

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

Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration Bangkok, Thailand, 12-13 February 2019

Co-Chairs' Statement

1. The second meeting of the Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration (TEGRR) of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process) has held in Bangkok on 12-13 February 2019, co-chaired by Australia and the Philippines.

2. The meeting brought together officials representing relevant agencies responsible for returns and reintegration from relevant Bali Process member countries, and experts from international organisations.

- Member country participants were from Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nauru, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. Thailand and the United Arab Emirates were unable to attend.
- Organisational member participants were from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO).
- Observer participants included Canada and the United Nations Action Against Trafficking in Persons (UN-ACT).

Proceedings

3. The co-chairs reviewed the outcomes of the meeting of the TEG-RR in April 2018. They emphasised the importance of promoting greater understanding of global and regional trends on returns and reintegration, and the sharing of good practices and information as part of a comprehensive migration management policy.

4. The RSO presented on the progress of the drafting committee for the policy guide for returns and reintegration, established following the last TEG-RR. This included timelines, the approach taken by the drafting committee, consideration of content, engagement with members, policy approaches and the importance of case studies to promote good practices. Feedback was provided on the draft, and further feedback was sought, to assist the RSO to continue to refine the guide.

5. Member States provided updates on their returns and reintegration interests and priorities. Some member countries gave detailed presentations on their current situation, policy frameworks and international engagement. Some key elements included:

- The importance of developing a national policy framework and action plan for returnees and internally displaced people. The framework outlines the role and responsibility to ensure a safe and successful reintegration;

- . The importance of negotiating Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between States, to define the return, readmission and reintegration processes, and assist in the confirmation of identity and specific assistance provided; and
- . The role of consular support and communication to citizens abroad, including expanding the use of digital media and promoting support services.
- . The issue of undocumented foreign workers and ongoing arrangements to combat human trafficking.
- . The development of standard operating procedures for return and reintegration and the benefit of closer cooperation of Embassies and Consulates to assist in the repatriation of citizens.
- . The importance of identity management and travel document issuance systems to support the return and readmission of citizens.

6. The IOM presented on Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration (AVRR), including how migrants and governments benefit from returns as part of a broader migration management plan. It noted the link between reintegration and development, and the importance of communication between sending and receiving States. IOM also provided further insights into the challenges faced with returns and reinforced the commitment to successful and sustainable reintegration.

7. The UNHCR delivered an update on their work, focusing on the circumstances required to facilitate returns, including safety, facilities and opportunities to reintegrate.

8. The UN-ACT provided an update on experiences from the COMMIT Process across the greater Mekong sub-region. This included practitioner tools for the reintegration of trafficked victims and the establishment of trans-national referral mechanisms.

Next steps

9. Participants welcomed the draft Policy Guide for Returns and Reintegration and acknowledged the significant work of the drafting committee and the RSO, to identify and collate good practices for returns and reintegration. They also noted the importance identity plays in successful return and reintegration arrangement and proposed that consideration be made for further practical support on this matter.

10. The Co-chairs reiterated the timeframes for final comments, with the view to finalising the guide and presenting it for consideration at the next Bali Process Ad Hoc Group Senior Officials' Meeting, slated to be held in July 2019.

11. It was envisaged that the TEGRR would continue to meet annually with the next meeting in early 2020.

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