



The Bali Process

on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime

Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons 11th Annual Meeting, and Joint Regional Event: *Innovation and collaboration in breaking the trafficking cycle*

Co-Chair Statement

December 2025

From 1 to 5 December 2025, the Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (WG-TIP) and the Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration (TEG-RR) held a joint week of events in Manila, the Philippines. Events included the WG-TIP 11th Annual Meeting, a Joint Regional Event: *Innovation and collaboration in breaking the trafficking cycle*, site visits highlighting the Philippine response to trafficking in persons, and the TEG-RR 8th Annual Meeting. Co-chaired by Australia, Indonesia and the Philippines, the events were attended by:

- 17 WG-TIP and TEG-RR members (Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, the USA, the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).
- 12 additional Bali Process members as observers (Cambodia, China, Fiji, Iraq, Japan, Lao PDR, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu) and 3 Bali Process observers (the United Kingdom, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees).
- 6 civil society and non-government organisations (the Australian National University, the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), International Justice Mission (IJM), the Migrant Forum in Asia, the Mixed Migration Centre, the Pacific Immigration Development Community and the Samoa Returnees Charitable Trust).

Additional attendees included the Australia-ASEAN Counter Trafficking (ASEAN-ACT) program, other Bali Process workstreams (Taskforce on Planning and Preparedness, Disruption Working Group, and the Government and Business Forum) and the Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO).

Eleventh Annual Meeting – 1 December 2025

Consistent with the WG-TIP's purpose to promote effective and coordinated law and justice responses to combat trafficking in persons in the Asia-Pacific region, the Annual Meeting facilitated the identification of opportunities for international cooperation, capacity building and information sharing. The agenda delivered action items under the Working Group's



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Forward Work Plan 2024-26, in line with the broader Bali Process 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation.

WG-TIP Co-Chairs, Mr Caka Alverdi Awal, Director for International Peace and Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and Ms Kathryn Haigh, First Assistant Secretary, International Cooperation and Human Rights Division, Australian Attorney-General's Department, acknowledged the region's substantial progress in responding to trafficking in persons and the growing complexity of victim identification. Co-Chairs reinforced the critical importance of the Bali Process as the global landscape changes and presents new challenges for law enforcement and victim support.

Members and observers shared updates on their national responses and priorities. Common themes and shared challenges included trafficking in persons for forced criminality in online scam centres and the linkages between trafficking in persons and other forms of transnational crime. Many emphasised the importance of strengthening cooperation and collaboration, including between law enforcement agencies.

Responding to shared member concerns about the continued growth of online scam centres, Co-Chairs invited UNODC to present its recent report *Inflection point: Global implications of scam centres, underground banking and illicit online marketplaces in Southeast Asia*, and the Philippines to share a case study on their work to ban Philippine offshore gaming operators (POGOs). Following these presentations delegates engaged in small group discussions, considering options to enhance the regional response to trafficking into online scam centres through intelligence sharing, strategic awareness and technical capabilities.

In addition to a strong focus on online scam centres, the annual meeting supported consideration of other forms of trafficking in persons. This included the linkages between forced marriage and trafficking in persons, highlighting research commissioned by Australia and undertaken by GI-TOC, alongside the ASEAN Guidelines for addressing child and forced marriage within the context of trafficking in persons, developed with support from ASEAN-ACT. Fiji presented on their ongoing work to combat exploitation in the fishing industry, with interventions from other Pacific Island delegates.

The Annual Meeting closed with small group discussions to identify priority areas for capacity building, and how the WG-TIP and RSO might address these needs through tailored tools and support.

Joint Regional Event – 2 December 2025

Following the theme *Innovation and collaboration in breaking the trafficking cycle*, sessions considered various points of intervention in the trafficking cycle, including promoting safe and decent migration, law enforcement cooperation, leveraging technology to improve access to services, and cross-sector cooperation on returns and sustainable reintegration. The challenge of responding to online scam centres, and the need for a collaborative approach across the region, was a recurring sentiment throughout the day.



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Key sessions included:

- An IOM-led panel discussion on the drivers of irregular migration and the **importance of safe and decent migration pathways** as a key prevention mechanism for trafficking in persons.
- Small group discussions to map **pre-departure counselling and information needs**.
- A panel discussion on opportunities to strengthen **law enforcement cooperation** facilitated by New Zealand with speakers from Cambodia, Malaysia, the Maldives and Palau.
- Presentations from the RSO and ASEAN-ACT on **improving victim identification practices** and the **application of the non-punishment principle** in relation to trafficking for forced criminality in online scam centres.
- A panel discussion on strengthening pathways to **remedy for migrant workers**.
- An IJM-led panel discussion on cross-sector cooperation in the return of trafficked people, which included **insights from victim-survivors** who participated as panellists.
- Presentations from ASEAN-ACT and the Philippines on the role of sustainable reintegration in reducing the risks of re-trafficking.

The day concluded with a session on the value of embedding experience from victims and frontline officials in policy and program design, with presentations from Indonesia, the RSO and Australia.

Site visits – 3 December 2025

Delegates participated in a full-day program of events designed by the Philippine Department of Migrant Workers to highlight the Philippine whole of government response to trafficking in persons, including maritime and airport operations, disruption of online scam centres and victim-centred approaches.

Conclusion

Co-Chairs thank WG-TIP members, observers, and presenters for their contributions to the 11th Annual Meeting and Joint Regional Event. Co-Chairs extend their thanks to the Co-Chairs of the TEG-RR for their collaboration through the joint week of events, and to the Government of the Philippines for their hospitality and support through hosting the week of events in Manila.