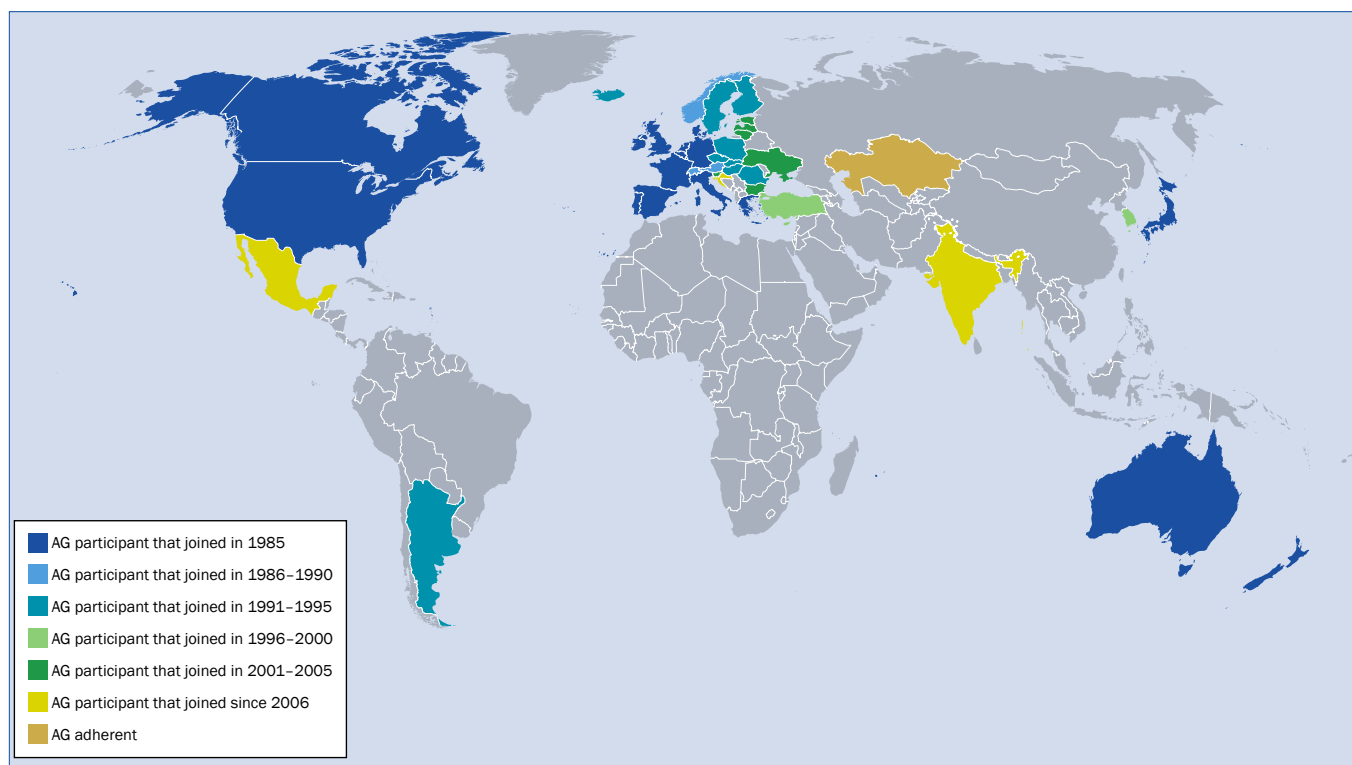
The AG was founded by 15 states and the EU (represented by the European Commission) in 1985 and grew to 17 participating states in the same year.<sup>25</sup> A further three European states joined between 1986 and 1990, before AG membership grew by nine states in 1991–1995, five former members of the Warsaw Pact, Argentina, the remaining Nordic states and Iceland. The growth of the AG was fairly steady until 1996, when the Republic of Korea joined as the 30th state participant. New membership admissions picked up again in 2000 when Cyprus and Türkiye were admitted at the same time, followed by Bulgaria in 2001 and a significant expansion of another five states, to include all the then EU member states. Ukraine followed in 2005 and Croatia in 2007. Since then, only Mexico (in 2013) and India (in 2018) have joined the regime, despite the significant momentum created by the increase in the number of states that introduced export control systems after the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 in 2004 (see figure 2). Resolution 1540 introduced the first international legal requirement for states to have in place adequate systems of export control and put the issues of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) terrorism and non-proliferation export controls targeted at non-state end-users on the international agenda.

### **Adherence**

In 2014, the AG introduced a mechanism by which non-member states could submit to the AG Chair a notification of unilateral adherence to the AG guidelines and its common control lists.<sup>26</sup> A unilateral political commitment of adherence is not subject to any acceptance decision or verification by AG participants. Kazakhstan is the only state to declare its unilateral adherence to the AG thus far (in 2015). By contrast, the Missile Technology Control Regime has four unilateral

<sup>25</sup> Zanders, J. P., ‘On the early relationship between the Australia Group and the Chemical Weapons Convention’, ed., J. P. Zanders, *The Australia Group and the Prevention of the Re-emergence of Chemical and Biological Weapons: Ongoing Challenges*, Recherches & Documents 4/2024 (Foundation for Strategic Research: Paris, 2024), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Australia Group, ‘Statement by the Chair of the 2014 Australia Group Plenary’, 6 June 2014; and Australia Group, ‘Membership’ (note 24).



**Figure 2.** Australia Group participants, by year joined, and adherents, 2025

*Note:* The European Union, represented by the European Commission, is also an Australia Group participant with full voting rights.

*Source:* Australia Group, ‘Participants’, [n.d.].

adherents and the Nuclear Suppliers Group six.<sup>27</sup> Chile declared in 2022 that it intends to become an AG adherent but it has not submitted a formal notification of unilateral adherence to date.<sup>28</sup> A number of states are partners receiving assistance as part of one or several of the major export control capacity building programmes provided by the EU, the USA and others. These states have succeeded in implementing advanced export control systems, including adoption of the AG control lists, and would arguably be well positioned to declare adherence and/or apply for membership. Among these states are, for example, the Philippines and Singapore.<sup>29</sup>

Several reasons might help to explain the limited willingness of states to use the adherence procedure

provided by the AG. Applicant states might not wish to settle for what could be perceived by some as ‘second class’ membership or fear the appearance of ‘settling for less’ than full membership. There are also perceptions among some states that introducing chemical and biosafety and security regulations, as well as limited trade controls on the list of scheduled chemicals and certain viruses and toxins included in the CWC and BWC is sufficient to meet their international obligations and thus applying the AG guidelines provides them with little or no benefit.<sup>30</sup> This is a problem encountered across the multilateral export control regimes and unlikely to be easily resolved. The AG has made it clear that there can be no automatic process through which an adherent becomes a participant, such as if it were to meet certain conditions, because a consensus vote by all AG participants will always be required. As long as there continues to be this possibility of a negative perception of choosing to become an adherent, as well as what might be seen as a self-limitation on political

<sup>27</sup> Missile Technology Control Regime, ‘Partners’, [n.d.]; and Maletta, G., Bromley, M. and Brockmann, K., ‘Non-proliferation, Nuclear technology and peaceful uses: Examining the role and impact of export controls’, *Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers*, no. 95 (Apr. 2025), p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Australia Group, ‘Statement by the Chair of the 2022 Australia Group Plenary’, 8 July 2022.

<sup>29</sup> 1540 Committee, ‘Committee approved matrices’, [n.d.], and Michel, Q. and Paille, S., ‘Countries having adopted the EU dual-use list as national control list’, Working document, University of Liège, Liège, Apr. 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Observation based on conversations and interviews conducted by the author and SIPRI colleagues as part of dual-use export control capacity-building activities.



manoeuvrability, states will need to be given adequate inducements or benefits. Currently, the incentives for adherence are limited to a vague mention of ‘a broader range of information from AG participants to assist them in observing global best practice’.<sup>31</sup> In practice, the AG adherent has been routinely invited to AG dialogues and regular contact with the AG Chair to facilitate continuous engagement and offered assistance with implementation of the AG guidelines and control lists, if required, which includes briefings on any list changes. However, these potential benefits are not explicitly listed or outlined on the AG website for potential future adherents.

### Outreach practices

The AG conducts regular outreach to non-participants using a variety of activities to provide information on AG activities and promote its objectives and adherence to the guidelines and common control lists. AG outreach activities include Australia Group Dialogues, bilateral outreach missions and participation in intergovernmental export control seminars and conferences, as well as in regional meetings of major providers of export control capacity building. The AG claims to engage with around 50 non-participants annually, which includes briefings on control list changes provided through Australian diplomatic representations.<sup>32</sup>

Australia Group Dialogues were the main regular outreach activities organized by the AG. The dialogues usually had a specific regional focus and a wide range of states was invited to engage with the AG Chair to learn about the work of the AG and listen to presentations on recent changes to the control lists, providing an opportunity for engagement and to ask questions. Since the post-pandemic resumption of major in-person meetings of the AG in 2022, the AG has instead held outreach sessions at its intersessional meetings, inviting select interested non-participants to attend (see table 1).<sup>33</sup> No AG regional dialogues have been reported since 2022 in the Chair’s statements or

in publicly available presentations by the AG Chair or head of secretariat.

### Strengthening outreach, the benefits of AG adherence and membership

The AG should consider being more explicit about and expanding the benefits that adherents would receive. This would involve expanding the section on adherents on the AG website with a list of benefits that AG adherents would be afforded. With only one adherent, it is understandable that this is currently largely handled bilaterally and on an ad hoc basis with Kazakhstan. However, if these benefits were clearly presented and expanded, it could help to incentivize more states to become AG adherents and to set expectations for those states that are considering declaring their unilateral adherence to the AG guidelines and control lists. In addition, to provide an appropriate accompanying narrative, the AG could build on the growing body of scholarly work on economic benefits that states appear to have experienced as a result of their adoption of comprehensive export controls based on the standards provided by the regimes. This has made them more trusted partners in the trade in advanced technology and reduced the risk of unauthorized re-export, diversion or illicit procurement from entities in such states.<sup>34</sup>

The current geopolitical environment means uncertain times for both the AG and the other multilateral export control regimes. The America First trade policy of the administration of US President Donald J. Trump signals a potential shift in US thinking away from support for country-agnostic multilateral non-proliferation activities in favour of targeted unilateral or mini-lateral measures. Meanwhile, the critique of export control regimes with self-selected membership initiated by China, demonstrated by the UN resolutions it has tabled on ‘peaceful uses’, looks set to foster increased suspicion of the work of the regimes among developing states.

In this environment, it will be important for the AG to consider a dedicated effort to expand its membership and the number of official adherents. This would involve developing a clear strategy and vision for future membership and adherence, and defining priorities for outreach. States that produce,

<sup>31</sup> Australia Group, ‘Statement by the Chair of the 2014 Australia Group Plenary’ (note 26).

<sup>32</sup> Tilemann, J., ‘The Australia Group’, Presentation provided to the 21st Asian Export Control Seminar, Tokyo, 26–28 Jan. 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Such outreach sessions attended by non-participants were held at the AG intersessional meetings in Rome in Feb. 2023 and Berlin in Jan. 2024. Australia Group, ‘Statement by the Chair of the 2023 Australia Group Plenary’, 9 June 2023; and Australia Group, ‘Statement by the Chair of the 2024 Australia Group Plenary’, 7 June 2024.

<sup>34</sup> Pryor, C. D. and Preble, K. A., ‘Tracking the implementation of Strategic Trade Controls (STCs)’, SSRN, 1 Oct. 2024.

**Table 1.** Select Australia Group outreach activities

Year	Location	Type of outreach	Outreach partner(s)
2024	Berlin	Outreach session	Select invited states
2023	Rome	Outreach session	Select invited states
2019	Malta	AG Dialogue	Middle East states
2018	London	AG Dialogue	African states
2017	Buenos Aires	AG Dialogue	Latin American states
2016		Bilateral outreach	Hong Kong, Taipei
2015		Bilateral outreach	Kazakhstan, Thailand, Viet Nam
2014		Bilateral outreach	India, Indonesia, Singapore, Myanmar, Taipei, the Philippines
2012–13		Bilateral outreach	Viet Nam, Thailand, Colombia, Pakistan, Malaysia, China

*Sources:* Plenary statements by the Chair and presentations delivered by Australia Group representatives to the annual Asian Export Control Seminars. See Australia Group, ‘Publications Archive’, [n.d.]; and Archer, C., ‘Preventing CW and BW proliferation: The Australia Group’, Presentation provided to the 24th Asian Export Control Seminar, 21–13 Feb. 2017, Tokyo.

export or transship controlled items and which are in the process of strengthening their export control systems would be prime outreach targets and should be explicitly encouraged to become adherents. Such an effort would demonstrate action rather than inactivity by the regime and take the wind out of the sails of some of the accusations levied against it. In the longer term, emerging economies and innovation powerhouses that also have highly active biotechnology ecosystems and mature export control systems that arguably satisfy all the membership criteria should be invited to join a process leading to possible AG membership.

#### IV. TRANSPARENCY AND REGIME GUIDANCE

The work of the AG requires a balancing act between transparency and the necessary confidentiality. The regime strives for a situation in which non-participant states that meet the criteria pursue membership and other states are encouraged to adopt its guidelines and control lists in their national export control systems. The substantive work of the AG in creating and maintaining its guidelines and control lists, coordinating their practical application and sharing denials based on proliferation risk assessments is strictly confidential. To avoid non-participants perceiving this combination of limited membership, confidential deliberation and the provision of rules affecting non-participants as illegitimate, the AG has sought, to the extent possible, to be transparent about its activities. Addressing the perception of the AG as a secret, exclusive, cartel-like structure has primarily involved an effort to improve public communication to enhance understanding of regime activities. This

has included information about the rationale behind and reasons for specific decisions, such as new control list entries, and the relationship of the AG with the BWC, the CWC and UN Security Council resolutions.<sup>35</sup> Increasingly, the AG and the other regimes have also sought to assume the role of providers of public goods by making resources available to all states to help them implement their export controls uniformly.

#### Public communication of AG activities and guidelines

The publication of information about the activities of the AG, its guidelines and control lists, and any changes is central to the AG’s transparency. Over the years, the AG has provided public information through a variety of channels, such as press releases, public statements, its website, presentations to a variety of public and non-public events involving non-participants, and bilateral engagement with states, regional organizations and non-governmental stakeholders.

##### *Statements by the Chair*

The AG Chair issues a public statement at the conclusion of each AG annual plenary.<sup>36</sup> The structure of the public statement has evolved to include a description of key outcomes, the technical issues discussed, the outreach activities conducted in the past year and during the plenary, an update on AG membership and adherence, and, on occasion, details of intersessional meetings or specific country situations

<sup>35</sup> Seevaratnam (note 17), pp. 409–10.

<sup>36</sup> Australia Group, ‘What’s new?’, [n.d.]; and Australia Group, ‘Archive’, [n.d.].

involving CBW proliferation or use. The statement usually provides a broad but brief description of these topics, without specifying which of the AG's subsidiary meetings has advanced the substantive work and forwarded it to the IM or plenary. Large parts of the plenary statement are standard formulations repeated each year with only marginal adjustments.

The unique set-up of the AG, with a permanent Chair, together with the strong like-mindedness of the AG participants has ensured the continued commitment of the Chair, retention of institutional knowledge and continuity of initiatives. In contrast, other regimes have struggled to find volunteers to chair or consensus on candidates, and to achieve long-term continuity in their efforts, while initiatives have often been limited to those which can be pursued in a one-year period. Relying on a Chair's statement rather than a strict consensus statement, although in practice it has always been a consensus statement, has ensured that a statement is always issued and created more room to include references to specific 'country situations' of concern. This allows the AG to position itself vis-à-vis breaches of the BWC and the CWC, and violations of UN Security Council resolutions.<sup>37</sup> The AG has also issued statements on specific occasions, such as BWC and CWC anniversaries, and public and high-impact cases of CBW use or proliferation that warrant a public response.

#### *The AG website and social media*

The AG's website is hosted and managed by DFAT and was recently modernized. It provides a wide range of background information about the AG, its history, objectives, activities and relationship with the BWC and the CWC, as well as access to key resources and publications, such as the AG guidelines, the common control lists, the control list handbook and public statements.<sup>38</sup> The website has a news section but at the time of writing, it did not appear to have been updated for several years.<sup>39</sup> The items previously linked to in the news section are largely public statements from annual plenaries and special occasion statements, which largely overlap with the more comprehensive publications and archive section.<sup>40</sup> The other regimes

use the news sections of their websites more regularly and more consistently to share brief reports on bilateral outreach missions and participation in select outreach activities.<sup>41</sup> Providing this type of information would not only contribute to the overall transparency of AG activities, but could also function as a means of acknowledging outreach partners' constructive engagement with the regime and demonstrating to other non-participants which states engage with and benefit from this level of bilateral engagement with the AG. This could motivate additional states to request such engagement.

The AG does not currently issue a regular newsletter or similar informal information circular beyond the official plenary statements and special occasion statements. Issuing a newsletter has been the exception among the multilateral export control regimes. Only the MTCR has issued a newsletter, which ran to a single edition.<sup>42</sup> The MTCR newsletter is nonetheless a notable example to consider, in particular as a means of providing more detailed updates and insights about the work of the different subsidiary groups of the regime. The AG has largely abstained from using social media channels to share updates on and impressions of its work, with the exception of occasional postings from official DFAT social media accounts or directly by the AG Chair.

#### *AG representation in public and privileged events*

The AG Chair, the head of the AG secretariat and on occasion Chairs of the AG subgroups participate in public events hosted by third parties, such as governments and national authorities, UN organizations, implementers of capacity-building activities and, on occasion, think tanks. They also regularly host or participate in side events during BWC and CWC review conferences, meetings of states parties and meetings of experts. More regular side events during BWC and CWC meetings to clarify the role of the AG, its non-proliferation mission and its commitment not to impede legitimate trade could help to improve outside perceptions of the AG. They could also create an opportunity for dialogue and direct

<sup>37</sup> See e.g. the statement issued by the AG on chemical weapons in Syria. Australia Group, 'Australia Group Statement of Concern regarding Syrian chemical weapons', 28 Jan. 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Australia Group, 'The Australia Group', [n.d.].

<sup>39</sup> Australia Group, 'What's new?' (note 36).

<sup>40</sup> Australia Group, 'Publications', [n.d.].

<sup>41</sup> See e.g. the MTCR's list of news items and the Wassenaar Arrangement's sections on 'recent activities' and 'recent outreach'. MTCR, 'Missile Technology Control Regime', [n.d.]; and Wassenaar Arrangement, 'The Wassenaar Arrangement', [n.d.].

<sup>42</sup> MTCR, 'Missile Technology Control Regime newsletter', 3 Sep. 2020.

engagement between non-participants, participants, AG representatives and non-governmental experts.

### **AG guidance materials**

A key function of each regime is the harmonization of export control policies and their implementation. Compiling and issuing guidance materials is an important step as their drafting forces states to consider and agree on common approaches and interpretations of concepts. Harmonization through common guidance ensures a level playing field between states and avoids exporters having to comply with different controls on the same item or different interpretations of provisions on certain types of export controls. One area where there are such differences is the application of export controls when software or technology are shared or stored via cloud computing. Each regime has created guidance documents on various export control issues, but they differ significantly in terms of topic, number and whether they are published or provided only to regime participants.

The AG currently provides very few public guidance materials from which all states, including non-participants, can benefit. The main guidance document provided is the AG control list handbook, which is an informal resource produced and periodically updated by the USA.<sup>43</sup> The handbook is a valuable resource that assists states in the implementation of the AG guidelines by enabling them to better understand, and thus more effectively apply, the common control lists as the basis for list-based controls in their national export control systems.

The AG does not currently publish any guidance materials on specific export control implementation issues. In contrast, the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Nuclear Suppliers Group have published expansive sets of such guidance as national or good practices documents. These guidance materials are regularly identified by non-participants and partners of export control capacity-building programmes as valuable resources that ease the adoption of regime standards by providing additional practical information on the implementation of export control provisions. As a regime that encourages other states to voluntarily adopt the standards it sets, the provision of relevant

guidance materials by the AG as public goods could incentivize more states to seek closer engagement.

### **Strengthening the AG's transparency and provision of public goods**

The AG should increase the public reporting of its activities and strengthen its provision of guidance materials that benefit participants, adherents and non-participants alike. This would contribute to the transparency of the AG and enhance the appeal of AG membership and adherence, while also ensuring continued harmonization of the application of key export control provisions in the area of CBW-related dual-use items.

The AG maintains a standing offer of assistance under Article X of the BWC for legislative assistance to help states develop, review and maintain their national export controls.<sup>44</sup> If backed up with the provision of a sizeable set of guidance documents, such assistance would be even more significant and attract additional states to seek substantive engagement with the AG on improving their national export controls on CBW-related items.

Taking steps to improve its guidance materials, and communication with adherents and non-participants could improve perceptions of the AG's transparency, as well as understanding of its activities and the rationale and processes behind them. This could also lay the groundwork for more meaningful and trusting engagement during outreach activities and enable deeper engagement with substantive implementation questions, building on the baseline provided by public guidance materials.

## **V. GEOPOLITICS AND THE DEBATE ON 'PEACEFUL USES' OF TECHNOLOGIES**

Like the other multilateral export control regimes, the AG has long struggled with geopolitical competition involving its participants and perceptions among non-participants about its legitimacy and the impact of adoption of the AG guidelines on legitimate trade. The debate on 'peaceful uses' at the UN General Assembly has reignited some of these discussions, which had previously become more muted following adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which created

<sup>43</sup> Australia Group, 'Common Control List handbooks', [n.d.].

<sup>44</sup> Biological Weapon Convention, Article X Assistance Cooperation, 'Australia Group assistance to develop, review and maintain national export controls', 4 Aug. 2014.

a binding obligation on all states to have in place appropriate national systems of export controls. The trend towards mini-lateral and unilateral national controls and the increasing use of export controls as a means of economic statecraft against adversaries could leave the regime at risk of being unable to fulfil its functions effectively, despite the like-mindedness of AG participants. In such an environment, scepticism among non-members regarding all the regimes is increasing and even the commitment of longstanding champions of the regimes such as the USA is being called into question.

### Perceptions of the AG beyond its membership

The AG and export controls more broadly have long been viewed with scepticism by developing states but also by scientists working in biology, chemistry and the life sciences and practitioners in industry. The creation of the AG preceded the conclusion of the negotiations on and entry into force of the CWC and proved controversial. At the time, non-aligned states argued that article XI of the CWC on economic and technical development would render barriers to trade in chemicals inadmissible.<sup>45</sup> However, AG participants maintained that the AG was making an essential contribution to the non-proliferation of chemical weapons and that its framework of controls was consistent with the objectives and provisions of the CWC. The AG again became a major point of contention in the BWC negotiations on a verification protocol, following its expansion to cover biological weapons in 1991.<sup>46</sup> It was only in the early 2000s that a more cooperative atmosphere emerged but contentious discussions on export controls persist in the context of the implementation of article X of the BWC.<sup>47</sup>

The terrorist attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001, among other factors, facilitated a shift to a greater recognition of the value of export controls in preventing terrorist acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. These circumstances enabled the adoption under Chapter VII of the UN Charter of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 in 2004, as a binding resolution. Resolution 1540, which requires all states

to ‘develop, review and maintain appropriate effective national export and trans-shipment controls’, provides an international legal reference and has generated greater acceptance of strategic trade controls.<sup>48</sup> Since then, the creation of global dual-use export control outreach and capacity-building programmes has led to a significant increase in the number of states introducing national systems of export controls. The majority of these states use some variation of the AG’s common control lists, either using the lists as a reference when designing their own control list or by adopting the EU’s dual-use control list, which integrates the AG’s control lists and those of the other multilateral export control regimes into one list.

Since the 2010s, the AG and the other regimes have increasingly embraced the role of a provider of public goods, in conjunction with the creation of formal adherence procedures and incentives for adherents, as well as more accessible guidance materials and greater transparency through public communication.

### The debate on peaceful use at the UN and its impact on the AG

In December 2024, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on ‘Promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security’, tabled by China.<sup>49</sup> The resolution follows on from two previous resolutions with the same title that were adopted in 2021 and 2022.<sup>50</sup> The resolutions have been understood by many states as a critique of the multilateral export control regimes, accusing their participants of infringing the right of other states to benefit from international cooperation on science and technology for ‘peaceful uses’.<sup>51</sup> All 42 AG participating states have consistently voted against the resolutions or abstained. Argentina abstained in 2021 and 2022 but switched to voting against in 2024, while India abstained from voting on all three resolutions.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, 28 Apr. 2004, para. 3.

<sup>49</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security’, A/RES/79/80, 10 Dec. 2024.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security’, A/RES/76/234, 24 Dec. 2021; and United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security’, A/RES/77/96, 16 Dec. 2022.

<sup>51</sup> Brockmann, Bromley and Maletta (note 7).

<sup>52</sup> For the voting record on the three resolutions, see United Nations, General Assembly, Vote name list, ‘Item 100 - A/76/444 DR XXX as

<sup>45</sup> Seevaratnam (note 17), p. 409.

<sup>46</sup> Zanders (note 25), pp. 11–14.

<sup>47</sup> Revill, J. and Garzón Maceda, M., ‘Addressing the elephant in the room: Export controls decisions’, eds J. Revill and M. Garzón Maceda, *Options for International Cooperation under Article X of the Biological Weapons Convention* (UNIDIR: Geneva, 2022).



Kazakhstan, the only AG adherent, voted in favour of all three resolutions. Chile, a publicly declared aspirant of adherence, abstained on all three votes.

The high level of support for the resolutions secured by China and the other co-sponsors would appear to reflect how the resolutions appealed to a wider set of long-standing grievances among developing states related to unilateral sanctions, national export controls, specific licensing decisions and other perceived supply-side impediments—all subsumed under the heading of export controls.<sup>53</sup> The debate on peaceful uses is also a symptom of the increasingly aggressive geopolitical, economic and technological competition that is taking place between the USA and China. Nonetheless, it also reflects growing perceptions among developing states that European states and other US allies aspire to opt for greater strategic autonomy and economic security, while also guarding against the fallout from various areas of competition.

### **Managing the impact of geopolitics on the work of the multilateral export control regimes**

The multilateral export control regimes have struggled to formulate a coherent response to the pressures exerted by the narrative on ‘peaceful uses’ and the geopolitical and geoeconomic competition engaged in by some of its members, in particular the USA, and certain non-members. China–USA relations and the competition for leadership or even dominance in many emerging technology areas have significantly affected use of the trade control toolbox. Many states are increasingly emphasizing use of these instruments not just as tools to support non-proliferation and the prevention of terrorism, but as means of economic statecraft. At the same time, China, Russia and other states have been accused of using illicit practices to circumvent export controls and sanctions to acquire and divert dual-use and other strategic technologies

for use in weapon programmes and for other sensitive end-uses.<sup>54</sup>

The AG is arguably the regime least directly impacted by the Russia–Ukraine war, as Russia is not a member of the AG. However, the trend towards mini-lateral and unilateral national controls on emerging technologies involves cross-cutting technologies of concern to some or all the regimes, such as artificial intelligence. This could result in a further fracturing of technical discussions on technologies of CBW proliferation concern in additional forums and a reduced reliance on the regimes as dedicated, consistent and trusted standard-setters. The more competing forums and mechanisms states use, the more they will struggle to allocate sufficient resources and personnel to their work in the AG. These trends also affect the ability of the AG to ensure harmonized controls and, more generally, investment in—and the political will to continue to prioritize—efforts through the AG. The medium to long-term result could be an overall reduction in the ability of the AG to set global export control standards and play its important role in supporting the CBW non-proliferation regime.

For the AG to maintain its role as a key CBW non-proliferation instrument and custodian of global export control standards in the area of CBW-related dual-use items, it must more proactively assume the role of public goods provider, become an example of transparency and demonstrate its continued ability to fulfil its key functions despite the existence of competing instruments and contesting narratives.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS ON STRENGTHENING THE AUSTRALIA GROUP TO MAKE IT FIT FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES**

AG participants should consider pursuing a range of reforms of its current practices, as well as the introduction of new tools and approaches. Central to this would be a review of its strategy for the future of AG membership and adherence, improving its transparency and provision of public goods, and managing the impact of geopolitical competition and the criticism and pressure exerted on the regime.

a whole: Promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security’, 24 Dec. 2021; United Nations, General Assembly, Vote name list, ‘Item 107 - A/77/393 DR as a whole: Promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security’, 7 Dec. 2022; and United Nations, General Assembly, Vote name list, ‘Item 106 - A/79/416 DR as a whole: Promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security’, 2 Dec. 2024.

<sup>53</sup> Brockmann, Bromley and Maletta (note 7).

<sup>54</sup> Joske, A., ‘Picking flowers, making honey: The Chinese military’s collaboration with foreign universities’, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Policy Brief 10/2018, 30 Oct. 2018; and Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, ‘Joint financial intelligence advisory: Illegal procurement of dual-use goods by Russian end-users’, updated 23 Mar. 2024.

### **Developing a vision for membership, adherence and outreach**

- The AG should assume a leadership role among the multilateral export control regimes, building on the like-mindedness of its membership to take steps where other regimes continue to struggle.
- The AG should consider making a dedicated effort to expand its membership to achieve better regional representation, at least among its adherents, while maintaining a clear focus on requiring any prospective member to meet all the membership criteria without exception.
- The AG should consider more strongly promoting and expanding the benefits that AG adherents receive.
- The AG should consider improving its offer of collective outreach activities, and the information available on outreach sessions and AG dialogues hosted by AG participants, as well as its offer of possible additional future collective outreach activities.
- The AG should consider more regular reporting on the bilateral and regional outreach activities it has conducted, including, where possible, the specific topics for discussion and the expertise and good practices provided. This information could be provided as website news items, as part of a newsletter or in an annual transparency report.

### **Strengthening transparency and public goods provision**

- The AG should share all existing guidance and good practices documents with its adherent(s) and consider publishing them as public goods for the benefit of all states.
- The AG should produce a steady stream of additional public guidance and good practice documents, and updates to existing ones, to help ensure effective export control standards and contribute to the set of incentives for potential adherents.
- The AG should consider producing targeted guidance for outreach to start-ups in the chemical and biotechnology fields, which could include a framework good practices document on internal

compliance programmes (ICPs) for start-ups and one on intangible transfers of technology.<sup>55</sup>

- The AG should consider producing more regular updates on its activities, either as news items on its website or in the form of a newsletter or transparency report composed of contributions by the Chair, subgroup Chairs and the secretariat.

### **Manage the impact of geopolitics and strengthen perceptions of legitimacy**

- The AG should continue to ensure its visibility in key global security and CBW non-proliferation and disarmament forums—notably the BWC, the CWC, the Resolution 1540 Committee and the General Assembly—by organizing and contributing to side-events on export controls and complementary CBW non-proliferation measures.
- The AG should more strongly advertise its standing offer of assistance to states with establishing and enhancing national export controls, both directly through assistance from the AG Chair, secretariat and participants, and in cooperation with capacity-building programmes such as the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence (CoE) and Partner to Partner (P2P) export control programmes.
- The AG should consider publishing accounts of examples of assistance provided by the AG in a newsletter or as a standalone news item on its website. This could help set expectations and demonstrate to interested states the benefits they could receive from taking up this offer.
- The AG should explore closer cooperation with the EU CBRN CoE and P2P programmes, using them as multipliers to offer the regime's public goods to partner states that have demonstrated a commitment to strengthen their national export control systems. The AG should consider more direct targeting of this pool of states when promoting adherence, once the benefits of becoming an AG adherent have been expanded and explicitly presented.

<sup>55</sup> Brockmann, Héau and Maletta (note 23).



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## A EUROPEAN NETWORK

In July 2010 the Council of the European Union decided to support the creation of a network bringing together foreign policy institutions and research centers from across the EU to encourage political and security-related dialogue and the long-term discussion of measures to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems. The Council of the European Union entrusted the technical implementation of this Decision to the EU Non-Proliferation Consortium. In 2018, in line with the recommendations formulated by the European Parliament the names and the mandate of the network and the Consortium have been adjusted to include the word 'disarmament'.

## STRUCTURE

The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium is managed jointly by six institutes: La Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS), the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (HSFK/ PRIF), the International Affairs Institute in Rome (IAI), the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS–Europe), the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP). The Consortium, originally comprised of four institutes, began its work in January 2011 and forms the core of a wider network of European non-proliferation and disarmament think tanks and research centers which are closely associated with the activities of the Consortium.

## MISSION

The main aim of the network of independent non-proliferation and disarmament think tanks is to encourage discussion of measures to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems within civil society, particularly among experts, researchers and academics in the EU and third countries. The scope of activities shall also cover issues related to conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons (SALW).

[www.nonproliferation.eu](http://www.nonproliferation.eu)

## EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium

*Promoting the European network of independent non-proliferation and disarmament think tanks*



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