



# The Bali Process

on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime

## Co-Chairs' Statement

### **Working Group on Trafficking in Persons Ninth Annual Meeting, Regional Event on Victim Protection and Partnerships, and side events 7, 8 and 9 November 2023**

On 7 and 8 November 2023, the Director of International Security and Disarmament of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr Caka Alverdi Awal, and First Assistant Secretary, International Law and Human Rights Division, Australian Attorney-General's Department, Ms Anne Sheehan, co-chaired the Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (Working Group) Ninth Annual Meeting and Regional Event on Victim Protection and Partnerships in Bangkok, Thailand. These events were followed by a Bali Process Taskforce on Planning and Preparedness (TFPP) Policy Expert Gathering on online scams and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) training on following the money in trafficking in persons cases on 9 November 2023, and the TFPP Seventh Annual Meeting on 10 November 2023.

The Working Group events were attended by 15 members (Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and UNODC), seven additional Bali Process members as observers (Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu), a private sector representative (Meta), three civil society representatives (International Justice Mission/IJM, Walk Free and MAST Human), as well as representatives of regional fora (ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime/ASEAN SOMTC and the ASEAN Commission on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Women and Children) and the Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO).

### **Ninth Annual Meeting**

The Ninth Annual Meeting gave members an opportunity to share progress on implementation of the Working Group's *Forward Work Plan 2021-23*. Action item leads (Australia, Indonesia, IOM, Malaysia, UNODC, and Vietnam) updated the Working Group on the completion of, or planning to complete action items, as well as opportunities for member involvement. Observers shared updates on their national responses and suggested areas of future cooperation with the Working Group.

Representatives from the UNODC, IOM, OHCHR and Bali Process RSO delivered an expert briefing on trafficking for forced criminality/exploitation in online scam operations. Co-chairs expressed shared concern at the scale of these profit-driven criminal enterprises in the region, strong links to serious transnational organised crime, and grave harm to both the victims trafficked and forced to scam and the victims of those scams. Expert speakers described porous borders, rule of law, cross-border cooperation and corruption challenges as key



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enabling factors, and highlighted the poly-criminality and unprecedented profitability of these scam operations. Together, the Working Group strengthened its shared understanding of this complex issue, spanning modus operandi, trafficking flows, victim typologies and features of a human rights-based response.

A representative of the Lead Shepherd (Philippines) of the ASEAN SOMTC Working Group on Trafficking in Persons provided an update to support the Working Group in continuing to complement, draw from and coordinate with its efforts, including through implementation of the *ASEAN and People's Republic of China Regional Cooperation Roadmap to address Transnational Organised Crime and Trafficking in Persons Associated with Casinos and Scam Operations in Southeast Asia*. Reflecting on this, members then contributed to a strategic discussion to identify potential further opportunities for Bali Process and ASEAN SOMTC collaboration, including co-delivering activities that address mutual priorities, reciprocal training opportunities, and closer coordination in the development of forward work plans, policy guides and training materials. The Working Group also considered the development of its next Forward Work Plan 2024-2026, discussing priorities and potential action items, together with opportunities to cooperate with, and build on, the work of other Bali Process work streams, including the TFPP, the Working Group on the Disruption of Criminal Networks Involved in People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons (WG-D), the Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration (TEG-RR), and the Government and Business Forum (GABF). Members shared a range of ideas for furthering the Working Group's objective to promote more effective and coordinated responses to combat trafficking in persons in the Asia-Pacific region, aligning with the 2023 Bali Process *Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation*. Some of the inputs for future activities included strengthening cooperation in information sharing and awareness raising campaigns, and enhancing collaboration in handling trafficking in persons cases related to Rohingya movement in the region.

The Annual Meeting closed with Australia and Indonesia sharing examples of recent public information campaigns to raise community awareness of trafficking methodologies, risks and indicators, and pathways to support and protection, and an update from the Bali Process RSO on recent activities and upcoming member engagement opportunities.

## **Regional Event**

The Regional Event supported the Working Group's ongoing consideration of priority issues in its Forward Work Plan 2021-2023, bringing together a range of expert speakers across four focus topics:

1. Victim-centred approaches to detection, investigation and prosecution
2. Protecting and empowering victims of exploitation in supply chains
3. Embracing technology to prevent trafficking and enhance victim protection
4. Sustainable returns and reintegration

TFPP and WG-D co-chairs shared insights on identifying and protecting victims of trafficking in persons in mixed migration settings, drawing on the 2022 joint TFPP-DWP Tabletop



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Exercise. This was followed by a panel comprising representatives from the ASEAN Commission on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Women and Children, the ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking program and the Bali Process RSO, which explored the *ASEAN Do No Harm Guide for Frontline Responders*, application of the non-punishment principle, victim-sensitive court indicators and capacity building opportunities.

The IOM, together with the Walk Free Foundation spoke to victim-centred approaches to addressing exploitation in supply chains and improving transparency, including access to grievance mechanisms and remedies, available guidance for business, as well as recent GABF initiatives, awareness raising and engagement with survivor leaders, and global developments in implementing human rights due diligence.

The Regional Event fostered Working Group understanding of the power of partnership in supporting detection, disruption and investigation of trafficking in persons taking place online, bringing together representatives from Meta, IJM, and the Australian Federal Police to share examples of cross-sector collaboration. Members and observers also heard from MAST Human, a Thailand-based civil society organisation, which presented on its MAST Human Intelligence App and partnership with the Thai Department of Special Investigations to detect trafficking in persons and related exploitation in the fisheries sector. The Bali Process RSO shared its Screening and Referral Toolkit (developed jointly with UNHCR) as another example of how technology can enhance victim protection.

The Regional Event closed with a presentation from the IJM on challenges and good practice initiatives in the sustainable return and reintegration of victims of trafficking in persons, recognising that changing victim typologies can re-define protection and support needs. A representative of the Australian TEG-RR Co-Chair also updated the Working Group on TEG-RR's upcoming activities in early 2024.

ILO attended both events as a Working Group member after Co-Chairs formalised its membership in 2023.

Co-Chairs thank Working Group members, speakers and observers for their contributions to the Ninth Annual Meeting, Regional Event and side events.