

Summary of the Bali Conference Preparatory Meeting

A great deal of the meeting was taken-up with the formality of adopting the draft reports of the two working groups, the agendas for the upcoming senior officials meeting and the second ministerial meeting. Beyond this the elements of the Co-Chairs' statement were presented. Discussions on these were fairly minimal and non-contentious. (Will forward these documents when available electronically.)

The crucial topic, that being of the future of the follow-up, was discussed but discussions were absent of any concrete suggestions. Largely, delegations were seemingly unprepared to take a position on the topic. Clearly there is no consensus emerging on the way forward. However, there was notably little support for the APC subsuming the activities of the working groups though, at the same time, there was no suggestions of an alternative way forward. Singapore consistently referred to the Bali Co-Chairs' statement noting that the no new process should be created and that the work of the two working groups should be absorbed into existing regional mechanisms. This sentiment was supported by Brunei and Malaysia. In the absence of any reaction from other delegates, this sentiment appeared for most of the meeting to be prevailing. However, toward the end of the meeting Thailand proposed the continuation of the working groups and then volunteered to continue the coordination of the AHEG II for another year, without specifying what organizational arrangement this might entail.

There was a contradictory theme running through the meeting, that being that the future plans of actions and activities in train should continue (notably this included the work of the Japanese led working group on information exchange and the Korean led group on public awareness raising) while at the same time there was no positions taken on how these would be furthered or in what, if any, organizational arrangement. The development of the website and its continuation similarly was similarly supported.

Kiribati noted that this regional forum had been the first of its kind in which Kiribati and many other of the smaller states had participated. As such, Kiribati noted that the follow-up work had been useful and important to Kiribati and that absorbing the work that had been undertaken into other existing fora would effectively limit Kiribati and many other smaller states ability to participate, their not being members. Kiribati further noted it supported continuation of the work in some form, but also that efforts should be made to eliminate overlap between the two working groups through consolidation of activities.

It would appear at this point, with the issues so open-ended, that there would be little to be gained by marketing IOM as a stand alone alternative. IOM's current position of being willing to support governments in whichever direction is ultimately determined would seem to be the best position to take at this point in time. With a failure to present viable options for the follow-on at this meeting, there is a challenge for the Co-chairs in the remaining weeks to reconcile diverse and often contradictory positions in order to draft the co-chairs' statement in advance of the senior officials and ministerial meetings in Bali. It is likely that the shape of the follow-up will have to be driven by the ministers. It is clear, though, that any effort by any one player to direct the outcomes meets with almost certain suspicion and resistance.

There was a definite and positive recognition of IOM's support to the process thus far and IOM remains well positioned. And, IF the ministerial meeting calls for a continuation of the process, IOM would likely be called upon to continue in a supportive administrative role and

directly benefit through related projects that would be initiated. This outcome is by no means certain however, with other issues such as funding not all addressed in today's meeting. DIMIA, which has the funding resources within the Australian government, remains stubbornly committed to the APC option.