

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

Task Force on Planning and Preparedness Bangkok, Thailand, 14-15 February 2019

Co-Chairs' Statement

1. The fourth meeting of the Task Force on Planning and Preparedness (TFPP) of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process) was held in Bangkok on 14-15 February 2019, co-chaired by Australia and Indonesia.
2. The meeting brought together officials representing national security, defence, law enforcement, immigration, coast guard, search and rescue, and other relevant agencies from relevant Bali Process member countries, and experts from international organisations.
 - Member country participants were from Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam.
 - Other participants were from the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO).

Purpose and theme

3. The TFPP brings together operational-level government officials from a range of national agencies that are responsible for managing significant irregular migration, particularly by sea. The TFPP was established in 2017 to support the Bali Process Consultation Mechanism, which can be convened by the Bali Process Co-Chairs to discuss emergency irregular migration situations with relevant Bali Process members.
4. To date, the TFPP has agreed operating modalities, undertaken scenario-based table-top exercises, and reviewed national action plans. The theme of the fourth meeting of the TFPP was on 'information sharing to support regional awareness, response and cooperation'. In their presentations, participants could cover any aspect of irregular maritime migration developments, response and possible cooperation amongst Bali Process members.

Proceedings

5. In their presentations and related discussion, member countries focused on a wide range of issues relevant to irregular maritime migration.
 - There was examination of occurrences, trends, assessments and risks, especially regarding the current irregular maritime movement of displaced persons in the region.
 - There was focus on enforcement operations to prevent people smuggling and trafficking in persons, early warning and detection, and search and rescue.

- There was consideration of developments in policy approaches, legislation, agency roles and coordination, and national plans of action.
- Aspects of maritime domain awareness were canvassed, including the need for enhanced cooperation and mutual trust, and the value of information sharing.
- There was consideration of disembarkation options and downstream response issues, including identification of protection needs, reception and shelter, temporary protection, the return of migrants (where appropriate) and criminal investigations.
- The need to balance enforcement and humanitarian concerns was acknowledged.
- Case studies were reviewed, with an emphasis on information sharing within and between countries, and lessons learnt.
- Good practices were highlighted, especially domestic and bilateral arrangements that were effective in preventing people smuggling and trafficking in persons.

6. The IOM outlined regional irregular maritime migration trends, including that the cases of irregular migration by sea in 2018 were much lower than from 2013 to 2015. The UNHCR focused on response elements – search and rescue, disembarkation to a place of safety, and identification of protection needs. The UNODC outlined regional people smuggling supply side, demand side and spill over effects, and described its Global Maritime Crime Programme presence and support areas.

7. Global context was provided by presenters from the US Coast Guard, Frontex and Interpol. The US Coast Guard described the extensive architecture arrangements within the Caribbean region. Frontex outlined its information sharing arrangements, including with approximately 300 EU relevant agencies. Interpol summarised its secure and effective procedures to share information among its 194-member countries.

8. Further context was provided by the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies project on improving interdiction of migrant vessels at sea by developing a regional information sharing model, and the RSO/UNODC project on enhancing law enforcement information sharing on maritime people smuggling and human trafficking. Possible models for enhancing regional information sharing were considered.

Outcomes

9. Participants:

- Welcomed the opportunity to explore aspects of information sharing to support regional awareness, response and cooperation within a Bali Process context.
- Considered good practices from within and outside the region, relevant to elements of response and information sharing across the irregular maritime migration space.
- Examined possible models, facilitated by the RSO, for enhancing regional information sharing, and building cooperation and mutual trust.
- Recognised there was significant scope to, and benefits from, improving information sharing between countries within the region.
- Revealed strong interest in the information exchange component of the TFPP, which increases awareness about developments in the region's irregular maritime migration space, including with regard to displaced persons.

- Supported continued efforts to improve regional planning and preparedness in relation to irregular maritime migration, with the RSO playing a facilitation role.

10. The meeting supported disseminating information about the meeting with the broader Bali Process membership. It noted that highlights from the meeting would be considered at the next Bali Process Ad Hoc Group Senior Officials' Meeting. It was envisaged that the TFPP would next meet in late 2019 or early 2020.