

Friends, colleagues,

Over the past two years we have been challenged by our Ministers to develop a framework for improved cooperation that would allow us both at a National level and regional level to build strengthened operational responses the crimes of people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crimes.

It has often been stated that meeting this challenge will be difficult because of the cultural, geographical and developmental diversity our vast region we represents. And while this may be true, as coordinator of the Ad Hoc Experts Group II, I have always felt that the key to meeting our common goals will be the building of networks and bonds between us as practitioners that will enable us to better understand and appreciate our respective national challenges, which, in so doing, will in turn guide us to an improved regional response.

The success of our meeting over the past two days has reinforced this belief in my mind as once again we have proven that, as officials committed to fighting the transnational crimes of people smuggling and trafficking in persons, our similarities are greater than our differences.

So as we come to the close of our meeting here today, I once again encourage you to build upon these relationships and advance the progress we have made through our work as the Ad Hoc Experts Group on Policy, Legislation, and Law Enforcement so that our recommendations become action and that the commitments that our governments have made to the Bali Process lead to both a greater understanding and framework of cooperation for us a region and a tangible reduction in the crimes of people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crimes, which threaten our citizens and our society.

I wish you all a safe journey home and I look forward to continued collaboration.