



The Bali Process

on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime

18TH AD HOC GROUP SENIOR OFFICIALS' MEETING

CO-CHAIRS STATEMENT

21 MAY 2025 – BANGKOK, THAILAND

The 18th Ad Hoc Group Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process), was co-chaired by Indonesia and Australia in Bangkok, Thailand on 21 May 2025.

Members reflected on their continued commitment to implement the 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation and on progress made since the 8th Bali Process Ministerial Conference in Adelaide, 10 February 2023.

Global and regional developments

- The meeting commenced with the Co-Chairs conveying their deepest condolences to the families of those lost in the earthquake that affected Myanmar and Thailand in March 2025.
- Members of the Ad Hoc Group SOM acknowledged that tackling the issues of people smuggling and trafficking in persons required cooperation between all Members towards regional and global solutions.
- Members reasserted the Bali Process as the preeminent regional forum to address irregular migration in the region.
- Members remained concerned by irregular maritime movement in the region and acknowledged that humanitarian challenges, including intensified conflict and natural disasters, are impacting irregular migration. There is a need to continue to address underlying humanitarian situations and raise awareness about the risk of people smuggling and trafficking in persons.
- Members noted the growing and evolving threat posed to regional security by trafficking into cyber-scam centres for forced criminality. Scam operations have expanded beyond Southeast Asia and are affecting regions including the Middle East, the Pacific, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. They are also increasingly taking advantage of emerging and sophisticated technology, including social media and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to reach large audiences and more victims. Regional cooperation is essential to disrupt the sophisticated capabilities of cyber-scam centres and to ensure the protection of trafficking in persons victims. Members emphasised the importance of cross-regional cooperation given the global scope of trafficking operations linked to online scam centres.
- Members noted the close interlinkages between people smuggling, trafficking in persons, and other forms of transnational organised crime, including cybercrime, misuse of technology, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and money laundering. Members agreed to the implementation of meaningful, robust and measurable solutions, with a particular focus on safe migration, awareness raising and trafficking in persons in the context of online scams.



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- Members highlighted the importance of a cooperative approach to address people smuggling and trafficking in persons by endorsing deeper collaboration with regional groupings, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- Members acknowledged the need for the Bali Process to continue to adapt and strengthen cooperation with a wide range of partners in its efforts to address people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime, including by reviewing the Bali Process membership to ensure that it is responsive to changing circumstances.
- Members highlighted the important role and active support provided by the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process (RSO) to advance Members' efforts in advancing progress against the Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation.
- Members noted the need for principles to guide engagement with people with lived experience in the work of the RSO and the Bali Process, including frontline officials and victims of cyber-scam operations, as appropriate, in alignment with the 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation and in acknowledgement of the value of incorporating lived experience perspectives to inform effective responses.

19th Steering Group Meeting

- Co-Chairs reported to the Ad Hoc SOM on the 19th Bali Process Steering Group Senior Officials' Meeting on 20 May 2025. Co-Chairs noted the progress made since the 18th Steering Group meeting.
- Members discussed how to deepen Bali Process engagement with other regions and regional mechanisms, and practical initiatives to address current and emerging issues on people smuggling, trafficking in persons, and related transnational crimes, including cyber-crime, misuse of technology and money laundering. Members also discussed options for inclusion of victim/survivor and related frontline officers' voices into Bali Process work, as appropriate.

Working Group Updates

Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (WG-TIP)

WG-TIP hosted a 10th Anniversary Commemorative Dialogue, its 10th Annual Meeting, and a Regional Event on *Trafficking into Online Scam Centres: Enhancing community awareness through partnership*, in Bangkok in November 2024. At the Annual Meeting, members officially endorsed the WG-TIP's 2024–26 Forward Work Plan, setting out priorities and activities in line with the 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation.

Since then, key activities have included a collaborative workshop with the RSO on AI and trafficking in persons, research on forced marriage and trafficking in persons, and strengthened partnerships with ASEAN bodies and other Bali Process working groups, all aimed at improving stakeholder engagement, victim protection, and regional coordination.



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WG-TIP Co-Chairs recommended that Steering Group Senior Officials continue to consider options for expanding Working Group membership to reflect current trafficking trends, and noted the benefit of sustained dialogue on complex issues like AI. Co-Chairs also reported on their interface engagement with ASEAN SOMTC TIPWG and ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).

Looking ahead, the WG-TIP will continue to implement its 2024–26 Forward Work Plan, contribute to the Joint Tabletop Exercise in mid-2025, and support members’ ongoing consideration of opportunities to use AI in enhancing counter-trafficking efforts – including through sharing information, trends and good practice at the WG-TIP’s 2025 annual events.

Working Group on the Disruption of People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Networks (D-WG)

D-WG concluded the 6th Joint Period of Action in July 2024 with a multi-lateral meeting themed ‘Review, Reflect, Reset’. Attendees highlighted the need for continued public awareness raising about the risks and realities of irregular migration.

The D-WG held its annual meeting from 16-18 July 2024 in Hanoi, Vietnam. Discussions noted the importance of building effective partnerships across policymakers, law enforcement and the private sector, including social media companies, and reflected upon challenges such as overcoming organisational, jurisdictional, and operational differences.

The D-WG noted success of a series of secondments hosted by the RSO from Sri Lanka’s Department of Immigration and Emigration. The secondments were funded by the Government of New Zealand, and established building on the success of cross-border cooperation between the governments of Sri Lanka and Thailand as part of the 6th Joint Period of Action. The secondments further fostered information sharing between Sri Lankan officials, Thai Immigration and Airline Liaison Officers based in the region, related to aviation people smuggling and trafficking in persons. This has proved a successful model for engagement, and Members are welcomed to express and progress interest in the RSO secondment programme directly with the RSO.

The D-WG will host a Bali Process Joint Tabletop Exercise in June with the theme “cross-border trafficking networks”. The exercise will build upon their commitment to invest in the capacity of frontline officials, hold in-person sessions to hear varied experiences, and forge strong partnerships among policymakers, law enforcement, and the private sector.

Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration (TEG-RR)

TEG-RR hosted its 7th Annual Meeting in Phnom Penh in Cambodia, December 2024. Participants discussed the importance of de-conflicting and streamlining lines of effort. The three forward priority areas remain information sharing and the need to establish clear mechanisms for communication, fostering cooperation and capacity building to leverage limited resources, and to support successful returns and reintegration. Co-Chairs plan for the 8th Annual Meeting to be held in Q4 2025.



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Taskforce on Planning and Preparedness (TFPP)

The TFPP hosted its 8th Annual Meeting in November 2024 in Bangkok, focused on leveraging emerging technologies to enhance regional responses to irregular migration. Key discussions focused on the use of predictive analytics and AI by international and civil society organisations to prepare for future displacement events.

Joint activities with the WG-TIP addressed trafficking into cyber-scam centres, emphasising community awareness and private sector collaboration. The meetings highlighted the growing complexity of migration and reinforced the need for proactive planning, cross-sector coordination, and strengthened border management.

Bali Process Government and Business Forum (GABF)

GABF Representatives reported that the Sri Lanka Summit, convened by GABF Business Leader Mr Chevaan Daniel in Colombo from 13–14 June 2024, brought together public and private sector leaders to address trafficking in persons and exploitation in the Indo-Pacific region. The event focused on implementing the “Acknowledge. Act. Advance.” Recommendations to improve supply chain transparency, ethical recruitment, and worker protections. The Summit emphasised the critical role of businesses and governments in safeguarding migrant rights and integrating human rights advocacy into corporate practices. It culminated in the launch of the Colombo Commitment, led by Dr. Andrew Forrest and Mr. Garibaldi Thohir, which pledged to combat forced labour, modern slavery, and unethical recruitment while advocating for stronger legal protections and responsible business conduct.

The event reinforced the need for sustained collaboration and accountability to drive ethical and sustainable practices across global supply chains. Moving forward, the Indonesia and Australia Business Co-Chairs plan to convene an awareness-raising event on the dangers of online job scams and, respectively, and a roundtable to discuss forced labour in supply chains.

The GABF and the RSO continue to advance the establishment of dedicated GABF-focused RSO personnel within the RSO offices in Bangkok to strengthen resourcing in support of strengthened collaboration between the private sector and Bali Process Member States.

Update from the Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO)

The RSO, as the practical and technical arm of the Bali Process, focused on strengthening regional responses to international migration challenges, including people smuggling, trafficking in persons, and related transnational crimes. The RSO presented an update against its 2024-2026 Strategic Plan and Work Plan, which comprises seven programme initiatives aligned with the 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation.

The RSO provided a thematic update on trafficking into cyber-scam centres, with a focus on supporting Members to develop a plan of action regarding response to and adoption of artificial intelligence.



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Notable activities highlighted included an Interregional Technical Workshop held in Chiang Saen, Thailand (27–30 May 2025), supporting capacity in online investigations and open-source intelligence (OSINT) to address trafficking into cyber-scam centres.

A Regional Meeting on Countering People Smuggling to be held jointly with the Government of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (27-28 May 2025), would further foster collaboration among government officials, international organizations, and regional partners, on the priority issue of irregular maritime movements in the Andaman Sea.

These events reflect the RSO's strategic emphasis on capacity-building, cross-border dialogue and cooperation, and support for forward planning and responsiveness to emerging issues.

Progress to implement the Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation

- The Ad Hoc Group SOM recognised progress towards realising the 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation. To monitor its implementation, the Co-Chairs committed to develop a scorecard to track progress to be completed by the Working Groups Co-Chairs, the RSO, and the GABF, as applicable.
- The Bali Process WG-TIP and TEG-RR have adopted new Forward Work Plans closely aligned with the Strategy.
- Working Groups have increased their collaboration with civil society, private sector organisations and regional bodies, including during their annual meetings. WG-TIP and TFPP joint event 'Enhancing community awareness through partnership' brought together government, civil society and the private sector to discuss public information campaigns and cross sectoral issues.
- The RSO continues to provide support to build member capacity across the Bali Process mandate, with Co-Chairs noting efforts in the areas of law enforcement, border management and stakeholder engagement.

Participation

Co-Chairs thanked all participants for their input, insight and recommendations at the 18th AHG SOM. Representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam, IOM, UNHCR, and UNODC attended the meeting. Co-Managers of the RSO attended the Steering Group and Ad Hoc Group to provide updates on activities and progress. An update on GABF activities was provided by representatives from AlamTri (previously known as Adaro) and Walk Free, representing GABF Business Co-Chairs to the Ad Hoc Group.

Members expressed appreciation to Thailand for hosting the Steering Group and AHG SOM, and to IOM for technical and logistical assistance.