



Bali Process Ad Hoc Group Meeting
Technical Experts on Irregular Movement by Air
Sri Lanka 10-11 May 2011

BALI PROCESS AD HOC GROUP
TECHNICAL EXPERTS WORKING GROUP ON IRREGULAR MOVEMENT BY AIR
COLOMBO 10-11 MAY 2011

CO-CHAIRS STATEMENT

The Bali Process Ad Hoc Group (AHG) - Technical Experts Working Group on Irregular Movement by Air meeting was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 10-11 May 2011. The meeting was co-chaired by Sri Lanka and Australia.

The meeting was attended by delegates, representing the governments of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Australia, India, Republic of Indonesia, Malaysia, Republic of the Maldives, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kingdom of Thailand, Union of Myanmar, New Zealand, as well as representatives from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The United Kingdom and Canada attended the meeting as observers. The United States of America and Bangladesh was unable to attend.

The meeting was opened by Her Excellency Ms Kathy Klugman, Australian High Commissioner for Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr W. A. C. Perera, Sri Lankan Controller General of Immigration and Emigration and Mr Bill Pettitt, Principal Intelligence Advisor for Australia's Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

The purpose of the meeting is to provide the Bali Process AHG Technical Experts Working Group (WG) on Irregular Migration by Air an opportunity to share information on relevant issues and share best practices on how to detect and deter irregular movements by air and deal effectively with people smugglers by pursuing and prosecuting those involved in illegal activity, wherever possible. In addition, it is an opportunity to re-affirm the commitment to the establishment of the Regional Immigration Liaison Officer Network (RILON) in key AHG member states to assist in combating irregular movements by air across international immigration borders, to review the activity of RILON over the last 12 months and discuss the way forward.

The meeting was opened by the co-chairs and the agenda and administrative arrangements were adopted. The co-chairs provided an overview of irregular movement of people worldwide. Current estimates from IOM report that there are approximately 30-40 million displaced persons worldwide, and as such, countries in the region are hosting significant numbers of displaced people. Political and economical instability in North Africa



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and the Middle East may have future impacts on further displacement and irregular movement through the region. In particular, there has been increased irregular movement activity in the air environment from Afghan, Iranian, Iraqi and Kurdish nationals. It was noted that there are many challenges ahead in an environment where the modus operandi of people smugglers becomes more sophisticated to keep abreast of advances in technology and improved border and visa regimes.

Members acknowledged that the emergence of numerous low cost airlines was contributing to the ability of people to move more freely through the region. When addressing irregular movements, countries must be mindful that genuine refugees fleeing persecution also travel in people smuggling pipelines and utilise irregular movement facilitation networks.

The briefings highlighted the importance of regularly reviewing visa regimes and products as people smugglers are looking for weak links in visa systems and opportunities presented from porous borders. The use of fraudulent and bogus primary documents including birth certificates and other identification documents to obtain passports is prevalent throughout the region. It is important to implement and review enforcement regimes to be used as a deterrent and combat the indifference of many airlines. Co-chairs re-affirmed the importance of facilitating genuine travellers and only target those that are a genuine risk to our borders.

Co-chairs asked the working group to be mindful of the general vulnerability of people who may enter into arrangements with people smugglers without understanding the ramifications of non-genuine travel facilitation. Information campaigns are essential in bringing awareness to people in the region about the dangers of engaging people smugglers and human traffickers.

Co-chairs highlighted the importance of combating irregular movements by adopting regional solutions and reiterated the commitment of Ministers at the recent Bali Process Regional Ministerial Conference held in March 2011. Co-chairs made note of the new joint cooperative transfer arrangement between Australia and Malaysia, as a part of a Regional Cooperation Framework that will help put people smugglers out of business and prevent asylum seekers making the dangerous journey to Australia by boat.



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Special Presentations

Sri Lanka delivered a special presentation on new initiatives that have been implemented. Sri Lanka has had significant success in preventing boat departures and efforts to prevent people moving irregularly through the airport. Measures have also been implemented to improve security of passports, as well as implementation of an Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) and pre-clearing arrivals on passenger ships.

IOM delivered a special presentation on exchanging digital information, particularly in relation to e-passports and breeder or source documents. This detailed briefing highlighted technologies available to secure e-passports and current initiatives to introduce increased security to breeder documents, including birth certificates. IOM offered to facilitate access to members to the Netherlands-sponsored database on breeder documents.

Country Presentations

Members were provided an opportunity to report to the working group on the current issues on irregular migration by air that emerged since the last meeting in 2010. Key themes across the region included:

- difficulties in managing long and remote land and sea borders but there has been considerable success in interdictions at airports;
- measures to improve passport, visa procedures and technical capabilities at immigration borders;
- lack of technical information and intelligence sharing about irregular movements through immigration borders; and
- need to improve training and development of officers.

The UNHCR representative briefed on irregular movement patterns indicating dedicated routes utilised by particular nationality groups. This highlighted the complexity of the problem for transit and destination countries, in particular. The briefing also addressed the issue of genuine refugees and displaced persons seeking to move across international borders seeking a safer environment and the need for consideration of protection sensitive mechanisms when implementing initiatives to disrupt irregular movements.

Regional Immigration Liaison Officer Network (RILON)

The origin of the RILON concept was discussed with the working group to reiterate the importance of regular information sharing among like minded countries and other related agencies. The discussion highlighted the need to reinvigorate the RILON concept to move towards the establishment of further RILONS in key locations.

The concept allows member states:



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- to develop a better understanding of irregular movements impacting the region through information and immigration-related intelligence sharing and cooperation;
- an awareness of best practices worldwide to detect and deter irregular movements by air;
- to keep pace with new methodologies used by transnational criminal networks to move their clients; and
- to enhance the integrity of travel documents and visa processes and address vulnerabilities at airports.

There has been a relatively slow uptake of the RILON concept. This has primarily been attributed to the uniqueness of this type of activity and a general lack of understanding around the original concept. RILONs have been established in Bangkok, Canberra and Colombo. RILON meetings to-date, particularly in Bangkok and Colombo, have provided clarity and refined procedures.

The relevance and utility of the RILON concept was recently reaffirmed at the Bali Process Regional Ministerial Conference. Ministers urged the Technical Experts Working Group to continue to progress the establishment of the RILON through their internal mechanisms. The members acknowledged that the lack of broader input from the full Bali Process membership limits the information and intelligence potentially available on irregular people movements and limits the focus to particular migration routes. Members agreed that the existing RILON concept be broadened to include other Bali Process member countries and inviting other like-minded, non-Bali Process countries to participate on a case by case basis, as determined by the Steering Group.

Countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom have strong Immigration Liaison Officer (ILO) networks in the region. The co-chairs and working group are pleased that representatives were able to be present at the meeting and welcomed their participation.

Local RILON representative from Canberra, Colombo and Bangkok provided short summaries on their inaugural meetings. These RILONs adopted the general RILON principles however the format, frequency and membership was guided by the priorities and circumstances of each country. Importantly, it was agreed that the sharing of information should not be restricted to these meetings but should be part of normal practices.



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Break out group discussions

Group 1 – Information Sharing

This breakout group discussed information and immigration intelligence sharing in regard to irregular movement. In particular there was discussion on the following points:

- strong agreement on the value and importance of timely information exchange to ensure a clear understanding of the threat and risks to immigration borders;
- agreement that the RILON concept was an appropriate forum for exchange of information, however participants should have a clear understanding of the medium of exchange, confidentiality implications of information to be shared;
- the type of information to be shared should have appropriate authority from member state's national headquarters; and
- noted that there was also opportunities to exchange information and immigration intelligence through bilateral arrangements with other member states.

Group 2 – Expansion and invigoration of RILON

This breakout group discussed the following points:

- India announced that they will establish a RILON as early as June 2011;
- Malaysia is currently seeking approval through the appropriate authority to establish a RILON in Kuala Lumpur;
- Pakistan is considering the establishment of a RILON;
- Myanmar will explore opportunities to participate in the Bangkok RILON;
- The need for timely information sharing including the possible establishment of a secure site on the Bali Process website for RILON members;
- Re-affirmed the need for information exchange between RILON members in host countries and their respective headquarters;
- Agreed to the development of an information package for RILON members including a briefing for member governments, a clarified statement of the purpose of RILON, Frequently Asked Questions, Standard Operating Procedures and statements on border management responsibilities within member countries.



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- RILON presents an opportunity to expand and coordinate regional capacity building initiatives.
- Consideration to be given to the scope of RILON in respect to irregular movements by means other than air. Subsequent discussions resulted in a decision to seek endorsement from the Bali Process Steering Group to re-task the working group to incorporate a broader mandate rather than restricting it to irregular air movements.

Outcomes/Recommendations

1. Participants acknowledged that sharing information regularly between Bali Process member states and like minded countries and agencies is critical to addressing irregular movement of people by air. Facilitating the exchange of information should be incorporated into everyday standard business operations.
2. Participants agreed that, wherever possible, there is value in sharing monthly trends and statistics between member states as a way to keep abreast of current people smuggling issues and a way of sharing immigration-related information and intelligence on a regular basis. Where ever available monthly reports will be provided to DIAC or IOM to compile and make available on the secure Bali Process website (when established) and/or via a RILON email distribution list.
3. Participants acknowledged that the future success of RILON is dependent on regular membership. Participants agreed to nominate a key contact in each local RILON and or member state (where RILONS had yet to be established), to be responsible for the network, its operation and development. This would ensure continuity of personnel and more consistent and informed reporting back to the Ad Hoc Group.
4. India made a commitment to establish a local RILON and hold their first meeting in the next three months. Pakistan is considering the establishment of a RILON. Malaysia is currently seeking approval through the appropriate authority to establish a RILON in Kuala Lumpur.
5. A further commitment was made to hold meetings of the Technical Working Group on Irregular Movement by Air every six months. The next meeting is proposed to be held in Colombo in November 2011. A decision will be made at that meeting regarding the rotation of future meetings to other member states.
6. Australia and Sri Lanka will develop revised RILON guidelines including a restatement of the RILON concept, set of standard operating procedures for establishing and running a RILON meeting and frequently asked questions. The draft guidelines will be circulated to the member states for comment by the end of June. The guidelines when finalised will be placed on the Bali Process website.



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7. Participants agreed to seek endorsement from the Bali Process Steering Group to re-task the working group to incorporate a broader mandate rather than restricting it to irregular air movements.

The Co-Chairs acknowledged the support of the IOM in assisting all invited members and observers to attend in the AHG meeting of the Technical Experts on Irregular Movement by Air.

The participants expressed its appreciation to the Government of Sri Lanka for its generosity and hospitality in hosting this meeting.

Australia and Sri Lanka (Co-Chairs)
Bali Process Ad Hoc Group
Technical Experts Working Group on Irregular Movement by Air
Colombo, 11 May 2011