



REGIONAL SUPPORT OFFICE

BALI PROCESS

The Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime

INFORMATION SHEET: Regional Roundtable on Irregular Movements by Sea

Background

The Government of Indonesia and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) convened a Regional Roundtable on Irregular Movements by Sea in the Asia-Pacific Region from 18 to 20 March 2013 in Jakarta, Indonesia under the auspices of the Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO).

Participants included delegates from most Bali Process Ad Hoc Group Member States and Observers, international organisations such as UNHCR, IOM, UNODC, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) as well as government, NGO and academic experts from other regions including the Caribbean, the Gulf of Aden and the Mediterranean.

The organization of a Regional Roundtable on Irregular Movements by Sea is one of the four foundation projects of the Regional Support Office undertaken during the first year of the RSO's operation.

Purpose and Objective

The purpose of the Regional Roundtable was to promote "a common understanding of conceptual issues on irregular movements by sea with a view to inform the development of bilateral or multilateral arrangements among interested States."

The Roundtable aimed to enhance understanding among participants of different aspects of irregular maritime movements, and to identify areas of common interest for follow-up discussions and activities. Key challenges were discussed facing States in the Asia-Pacific region specific areas were identified where cooperation and coordination at national and regional level were thought relevant.

The Roundtable confirmed inter alia:

- The customary international law obligation of helping people in distress at sea regardless of territorial boundaries;
- The need for a differentiated screening system;
- The importance of comprehensive responses based on the principle of burden and responsibility sharing;
- The development of accurate knowledge and information exchange; and

- The further development of the principles and operational checklists reflected in UNHCR's Model Framework for Cooperation in rescue at sea emergencies in the context of regional realities.

Proposals were made for:

- The designation of focal points at national and regional level linked to the network of RSO focal points;
- The development of guidelines and a simpler reference guide of applicable legal standards;
- Strengthening regional cooperation in prosecuting smugglers and traffickers;
- Better harmonization and consistency of protection responses including identification of needs; and
- A better mapping of post-disembarkation options to ensure host States are properly supported in the medium and longer term.

Next Steps

The Roundtable was framed as the beginning of robust networking among experts and a platform for enhancing confidence-building measures among parties. The RSO was referred to as the implementing body of the Bali Process Regional Cooperation Framework through which approaches aimed at addressing all aspects of the cycle of irregular migration by sea from root causes to solutions could be developed.

Ministers at the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime held in Bali, Indonesia on 2 April 2013 acknowledged the unprecedented number of irregular movements by sea through the Asia-Pacific region. They recommended that members give priority to building on the Regional Roundtable explore practical ways to strengthen cooperation in managing irregular maritime movements including through the development of a protection sensitive regional approach.

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