

NINTH MEETING OF THE TASKFORCE ON PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS

CO-CHAIRS' STATEMENT

20 OCTOBER 2026, COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

The Ninth Meeting of the Bali Process Taskforce on Planning and Preparedness (TFPP) was convened by TFPP Co-Chairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Director for International Peace and Security, Riando Sembiring, of Indonesia, and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Director Counter People Smuggling Section, Susan Jones, of Australia, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 20 October 2026. The meeting was held alongside the Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (WG-TIP) and formed part of a three-day joint program that also included site visits and expert presentations.

2. Bali Process Ad Hoc Group (and TFPP) member representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) participated in the meeting. Representatives from Cambodia, China, Fiji, Kiribati, Laos, Naoero, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu attended as observers. The Bali Process Regional Support Office also participated.

3. The meeting marked ten years since the establishment of the TFPP, which was endorsed at the Bali Process Ad Hoc Group Senior Officials' Meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 2016 to strengthen regional planning and preparedness for large-scale migration and displacement situations. Participants reflected on a decade of practical cooperation under the TFPP, including information sharing, preparedness activities, contingency planning, tabletop exercises and capacity-building initiatives that have strengthened regional readiness and cooperation.

4. The meeting noted with concern the significant and ongoing displacement, irregular migration and protection challenges globally and the increasingly complex operating environment facing the region. Conflict, humanitarian crises and economic pressures continued to contribute to displacement and irregular migration. The meeting expressed deep concern regarding the continued loss of life at sea and ongoing irregular maritime movements of Rohingya refugees in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal, driven by the political and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. The meeting underscored the importance of regional cooperation, preparedness, search and rescue coordination, information sharing and protection-sensitive responses to address these challenges and prevent further tragedies. The meeting highlighted the growing sophistication of transnational criminal networks and the increasing convergence of people smuggling, trafficking in persons, forced labour, cyber-enabled crime and trafficking for forced criminality.

5. Ad Hoc Group members delivered updates on national developments, migration trends, preparedness arrangements, operational challenges and pressing regional developments. The meeting welcomed the opportunity to exchange experiences and lessons learned, recognising the value of dialogue in strengthening situational awareness, identifying emerging challenges and sharing good practice across the region.

6. Delegates participated in a practical tabletop exercise examining regional information sharing and coordination during a large-scale irregular maritime migration event. Through facilitated discussions and syndicate activities, participants explored approaches to strengthen situational awareness, operational coordination, communication arrangements and cooperation between relevant national authorities across the region. The meeting noted the importance of contingency planning, coordination mechanisms, referral pathways and trusted relationships in supporting national and regional responses during rapidly evolving migration and displacement situations.

7. The exercise highlighted the importance of whole-of-government and whole-of-region approaches to addressing mixed migration challenges. The meeting recognised that migration movements may involve mixed cohorts of persons, including refugees, asylum seekers, smuggled migrants and victims of trafficking, requiring coordinated responses that incorporate border management, protection, law enforcement and humanitarian considerations. The meeting noted the importance of gender-sensitive, child-sensitive and victim-centred approaches when responding to people in vulnerable situations.

8. Looking ahead, the meeting noted that 2027 would be the 25th anniversary of the Bali Process and looked forward to contributing to the commemoration. Members reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the TFPP remains a relevant, agile and operationally focused forum that strengthens preparedness and supports coordinated regional responses to migration challenges. Co-Chairs welcomed members' ongoing engagement on future TFPP priorities.

9. Participants welcomed the opportunity to engage across the TFPP, WG-TIP and joint program, highlighting the value of deepening collaboration across the Bali Process architecture in responding to increasingly interconnected mixed migration and trafficking-related challenges.

10. Co-Chairs expressed their appreciation to the Government of Sri Lanka for hosting the meetings in Colombo.