



## **3<sup>rd</sup> JOINT PERIOD OF ACTION DEBRIEF WORKSHOP**

### **BALI PROCESS WORKING GROUP ON THE DISRUPTION OF PEOPLE SMUGGLING AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS NETWORKS**

**BANGKOK, THAILAND  
14 September 2017**

#### **CO-CHAIRS' STATEMENT**

On 14 September 2017, the Bali Process Working Group on the Disruption of People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Networks (the Working Group) convened the 3<sup>rd</sup> Joint Period of Action Debrief Workshop in Bangkok, Thailand. The workshop was co-chaired by the Royal Malaysia Police and Immigration New Zealand with 24 participants from nine Ad Hoc Group (AHG) member countries as well as observers from Interpol, the Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Ten countries – Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the USA – participated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> joint Period of Action, which ran over a period of six months (March to August 2017). Members reported back on the results achieved through nine joint investigations aimed at dismantling people smuggling and trafficking in persons networks in the Asia-Pacific region. Criminal networks involved in the online commercial sexual exploitation of children were also targeted.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Joint Period of Action contributed to 72 persons being convicted of human trafficking and people smuggling offences, including notorious people smuggler Abraham Louhenapessy, better known as Captain Bram. Sixty-two people were also convicted in Thailand's largest human trafficking trial, which arose from the May 2015 discovery of mass graves along the Thailand-Malaysia border. The investigation was first included under the 1<sup>st</sup> Joint Period of Action, and the continued cooperation between Thai and Malaysian Police authorities over subsequent periods of action significantly contributed to the results achieved.

Authorities in the ten countries also:

- rescued six trafficked victims
- executed five search warrants and identified 23 new suspects
- made 10 arrests and launched nine new investigations
- made two extradition requests
- made numerous bilateral and international enquiries to progress trafficking in persons and people smuggling investigations
- conducted awareness-raising activities and carried out targeted training for over 50 police, airport, immigration, and compliance officers across the region
- gathered useful intelligence on the traffickers and smugglers involved and their modus operandi

Members reflected on what had worked well under the 3<sup>rd</sup> Joint Period of Action as well as the Working Group's achievements. Over the last three years, the Working Group has significantly contributed to the establishment of contacts, reinforced trust, and enhanced operational cooperation between countries in the region. Members acknowledged the importance of developing solid investigation plans in order to ensure efficient and effective results, and noted that this had worked well during the last Joint Period of Action. Members also acknowledged the importance of follow the money techniques to trace the illicit flow of profits and disrupt criminal networks involved in trafficking in persons, people smuggling and related transnational crime, but also agreed that more capacity building work could be done.

Members reflected that human trafficking and people smuggling networks have also proven to be flexible and resilient, adapting to law enforcement action. Cooperation and engagement under the Bali Process is a vital part of disrupting organised criminal activities and networks, but more could be done. Members identified a number of priorities and areas of focus for the next Joint Period of Action, including:

- ongoing focus on follow the money approaches to disrupt trafficking and smuggling networks, including expanding capacity on follow the money techniques
- expanding membership to include additional member countries, such as Cambodia and Vietnam
- gaining a more in-depth understanding of barriers to information sharing
- using the Bali Process secure portal to share information
- continuing engagement with INTERPOL
- designating a focal point in each country to respond to the immediate needs for assistance from other member countries (if not done already)
- using multiple channels to achieve consistent communication (e.g. telephone, email, WhatsApp, Line, Viber)
- strengthening inter-agency cooperation within member countries
- providing assistance to the requesting state to connect with other agencies
- promoting formal international cooperation (e.g. mutual legal assistance) for evidence sharing to assist in carrying out investigations and prosecutions
- drawing on best practice examples from other crime areas (e.g. from drug trafficking)
- strengthening awareness raising efforts to better promote Working Group activities

Members welcomed an update from the Bali Process Trafficking in Persons Working Group (TIPWG), including updates on the Bali Process Policy Guide and training module on Following the Money in Trafficking in Persons Cases as well as TIPWG Forward Work Plan 2015-17. Members welcomed continued collaboration between the two Working Groups and agreed to a joint activity in 2018. Possible topics included:

- Continuing work on 'follow the money' tools and techniques to support investigation and prosecution of smuggling and trafficking cases, and disrupt associated illicit profits.
- Strengthening awareness of corruption as a key facilitator of smuggling and trafficking, and explore opportunities to strengthen engagement between anti-corruption and law enforcement officials.

- Promoting effective international crime cooperation (mutual assistance and extradition) between Bali Process member countries to support the prosecution of smuggling and trafficking cases.

Members also welcomed an update from the Bali Process RSO, including on its Regional Information Sharing Project. The project aims to develop a framework and toolkit for information sharing among Bali Process member states. Members expressed interest in learning more about the project and continued collaboration with the RSO.

Members also learnt about the INTERPOL Foundation Project – a five year global initiative that aims to build law enforcement capacity over a five year period. The project aims to:

- support the selected regions (the Americas, Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, and South East Asia) in enhancing their law enforcement capabilities to fight people smuggling, human trafficking, and online child exploitation
- build and consolidate global networks of experts through the INTERPOL Specialists Operational Network (ISON) on People Smuggling, the INTERPOL Human Trafficking Expert Group and the INTERPOL Specialist Group on Crimes against Children
- provide operational and investigative support through the use of existing INTERPOL police capabilities

In closing, the Co-Chairs thanked the members for their ongoing commitment to, and support of, the Working Group and the Joint Period of Action initiative. The Co-Chairs noted that a media release highlighting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Joint Period of Action results would be drafted and circulated to members along with the Co-Chair Statement. The Co-Chairs will continue to work with members as well as the TIPWG to plan for the Working Group's next set of activities, including the 4<sup>th</sup> Joint Period of Action Planning Workshop and Joint Working Group activity, tentatively scheduled in the first half of 2018.