

THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE BALI PROCESS TECHNICAL EXPERTS GROUP ON RETURNS AND REINTEGRATION

Manila, Philippines – 2-5 December 2025

Co-chairs Statement

Preamble

1. The Bali Process Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration (TEG-RR) held its Eighth Meeting and a Regional Event on *Innovation and Collaboration in Breaking the Trafficking Cycle* at the Sheraton Manila Bay in Manila, Philippines, from 2–5 December 2025.
2. The Eighth TEG-RR Meeting was co-chaired by Director Returns and Removals Policy Melissa McKenzie from the Australian Department of Home Affairs and Assistant Secretary for Reintegration Services Francis Ron De Guzman from the Philippine Department of Migrant Workers.
3. The Regional Event was co-chaired by the Governments of Australia, the Republic of the Philippines, and the Republic of Indonesia, and was jointly hosted with the Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (WG-TIP).
4. The Co-chairs and participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of the Philippines for its hospitality and support in hosting the Eighth TEG-RR Meeting and Regional Event, as well as for its efforts in facilitating a series of site visits that highlighted the Philippines' response to trafficking in persons and to return and reintegration.
5. The Eighth TEG-RR Meeting was attended by technical experts from Bali Process member states and organisations with support from officers of respective foreign ministries and relevant government agencies, including:

Sixteen TEG-RR Ad Hoc Group members:

- o Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, USA, International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHCR).

Sixteen Bali Process member and observer states and organisations:

- o Cambodia, China, Fiji, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Intergovernmental Consultation on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC), Iraq, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, United Kingdom and Vanuatu.

Eight other organisations as observers:

- o The Australian National University (ANU), International Justice Mission (IJM), Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), Migrant Forum in Asia, Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), and representatives from ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking (ASEAN-ACT), Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC) and the Samoa Returnees Charitable Trust (SRCT).

All Bali Process workstreams:

- o Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (WG -TIP), Task Force on Planning and Preparedness (TFPP), Disruption Working Group (DWG), Government and Business Forum (GABF), the Regional Support Office (RSO) for the Bali Process.

6. The Eighth TEG-RR meeting highlighted several critical outcomes:

Recognition of Emerging Drivers

- Members and observers acknowledged the influence of scam centres and labour exploitation as key drivers of trafficking and irregular migration, noting that victims now originate from a growing range of countries.

Commitment to Safe and Dignified Returns

- Participants agreed that return processes must begin before departure and extend over the long term. Trust-building was identified as essential to ensuring returnees' meaningful engagement in return programs.

Advancing Sustainable Reintegration

- Delegates affirmed that sustainable reintegration is context-specific and culturally informed, recognizing that uniform approaches are ineffective.

Addressing Persistent Challenges

- The dialogue underscored persistent gaps in data collection and coordination, including inconsistent definitions and limited cross-border cooperation, which continue to hinder effective regional responses.
- Members reaffirmed their commitment to and support for the TEG-RR as a platform for candid discussions and regional knowledge-sharing in support of the objectives of the Bali Process.

On the Joint Regional Event

- The two-day Joint Regional Event enhanced regional understanding to combat trafficking in persons, with a focus on trafficking for forced criminality. The event was delivered under the theme of *Innovation and collaboration in breaking the trafficking cycle*.

Day One

- Participants gained practical knowledge of emerging trends and best practices through peer learning and technical exchange, examining key challenges and shared best practices. Survivors of trafficking shared their personal experiences, highlighting the importance of cross-sector and international cooperation in ensuring safe return and sustainable reintegration into communities.

Day Two

- Participants undertook a study tour of the Department of Migrant Workers, showcasing the Philippines' comprehensive, whole-of-cycle approach to migrant worker support. This was followed by visits to operational sites, where participants engaged directly with frontline professionals on maritime and airport interventions, disruption of online scams, and gender- and victim-centred strategies.

The tours provided privileged, behind-the-scenes access to programs aimed at preventing trafficking for forced criminality. A forum on responses to gender-based violence fostered reflection on the intersections of health, psychosocial care, and justice in supporting survivors of trafficking, with particular focus on women and children. Importantly, the visits enabled participants to identify actionable measures and models for adaptation.

On the TEG-RR Forward Work Plan (FWP)

7. The Co-Chairs noted the progress made against the forum's five-year Forward Work Plan, particularly Activity 2: Returns and Reintegration Register and Activity 8: Identifying Best Practices and Robust Policies.
 - **Activity 2:** Volume I of the Returns and Reintegration Register is complete, and Volume II will be compiled from member interventions at the Eighth Meeting.
 - **Activity 8:** The RSO and contracted technical lead, Rebecca Surtees, shared the project plan for the Bali Process Returns and Reintegration Policy Guide Refresh.

On the Ninth TEG-RR Meeting

8. The Co-Chairs noted that the Ninth Meeting of the TEG-RR is scheduled for 2026 and encouraged Ad Hoc members to consider the feasibility of hosting the Meeting.
9. At the conclusion of the Meeting, the Philippine Co-Chair expressed his hope that all delegates felt welcomed and at home in Manila.


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