



# The Bali Process

on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime

## **INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE DISRUPTION OF PEOPLE SMUGGLING AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS NETWORKS BANGKOK, THAILAND 19 MAY, 2015**

### **CO-CHAIRS' STATEMENT**

1. The inaugural meeting of the Working Group on the Disruption of People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Networks [the Working Group] under the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime [the Bali Process] was held in Bangkok, Thailand on 19 May, 2015. Co-chaired by the Governments of Sri Lanka and New Zealand, the meeting was attended by law enforcement representatives from Afghanistan, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United States of America (USA), and Viet Nam. Experts from INTERPOL and the United Kingdom (independent consultant) also participated. A representative of the Australian Bali Process Co-Chair attended as an observer.
2. Participants reaffirmed the commitment of Ad Hoc Group (AHG) member states to disrupt transnational criminal networks. The importance of intelligence and information sharing was acknowledged, and participants welcomed country briefings on trafficking in persons and people smuggling networks. Participants reiterated that the Working Group should remain focused on concrete, coordinated action. To this end, the Joint Period of Action initiative proposed by the Co-Chairs was welcomed and supported by the participants. Seven countries committing their participation with the rest reverting back to their capitals for further discussion.

### **Background**

3. At the Eighth meeting the Bali Process AHG Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on 6 August, 2014 in Canberra, AHG member states endorsed the establishment of, and terms of reference for, a Working Group on the Disruption of People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Networks under the Bali Process.
4. The Working Group provides a forum for interested Bali Process AHG member state officials involved in aspects of national security, law enforcement, and border control to share information and best practices in order to disrupt and dismantle transnational people smuggling and trafficking in persons networks.
5. An initial Roundtable on Migration and Transnational Crime was held on 24 September, 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand to develop a forward work plan for the Working Group. The Roundtable recommended that the Working Group should focus on:
  - Assessments of syndicates, hierarchies, modus operandi, financial networks and methodologies used by people smuggling and trafficking criminal networks;
  - Operational responses to future trends including identifying push and pull factors which may impact the region;

- Opportunities for enhancing coordinated activities to combat people smuggling and human trafficking networks while respecting jurisdictional limitations as well as national sovereignty and privacy legislation;
- Sharing current effective practices, tips, tools, and information on capacity building and awareness raising activities;
- Understanding the work of other regional forums to ensure that discussions and outcomes are complementary to other initiatives; and
- Mechanisms which support regional information exchanges.

These activities are to be supported through table top exercises, panel discussions, case studies, and scenario driven activities focused on improving action to combat people smuggling and trafficking in persons.

## Proceedings

6. The Co-Chairs, Kapila Waidyaratne, Additional Solicitor General, Sri Lankan Attorney General's Department and Head of the Trafficking and Smuggling Unit, and Steve Stuart, General Manager, Compliance, Risk and Intelligence Services (CRIS), Immigration New Zealand warmly welcomed participants and underscored their respective governments' commitment to the Working Group. They highlighted how the Bali Process and other regions (e.g. Mediterranean) continue to face threats from transnational criminal networks that operate across our borders and too often circumvent law enforcement efforts attempting to disrupt their activities. For these reasons, the disruption of criminal networks was recognised as a collective challenge.
7. The Co-Chairs proposed that the Working Group collectively plan, coordinate, and carry out a Joint Period of Action to disrupt trafficking in persons and people smuggling networks. Explained in brief during the opening session, the Co-Chairs noted that the concept would be explored fully in the afternoon.
8. The meeting commenced with participants providing an overview of the trafficking in persons and / or people smuggling contexts in their respective countries. Presentations highlighted how numbers were often not indicative of the nature or scale of the problem due to the lack of reliable data. Another common theme was how people smuggling and trafficking in persons criminal networks were diverse and differed in scale and sophistication (e.g. from highly organized criminal groups to loosely connected networks to friends and family of the individual involved). Presentations also stressed how investigations were complex, and heavily reliant on victims to provide the required evidence. Subsequently, the need for enhanced cooperation and partnership at the regional level was underscored in order to more effectively combat trafficking in persons and people smuggling networks.
9. Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Expert, United Kingdom and Rastislav Sasik, Project Manager, INTERPOL, introduced the Joint Period of Action concept using examples of similar initiatives carried out in the European Union and Asia. Although a tried, tested, and successful concept (e.g. through EUROPOL and INTERPOL), a Joint Period of Action would be the first initiative of its kind under the Bali Process. Both presentations emphasised that coordinated, multi-national investigations can have a significant impact on the activities of criminal networks.

10. Julian Tehan, Criminal Intelligence Analyst, INTERPOL Liaison Office in Bangkok (Lobang) presented on some of the tools and services available through Interpol to support the proposed Joint Period of Action. INTERPOL's Police Databases, its Notices and Diffusions, and I-24/7 and MIND/FIND systems were highlighted as possible options.
11. Following these presentations, the Co-Chairs provided an overview of the proposed Joint Day of Action concept. They explained that participating AHG member states would carry out coordinated law enforcement operations against individuals and criminal networks involved in people smuggling and / or trafficking in persons over the same designated time period. In this context, law enforcement authorities in each country would cooperate at an informal level, for example, by meeting in advance to discuss tactics to coordinate their actions so as not to hinder each other's investigations or to discuss the possibilities of sharing evidence. The approach does not imply that law enforcement authorities from different member states work jointly. Rather, they would work within their own jurisdictions.

### **Recommendations and Next Steps**

12. The Co-Chairs invited the AHG member countries to partake in the Joint Period of Action. All countries expressed their support for the initiative with Australia, Indonesia (Coast Guard), Maldives, New Zealand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand committing their participation. Malaysia agreed to participate in principle, but needed to revert back to their capital for confirmation. Afghanistan, Indonesia (Police), Myanmar, and Viet Nam confirmed they would discuss Joint Period of Action further upon return to their respective countries. The USA and Interpol committed to a supporting role.
13. To conclude, the Co-Chairs outlined the tentative next steps of the process:
  - **August / September 2015** –Planning meeting to be held with the participating AHG member states to lay the groundwork for the initiative (e.g. establish a clear operational plan, including goals and objectives, clarify roles and responsibilities, identify levels of assistance required, etc.).
  - **October 2015** – The Joint Period of Action to be carried out over a designated time period. Media coverage at national and regional levels will be encouraged to promote the Joint Period of Action achievements.
  - **November 2015** – A debrief meeting to be held with the AHG member states to discuss what worked, what did not work, what should be done differently, and the next steps under the Working Group, including an expansion of the Joint Period of Action.