



10 October 2017

Media Statement

Bali Process countries tackle trafficking in persons and people smuggling networks during its 3rd Joint Period of Action

The Co-Chairs of the *Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime* are praising the results achieved during the **3rd Joint Period of Action**. Between March to August 2017, law enforcement and immigration agencies from ten countries – Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the USA – carried out nine joint operations 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 3rd 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 1st 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:

- executed five search warrants and identified 23 new suspects
- made 10 arrests and launched nine new investigations
- rescued six trafficked victims
- 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.

Altogether, joint efforts led to disruption of networks in Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, and the USA.

Ambassador Andrew Goledzinowski, Australian co-chair of the Bali Process, said the outcomes achieved under the 3rd Joint Period of Action show that cooperation between Bali Process

countries is essential if we are to combat human trafficking and smuggling effectively. “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.”

Febrian Ruddyard, Indonesian co-chair of the Bali Process, agrees that the Working Group has had a substantial impact on the criminal groups who think they can exploit people for profit. “The results achieved under the 3rd Joint Period of Action demonstrate that through a coordinated approach, Bali Process law enforcement agencies can successfully track down these criminal networks and bring them to justice.”

The Joint Period of Action is a flagship initiative under the Bali Process Working Group on the Disruption of People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Networks, which is co-chaired by the Malaysian and New Zealand governments.