



Australian Government  
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# Regional Engagement to Enhance Biosecurity: Lessons from the Australia / Indonesia co-hosted BWC Regional Workshops

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The views expressed in this presentation are those of the author  
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# Geneva-based BWC 3-year Program of Work

Agreed in 2002 to discuss, develop common understandings and promote effective action on:

- 2003: adoption of necessary national measures to implement the prohibitions set forth in the BWC, including enactment of penal legislation;
- 2003: national mechanisms to establish and maintain the security and oversight of pathogenic micro-organisms and toxins;
- 2004: enhancing international capabilities for responding, investigating, alleged use of BW or suspicious outbreaks;
- 2004: strengthening institutional efforts and mechanisms for surveillance and combating infectious diseases ...;
- 2005: the content, promulgation, and adoption of codes of conduct for scientists

## By end of 2004 ....

- The BWC meetings in Geneva in 2003 and 2004 were regarded as very useful. Many National Working Papers prepared and discussed. Indeed, one commentator referred to the ‘mountain of papers’ produced.
- However many BWC States Parties, including a number from Asia-Pacific region, had been unable to become fully engaged in the 3-year process.
- So the objective of the Australia-Indonesia co-hosted workshops was to enable participants from regional BWC States Parties to meet and become more involved in an ongoing regional dialogue and cooperation so that all States Parties in our region obtain the security benefits derived from full and effective implementation of the BWC.

# Participants

- Australia
- Brunei
- Cambodia
- Indonesia
- Lao People's Democratic Republic
- Malaysia
- New Zealand
- Papua New Guinea
- The Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Viet Nam
- ICRC
- WHO
- (Timor Leste also invited, could not attend)

# Regional Workshop Process:

## BWCRW1 – Melbourne 2005

- Discuss, develop common understandings

## BWCRW2 – Bali 2006

- Promote effective action

# Outline of Workshop Agenda

- Historical background / BW / BWC
- Legislative requirements
- Security of pathogens and toxins
- Disease surveillance
- Investigations of alleged use
- Outreach / Codes of Conduct
- Site visits

Background presentations / material available at  
<http://www.law.unimelb.edu.au/events/bwc/>

# Agreed follow-up activities in Region:

Those activities include:

- encouraging **bilateral** and **regional** sharing of information on national implementation measures and the provision of technical assistance focusing on the capacity building of States Parties ...
- establishing regional partnerships on enhancement of bio-security ..
- strengthening national and international efforts and broadening existing mechanisms for surveillance, detection, diagnosis, and combating infectious diseases ....
- exploring the possibilities of adopting a regional code of conduct for scientists.
- exploring the possibilities of taking regional concerted action to promote awareness among scientists.
- ... internet network of workshop participants
- holding further workshops.

# BWC Regional Engagement Follow-up Activities

A range of activities including:

- ‘Traditional’ Regional Seminars / Workshops
- ‘Specific Issue’ BWC Regional Workshops
- National Workshops
- National Conferences
- Regional Security Meetings
- Other Regional Engagement activities

# ‘Traditional’ Regional Seminars / Workshops

For example, the regional workshops co-hosted by Indonesia and Australia (BWC/CONF.VI/WP.34).

Typically two or three participants from each country in the region.

Objectives include:

- raising awareness of the relevant BWC issues,
- encouraging consideration of the most useful approaches for countries in the region to address the requirements, and
- developing guidelines and concrete steps by participants to assist the States Parties in the full and effective implementation of the BWC obligations

Often value in convening more than one such ‘traditional’ Regional Workshop in a region.

# ‘Specific Issue’ BWC Regional Workshops

Typically two or three participants from each country in the region.

Tailored to specific requirements of BWC or particular requests, including:

- Universality
- Legal requirements
- Security of pathogens and toxins
- Oversight / sensitive research
- Awareness raising / academia
- Other Bioterrorism prevention activities

# National Workshops

Objectives include:

- Awareness raising of issues among government officials from a range of departments and agencies who will have responsibilities for one or more the various obligations of the State Party under the BWC.

Benefits in having presenters from other regional countries to share their experiences during national workshops.

# National Conferences

Objective:

- Awareness raising among the broader biological sector, ranging from academic researchers, government scientists, research institutes, biotechnology industry.

Benefits in having presenters from other regional countries to share their experiences during national workshops.

# Regional Security Meetings

The inclusion of an agenda item related to the implementation of the BWC as part of a broader regional security meetings, including:

- law enforcement meetings
- counter-terrorism meetings
- customs / border control meetings
- Disease surveillance

# Other Regional Engagement activities

The achievement of the objectives of the various Regional Seminars Workshops can be enhanced and supported by other regional engagement activities, including:

- ministerial level consultations
- regular high-level bilateral consultations
  - Provides high level support.

# Concluding Comments

- Key lessons:
  - benefits from sharing regional perspectives
  - inclusion of int'l organisations
  - we are all on a steep learning curve
  - no one size fits all = tailor made solutions
  - Not a 'one-off' event – part of a process
- Encourage other regions to conduct similar regional engagement activities, including:
  - Workshops
  - Conferences
  - Bilateral activities
- Role for BWC Implementation Support Unit