

# **Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime**

## **15<sup>th</sup> Ad Hoc Group Senior Officials' Meeting 20-21 October 2020**

### **Co-Chairs' Statement**

The fifteenth Ad Hoc Group Senior Officials Meeting of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process) convened virtually on 20-21 October 2020. The meeting was co-chaired by Indonesia and Australia. The meeting brought together officials from all sixteen member governments and the three member organisations of the Bali Process [Ad Hoc Group](#).

While COVID-19 has constrained the ability to convene in-person, the virtual meeting demonstrated that the important work of the Bali Process as a forum for policy dialogue, information sharing, and practical cooperation can, and must, continue despite the global pandemic.

The meeting discussed progress toward implementing the **Bali Process Ministerial Declarations and Regional Support Office (RSO)** work plans. It considered the interests and forward objectives of Bali Process members, looking at the impact of COVID-19 on member governments.

The meeting affirmed opportunities for ministerial interaction in 2021 in advance of the next Ministerial Conference in 2022. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary Ministerial Conference in 2022 would be an opportunity to celebrate the progress of the Bali Process over the past 20 years and to reflect on how the Bali Process can continue to be of benefit to members in future years.

Members received a presentation from the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** on how to consider the health dimensions of irregular migration to better understand the impact of the global pandemic on tackling irregular migration. Members outlined regional and country-specific perspectives and reiterated the need for the Bali Process to continue to develop practical, flexible measures to assist members to respond to the unprecedented border management challenges posed by COVID-19 and to adhere to international norms and Bali Process commitments, including ensuring safety of life at sea. Many members highlighted that COVID-19 has increased the difficulty of labour migration and the risk of exploitation by people smugglers and traffickers. Members affirmed that the Bali Process should continue to build capacity of members and convene important discussions to support members through this challenging period and to respond to the issue of irregular migration and displacement in the region, including related aspects of people smuggling and trafficking in persons.

The **UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)**, the IOM and the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** delivered a joint presentation and recommendations to address the impact of COVID-19 on migrants and refugees across Asia and the Pacific and the situation in countries particularly affected by recent maritime irregular migration. Co-Chairs took note of the proposals put forward by member countries and the international organisations and would explore how they might inform the work of relevant Bali Process working groups.

The meeting noted initiatives relevant to Bali Process members on addressing trafficking in persons and related transnational crime. UNODC updated members on a Bali Process initiated project,

undertaken with the RSO, focused on the role of corruption in facilitating trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** provided data on the impacts of COVID-19 on forced labour and the heightened risk to vulnerable workers in the global supply chain, especially to children trafficked for labour exploitation. The ILO foreshadowed a 2021 update to its Global Estimates on Modern Slavery and highlighted work underway with UNODC to develop a common framework to measure trafficking for forced labour. Noting 2021 would be the **International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour** the meeting welcomed opportunities for the Bali Process to mark this event, within its mandate.

The Ad Hoc Group noted the report of the Liechtenstein Initiative, *Unlocking Potential: A Blueprint for Mobilizing Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking* presented by the **Liechtenstein Initiative on Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST)** Secretariat. The report contains a series of tools for financial sector actors including business and governments to use to address trafficking and related exploitation around financial crimes compliance; regulations on capital markets and public investing and lending; and financial inclusion to prevent re-victimisation.

Australian government co-chair of recent informal consultations and innovation sessions of the **Government and Business Forum (GABF)** briefed the Ad Hoc Group on sessions on the finance and fishing sectors. The Ad Hoc Group noted that the GABF would continue to convene virtually and would continue to take a sector-focus to support businesses and governments to achieve the AAA (Acknowledge, Act, Advance) recommendations adopted by Ministers in 2018. The meeting welcomed plans by the GABF to define an annual workplan for future consultations and encourage greater input from all members.

Members welcomed progress by the **Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (WG-TIP)** toward developing a *Compendium of Good Practice Examples to Combat Exploitation in Supply Chains*; and efforts to enhance the accessibility of training and guidance for member countries. The WG-TIP co-chairs outlined forward priorities including an online workshop on the Compendium ahead of the sixth annual meeting on 10 November. The WG-TIP will also host a series of online workshops in 2021 on building regional cooperation to combat trafficking in persons.

New Zealand as co-chair, with Fiji, of the **Working Group on the Disruption of People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Networks (WG-Disruption)** updated members on efforts to refresh the Group's format and workplan and distributed a concept note for the Ad Hoc Group to consider. Comments were invited by 6 November. Members acknowledged the WG-Disruption's important role in addressing the criminal networks that seek to exploit the most vulnerable and welcomed the Group's proposal to develop greater collaboration with the WG-TIP on enhancing a victim-centred approach.

The Indonesian co-chair of the **Task Force on Planning and Preparedness (TFPP)** briefed the Ad Hoc Group on the TFPP's 5<sup>th</sup> meeting which promoted good practices, information sharing and cooperation among key regional stakeholders in response to irregular maritime movement. The meeting heard that a proposed simulation-based exercise for the TFPP would be deferred until international travel restrictions eased. The meeting also received the report of the ad hoc **Policy Experts Gathering of the TFPP held in July 2020** to discuss the unprecedented border management challenges that COVID-19 poses for governments in addressing trafficking in persons and people smuggling.

The meeting acknowledged progress by the **Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration (TEG-RR)** including reviewing key outcomes of the third meeting. The meeting welcomed efforts underway with IOM and the RSO to convene workshops and develop tools and data that help capture the challenges associated with the management of sustainable returns and reintegration.

The meeting commended efforts by the **RSO** to reset and recalibrate capacity building and training activities to support members at this challenging time. The RSO highlighted specific practical guides and resources of high relevance to the Ad Hoc Group's discussion on addressing the challenges around irregular maritime arrivals. The meeting welcomed the RSO workplan and efforts to reinvigorate Bali Process digital platforms and noted the RSO would shortly commence consultations on its next strategic plan.

Members welcomed the participation of observers to the meeting, including the governments of Canada and the United Kingdom and representatives from the ILO, the Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration, the FAST Secretariat, and the GABF Secretariat (Walk Free, an initiative of the Minderoo Foundation).