

***Working with stakeholders to multiply our common counter-proliferation objectives.***

Why this presentation?

- To demystify - for years I was allergic to the word “stakeholder”, which sounded like a vague and politically-correct term which was bandied about all the time in government circles, but which no-one ever bothered to explain;
- But working with a number of different partners on some specific counter proliferation projects has changed my mind about the value of working with stakeholders, and I thought it could be useful to share those experiences, and invite you to share your own.

## What is a stakeholder?

It's not rocket science (a good thing too because if it were it could be subject to export controls on ITT). There can be many definitions but I prefer a very simple description

**- Any person or organisation that can either help or hinder the achievement of our objectives;**

**- Any person or organisation that is affected by our activities - in a positive or negative way.**

As the word suggests, someone who has a stake, or could have a stake, in our business, in this case in the export controls business.

Some examples:

- Members of Parliament
- academics
- the media
- industry
- foreign governments
- international organisations
- international "regimes" (Wassenaar, MTCR, AG, NSG)
- civil society (NGOs, faith groups etc.)
- other parts of our own government
- ordinary people - the citizens of our own country.

Not an exhaustive list - once you start thinking about the issue you can come up with a surprisingly long list.

## So why work with stakeholders?

- Because governments and other organisations can't do everything alone - to confront a global threat like proliferation, we need both global and domestic partners;
- Because we don't have the monopoly on wisdom - we need to tap in to new ideas to make better policy and to discover the best way of implementing our policies;
- Because others may have the specialist skills which we lack;
- Because we need people to tell us when things are a bad idea, and point out when policy is counter-productive;
- Because we need to stay connected with the world in which we operate, and to demystify what counter-proliferation is all about;
- Because it's good to test our own thinking - that does not mean we will always agree, but going through the debate brings rigour to the process and is a chance to communicate what we are trying to achieve to a wider audience;
- Because we are accountable and our political systems oblige us to consult outside government as we go about our business;
- (I saved the most important until last) Because together we can multiply our counter proliferation efforts. We can achieve much more if we do it in partnership with others.

## How do you prioritise which stakeholders to work with?

- **You need to be clear about your own objectives first.** What are you trying to achieve and why?

- Then you can begin to draw up a list of those who could help or hinder you, or be affected by your activities.

- Cast the net wide to start with then focus in. Don't just list "the people we always work with". Be imaginative. (For example, if you want to campaign for an Arms Trade Treaty, you might think that NGOs would share your concern about the destabilising flow of conventional weapons into conflict zones. But a British coffee-trader with a global network of operations will be equally concerned about the impact of conflict on his/her markets, and could be a potential ally).

- When you decide how to divide your time, focus on those with influence and expertise, as well as those who fill your postbag with lobbying. In other words, seek out your targets and don't wait for them to come to you.

- Don't forget the media; they can multiply a message like no other, and it can be a negative message too, so work with them from the start.

That all sounds fine in theory but how does it work?

- A good example of stakeholder engagement is the implementation of the **Academic Technology Approval Scheme** ;

- in 2007 the UK introduced a new scheme to mitigate the risks of knowledge acquired in the UK being used in the proliferation of WMD overseas;

- this is not a blanket ban on study in the UK. It targets a number of specific courses at the Postgraduate level which could have applications in WMD programmes (e.g. missile technology, certain biological sciences);

- Students apply on-line for an ATAS certificate which they then show the Entry Clearance Officer at our embassies who issues the visa. It is applied to nationals of every country except those in the EU;

- We needed to design a new scheme and get buy-in from academia to make to work;

- So we established an academic advisory group at the design phase, who helped us to clarify which courses should be included in the scheme;

- Next we went on a road-show around the UK to British universities to explain the scheme. We used umbrella groups like associations representing all universities and students to multiply the message;

- We wrote about the scheme in the media and discussed it with MPs;

- We instructed our embassies to explain to foreign governments what the scheme would involve and what it would mean in their country;
- We gave the universities contact details for a dedicated team in the Foreign Office who could quickly resolve and problems or clarify what as required;
- We took advice from admissions experts at universities on when to introduce the scheme, and we tested it in a pilot;
- We never stopped talking to our stakeholders, by phone, by email and by letter,

## **The result?**

\* What could have been a very negative and chaotic exercise, with government seen as Big Brother complicating peoples' lives, has gone very smoothly in its first year.

\* We now have a virtual team of people working on counter proliferation with us up and down the UK, not on our payroll but certainly understanding what we're trying to do and sharing our mission. So we have multiplied the message and shared the workload, with only a small core team of 3 officers in the FCO and a handful of advisers in other government departments.

## **And the reasons:**

- we designed the new scheme with experts;
- we explained why we were doing it over and over;
- we listened over and over;
- we responded rapidly to problems which were brought to our attention, and gave feedback;
- we never stopped communicating.

There are many other models I could mention, and people will talk more about outreach in the course of the seminar. Working with industry is another key area I would mention if there were time. For now, I'd like to open a discussion and seek your views on what works for you, and what doesn't.