

**THE BALI PROCESS AD HOC GROUP TECHNICAL EXPERTS WORKING GROUP
ON IRREGULAR MOVEMENTS BY AIR**

**Regional Immigration Liaison Officer Network
Standard Operating Procedures**

Background

The Bali Process Ad Hoc Group Technical Experts Working Group on Irregular Movements by Air was established in 2009. Member countries are Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. In December 2009, the Group was tasked to oversight the implementation of the Regional Immigration Liaison Officer Network (RILON) and met for the first time in March 2010.

At its most recent meeting in Colombo on 10-11 May 2011, the Group discussed irregular movement issues impacting the region and the invigoration of RILON

Briefings by countries that had implemented RILONs highlighted the value of regular information sharing among like minded countries and other related agencies and the opportunity the meetings provided to facilitate networking with relevant officers from other diplomatic missions. The Working Group discussion emphasised the requirement to reinvigorate the RILON concept and the potential value of establishing additional RILONs in key locations.

The Working Group discussions also addressed the relatively slow uptake of the RILON concept. This has primarily been attributed to the uniqueness of this type of activity for some Ad Hoc Group partners and a general lack of understanding around the original concept by attendees at the initial Technical Working Group meeting in March 2010 in Colombo. The establishment of RILONs in Bangkok, Canberra and Colombo have provided clarity around their benefits and refined procedures.

One of the May 2011 Working Group recommendations was:

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.

This document provides a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which can be utilized by local RILONs in developing their groups.

Membership of RILON

- RILONs comprise local representatives of the Ad-Hoc Group countries who are already in place in the relevant location. For example, the Indian representative in the Bangkok RILON should be a member of the Indian Embassy staff. Countries are not required to deploy additional resources solely for the purpose of supporting RILON.
- Ideally RILON members should be the Embassy/High Commission official/s most directly involved in issues around irregular movements, including visa and other travel document fraud. Depending on local resources this may be a dedicated Airline Liaison Officer (ALO), Visa Integrity Officer, a Visa Processing Manager or a Foreign Affairs officer responsible for overseeing visa issuing.
- Each local RILON should agree on which host government agencies should be full time members of their group. As a guide, this could include Immigration, Airport Security, Police, Ministry of Interior or Defence, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- RILONs may also decide to invite non-Ad-Hoc Group members to join. For example, The Colombo RILON has invited Canada, the USA and the UK to participate as regular members or on an ad-hoc basis.

Administrative Arrangements

- Host country agencies should agree on arrangements for chairing meetings. It is recommended that this be managed on a 12 month rotational basis in order to give consistency and momentum to newly established groups.
 - It is recommended that a nodal point be identified to ensure all relevant host country agencies are involved.
 - It is recommended that when choosing a chairing agency, consideration be given to the issues that are likely to be discussed.
- Although a single chair may operate for 12 months, it is recommended that members rotate the hosting of the meetings in order to spread costs and administrative burdens.
- The Australia Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) can provide some funding to support local RILON meetings. Whilst the initial meeting of each RILON may require additional costs (catering, media coverage etc.) subsequent events should be 'working meetings' requiring lesser expenditure.
- Each RILON should identify a Secretariat who will support the chair in arranging meetings and coordinating out of session communications (see below). In Colombo DIAC will provide Secretariat support.
- RILON meetings should be held **at least** four times a year depending on local factors.

- Each RILON meeting should include a standing agenda item on Information Sharing where members can provide country updates on recent irregular movement trends or other issues, including for example recent visa fraud modus operandi detected.
- It is recommended that RILONs consider having 'themes' for subsequent meetings in order to give them greater focus. Suggested topics could include Capacity Building, Fraudulent Document Trends or People Smuggling and Human Trafficking Legislation.
- Member states should be encouraged to provide presentations at RILON meetings on a rotational basis.
- Local RILONs may choose to invite guest speakers to provide presentations on topics of interest. For example, the Colombo RILON has invited the Sri Lankan office of the Examiner of Questioned Documents to present at a future meeting.
- Each RILON will routinely report its progress to the Bali Process Ad Hoc Group Technical Experts Working Group on Irregular Movements by Air . The next Ad-Hoc Group meeting will be held in Colombo in late 2011.

Information Sharing

- RILON is based on an agreement amongst member countries on the value and importance of timely information exchange to ensure a clear understanding of the threat and risks to immigration borders.
- RILON is an appropriate forum for exchange of information, however participants should have a clear understanding of the medium of exchange, and confidentiality implications of sharing information (this will vary from country to country based on local legislation).
- Any information to be shared should have appropriate authority from member state's national headquarters.
- Information should be shared in a timely fashion, rather than waiting for the next RILON meeting, so that it can have a positive impact on operational activity targeting irregular movements.
- Each RILON should establish local email distribution lists allowing for the dissemination of information outside of formal RILON meetings. Our aim is to see this information exchange become a part of 'day-today business'.
- Where member states do not have ready access to email other exchange mechanisms should be implemented (ie. Fax, mail or hand delivery).
- The Ad-Hoc Group will develop and fund a secure website where member states can post and share information reports.
- RILON information sharing protocols do not preclude bilateral information sharing between individual member states.

Governance

- Australia (DIAC) and Sri Lanka (Department of Immigration and Emigration) are co-chairs of the Ad-Hoc Technical Working Group and are responsible for governance processes around RILON.
- Member countries can direct queries and provide feedback to the co-chairs at any time or at regular meetings (next meeting is scheduled for late 2011).
- Feedback would be appreciated on enhancement of SOPs, agenda items for the next meeting and broader RILON issues.
- Host countries are encouraged to identify a nodal point for channelling and distribution of information between each RILON team and the co-chairs.
- Funding is available through the Ad-Hoc Technical Working to assist individual RILON teams with establishment and operational costs.

Support from the Ad-Hoc Group

- As noted above, the Ad-Hoc group will provide financial support to individual RILONS as required.
- The Ad-Hoc group will also develop and maintain briefing materials and Frequently Asked Questions for RILONS to use in securing internal government support for the concept.