

**5<sup>th</sup> JOINT PERIOD OF ACTION DEBRIEF WORKSHOP**  
**BALI PROCESS WORKING GROUP ON THE DISRUPTION OF PEOPLE SMUGGLING**  
**AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS NETWORKS**

**BANGKOK, THAILAND**

**3 DECEMBER 2019**

**CO-CHAIRS' STATEMENT**

1. The Governments of Fiji and New Zealand co-chaired the 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Period of Action Debrief Workshop under the Bali Process Working Group on the Disruption of People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Networks (the Working Group) on 3 December 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. The workshop was co-chaired by Detective Inspector Aiyaz Ali, OIC Organised Crime Unit, from the Fiji Police Force, and Travis Benson, National Manager from Immigration New Zealand.
2. Eleven countries – Australia, Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United States of America and Vietnam – attended the workshop. Representatives from Canada, the Bali Process Regional Support Office, the International Organisation for Migration, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime attended as observers.
3. The 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Period of Action ran over a period of six months (July to December 2019) with seven countries participating. During the debrief workshop, member countries reported back on the results achieved through investigations aimed at dismantling people smuggling and trafficking in persons networks in the Asia-Pacific region.

**Country trends and activities**

4. Participating countries are seeing an increase in the numbers of migrants being smuggled by air. For example, New Zealand presented on its ongoing investigations into South East Asian nationals arriving by air on fraudulently obtained visitor visas, and Sri Lanka detailed recent trends of its nationals attempting to travel to Australia fraudulently by air. Canada noted that recently they have seen recent examples of migrants from the Asia-Pacific region being smuggled by air.
5. Another common trend is the increase in trafficking of women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Vietnam noted that child sexual exploitation, both prostitution and online, is present in various forms across the country. It has seen a number of cases with international offenders. Malaysia, the Philippines and the United States also presented further evidence of both trafficking for the purpose of prostitution and the online exploitation of children.
6. Transnational law enforcement co-operation on trafficking and smuggling remains robust and effective. Malaysia is working jointly with Interpol to locate the perpetrator behind Thai and Vietnamese nationals being trafficked for the purpose of prostitution. The United States' collaboration with partner agencies, Thai law enforcement, private companies

and NGOs over two years led to the rescue of more than 50 children and the arrest and prosecution of child sex offenders.

7. To raise public and law enforcement awareness about human trafficking, participating countries are implementing various outreach and informational programmes. Bangladesh has implemented a community awareness programme to educate large numbers of people about the harm of human trafficking, drugs, terrorism and the repression of women and children. Australia's "Look a Little Deeper" programme aims to increase law enforcement understanding of trafficking, including where it is seen, the indicators, and what to do when officers come across it.

#### **Update from the Bali Process Trafficking in Persons Working Group and the Regional Support Office**

8. The co-chairs of the Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons provided an overview of the Group's current areas of focus and priorities. In 2019, the Working Group developed a guide to identify victims and a guide to protect victims, both using victim-centred approaches. The co-chairs expressed interest in collaborating with the Disruption Working Group in future. The Bali Process Regional Support Office reported on its recent activities and its plan for 2020. It noted that the 2020 Areas of Focus have now been agreed, and emphasised the many resources available for free online.

#### **Reflection on the history of the Working Group**

9. The co-chairs reflected on the successes and challenges that members of the Working Group have experienced over the last five years.
10. The Working Group was established in 2014 and the first workshop was held in 2015. The first four Joint Periods of Action saw an impressive number of joint investigations between member countries, and extensive disruption to people smuggling and trafficking in persons networks. A significant success was the investigation and prosecution by Indonesia of notorious people smuggler Abraham Louhenapessy, better known as Captain Bram.
11. The Working Group also experienced a number of challenges to the effective disruption of people smuggling and trafficking in persons networks. The long-term nature of investigations, which often span multiple years, often do not fit within the six-month Joint Period of Action. Some countries found it difficult to identify the correct focal point from other countries in order to progress investigations, and staff turnover has meant that some important relationships have been lost.
12. The co-chairs presented the results of a survey which was circulated to all members of the Working Group in advance of the workshop. The purpose of the survey was to help ensure that the future work programme of the Working Group reflected the priorities of participants and that all countries involved get the most benefit out of attending.

## **Priorities and areas of focus for the Working Group**

13. The survey found that members did not consider the format of the Working Group to be as effective, and that it would benefit from changes. Some members noted that the format has become less effective recently and there has been less country participation. Another reflection was on the importance of having representatives at the workshops with operational experience and the influence and authority to make decisions to initiate joint action. Participants also need to be able to commit to the Working Group and bring case studies, initiatives, intelligence and investigative opportunities to meetings. One member noted that organising a joint investigation requires prior planning to get the best plan and participation, and the ability to connect countries beforehand would help in the development of effective plans and likely result in early co-operation and better joint activity and results.
14. Members noted that their preference would be for the workshops to occur annually, rather than biannually, and for a duration of two or more days.
15. Members identified several priorities and areas of focus for the next Joint Period of Action, including:
  - a. Enhancing co-operation between origin, transit and destination countries,
  - b. Collecting, sharing and analysing smuggling and trafficking data, and
  - c. Identifying trafficking indicators in cases of smuggling.
16. Members would like to have particular focus on smuggling facilitated by organised smuggling networks, and the use of social media in organised smuggling ventures. With regard to trafficking in persons, members would like to focus on trafficking for the purpose of forced marriage, sham marriages, the production of pornography, and labour exploitation in the construction sector.
17. Members noted several successes of the Working Group, including the development of their understanding about what other countries do to disrupt trafficking and smuggling networks, establishing or maintaining bilateral relationships, and enabling connections with investigators or other law enforcement officials from other countries.
18. Members identified activities they would like to see included in future meetings. This included presentations on trends, policies and tools by international organisations or other Bali Process Ad Hoc Group members, progressing training opportunities, being involved in the development of relevant guides and other material, and discussing case studies and/or current investigations.

## **Next steps**

19. The co-chairs noted the number of action points to take forward in developing and agreeing the Working Group's future work programme. The co-chairs will work to update the work programme to ensure it is beneficial to all.
20. The co-chairs will be in contact with members in 2020 with details on future Working Group events.