OUTCOME STATEMENT:
THIRD RSO CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

25-26 FEBRUARY 2025

REGIONAL SUPPORT OFFICE
THE BALI PROCESS

FOREWORD

The safe and orderly movement of people across borders is a priority issue for all governments to manage. Latest estimates indicate that the Asia-Pacific region hosts some <u>24 million international migrant workers</u>[1], and with the numbers of people moving in search of opportunity and a better life continuing to rise, so too do the risks faced by those crossing borders.

Transnational crime networks operate seamlessly across borders, facilitating people smuggling, trafficking in persons and broader serious crime. Cross-border cooperation, information sharing, and mutual learning between governments, law enforcement and border agencies, international organisations, and the private sector are central to support agile responses to challenges around irregular migration and transnational crime.

The Third RSO Constructive Dialogue, convened by the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons, and Related Transnational Crime (RSO), brought together 90 senior representatives from 34 Member and Observer States and Organisations, Bali Process Working Groups, the Bali Process Government and Business Forum, and partner organisations to share current priorities and challenges in addressing migration-related issues, and to spotlight promising practices, experiences and solutions that might benefit others in the region.

[1] International Labour Organization. (2021). Profits and poverty: The economics of forced labour. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/%40publ/documents/publication/wcms_808935.pdf

A ROUTES-BASED LENS

Discussions at the Third RSO Constructive Dialogue were structured around **a routes-based lens, focusing on three key stages of an international migration journey: pre-travel, at-border, and post-arrival**. Bali Process Member Organisations, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) facilitated sessions and provided a situational overview, alongside the RSO. The International Labour Organization (ILO) provided a keynote address.

This framing sought to support consideration of opportunities—for governments to proactively intervene and influence migration-related decisions, to provide support to vulnerable individuals, and to identify where responses could be best strengthened to counter the activities of transnational organised crime groups seeking to take advantage of border systems and individuals.

Invited updates at the Constructive Dialogue focused on Member State led promising practices that highlighted progress made in line with the Bali Process 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation, and solutions that may help other governments seeking to take steps in addressing enduring priorities and challenges for migration-related issues.

A series of workshops, co-led by the RSO and Bali Process Working Groups, together with expert contributors from the Mixed Migration Centre and Humanity Research Consultancy, highlighted efforts being led across respective RSO and Bali Process Working Group work plans, and supported in-depth exploration of RSO research and resources.

Sessions explored how generative artificial intelligence (AI) can support efforts to counter trafficking in persons, opportunities to enhance practical and timely information exchange at an operational level, understanding of community perceptions of irregular migration to enhance effectiveness of information campaigns, and addressing complexities in victim identification in the context of trafficking into forced criminality in cyber-scam centres—where the lines between victim and perpetrator can become blurred.

Delegates also discussed the <u>UNODC Observatory on Migrant Smuggling in Southeast Asia</u>, whose research was undertaken by the Mixed Migration Centre to assess the characteristics, drivers, and impacts of migrant smuggling.

Discussions covered three major trends observed—high costs and bureaucratic complexities associated with regular channels for labour migration which can push migrants towards irregular channels; forced displacement and statelessness of large populations, particularly from Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Somalia, and the role of corruption in facilitating transnational organised crime, which also contributes to the impunity of smugglers.

Frontline perspectives on operational challenges and opportunities for stronger cross-border cooperation identified at the <u>Third RSO Border Forum</u>, the RSO's flagship capacity building event for Bali Process Members, were presented back to Senior Officials at the Constructive Dialogue through a series of focused small group sessions. This aimed to support identification of pathways to address challenges brought forward by frontline officials.

Challenges discussed were themed around strengthening information and intelligence sharing mechanisms, risks and rewards around border technology and automation, technology-enabled smuggling and trafficking and understanding motivations and influences that may lead to people smuggling or trafficking in persons.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE
THIRD CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

1
Enhancing early interventions and prevention measures to promote safe and orderly migration

The first steps in deciding to embark on a migration journey are amongst the most critical. Support for prospective migrants to inform their decision-making through awareness campaigns and enhanced digital literacy, enhancing access to legal identity and expanding legal pathways for migration, and strengthening pre-departure screenings can play an important role.

2
Enhancing law enforcement, border and immigration capabilities and strengthening cross-border information sharing

Criminal networks rapidly adapt; law enforcement must leverage technology and collaborate with the private sector to disrupt trafficking in persons and people smuggling. Coordinated, real-time data-sharing mechanisms between agencies and across borders are needed to counter the activity of criminal networks, and to support victim identification and protection.

3
Eliminating duplication by aligning national, regional, and multi-agency efforts

Coordinated interventions support more efficient and effective resource use, through a unified approach to transnational crime. Advancing regional standards—for example in migrant registration, victim indicators and practical identification tools—can support joined-up efforts across borders.

4
Closing protection gaps by grounding policies in the experiences of victims and migrants who may be in vulnerable situations

Victim-centered approaches must inform institutional responses to provide meaningful support and prevent re-exploitation. Supporting collection of evidence from victims remains crucial to build understanding of organised criminal network operations, and support disruption and prosecution of criminal actors.

ENHANCING EARLY INTERVENTIONS AND PREVENTION MEASURES TO PROMOTE SAFE AND ORDERLY MIGRATION

The first steps in deciding to embark on a migration journey are amongst the most critical, shaping the trajectory of an individual's experience.

In the Bali Process region, armed conflict, economic hardships exacerbated by the economic downturn resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as natural and humanitarian disasters will continue to act as drivers for people's movement.

Labour migration—which has long served as a multigenerational poverty reduction strategy—continues to be perhaps the most important driver for people's movement in the region. The ILO's latest estimates indicate that the Asia-Pacific region employs around 24 million international migrant workers, with Southeast Asia and the Pacific seeing the highest proportion of women migrants in manufacturing, agriculture, hospitality, and construction.

For those fleeing human disasters, a lack of legal documentation may prevent individuals from accessing safe travel routes, forcing them to travel irregularly by land or sea to seek asylum.

Early intervention at a local level was emphasised as essential to countering misinformation and protecting migrants in vulnerable situations. Public awareness campaigns and digital literacy efforts are important measures to support informed decision making ahead of travel and reduce vulnerabilities to trafficking.

Enhancing access to legal identity has been shown to support use of regular, safe routes for migration, rather than irregular pathways that expose migrants to exploitation.

The expansion of access to legal migration pathways also plays an important role in supporting safe and sustainable migration, that benefits the host country and reduce the risks taken by migrants.

Effective pre-departure screenings at border crossings provides a final opportunity for border authorities to intervene ahead of travel. Corruption is an important challenge to address here.

SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBER AND OBSERVER STATES AND ORGANISATIONS PROMISING PRACTICES AND SOLUTIONS

AUSTRALIA highlighted efforts to expand complementary pathways for migration, including labour mobility and education opportunities for refugees and displaced persons. As Chair of the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility, Australia is committed to scaling up labour migration programmes, such as its Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot. It is developing a train-to-hire model in the Asia Pacific equipping displaced persons with skills to access employment and migration pathways.

BANGLADESH has long been a global labour market contributor, with over 7 million migrant workers in 168 countries. In 2024, remittances totalled USD 27 billion, accounting for 6% of GDP and 35% of the national budget. The EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership, launched in July 2024 in collaboration with the ILO, Bangladesh's Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, and the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, aims to train and place 3,000 skilled Bangladeshi workers in European labour markets, and promote regular labour migration pathways.

CAMBODIA has adopted a new law on civil registration, vital statistics, and identification, which guarantees legal identity for all.

PAKISTAN in collaboration with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), has carried out awareness campaigns and capacity-building initiatives to curb irregular migration. This includes a video series highlighting real-life accounts of irregular migration which reached 6.9 million online engagements, safe migration messages displayed at 9,000 sites across major cities, a targeted SMS campaign educating 200,000 potential migrants, and specialised training programmes for law enforcement agencies to counter online misinformation.

SRI LANKA's 'Safe Migration Promotion Unit' was established at Bandaranaike International Airport as a three-month pilot project, initiated by parliament under a migration framework and led by the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force. The SMPU aims to promote safe migration, prevent trafficking in persons, and curb the misuse of visit visas for employment. Over three months, 2,739 passengers were referred to the Safe Migration Promotion Unit with 227 voluntarily returning home after realising migration risks.

THAILAND has made global pledges to resolve statelessness such as through the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. In 2024, Thailand approved an accelerated pathway to citizenship for around 480,000 stateless people. At the national level, all stateless persons in Thailand have been registered in the civil system and issued identity cards, granting access to basic services. Birth registration is available to all children born in Thailand, regardless of their parents' nationality.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

CONTEXT	ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS
• Frontline officers attending the Third RSO Border Forum highlighted that **victims of trafficking often don't trust government awareness campaigns**, and many still take risks despite knowing the dangers. • Delegates noted that **people smugglers are able to leverage fear of authorities to gain trust,** developing alternative narratives that seek to reassure, provide pressure, and even offer adventure. • The <u>Mixed Migration Centre highlighted results from its research</u> showing that most migrants are introduced to smugglers through personal networks, particularly family and friends.	• Awareness initiatives should be localised to target migrant-sending communities, and tailored for online platforms. Partnering with **influential figureheads—both within communities and online** can enhance messaging reach. **Pakistan** and **Sri Lanka** have provided strong case studies for the region through their efforts. • Enhanced engagement with the **private sector,** including leveraging **social networks and digital platforms**, is essential to support reach and impact of awareness campaigns, and to effectively counter misinformation. • The RSO will work with **Bali Process Member States** to build on recommendations made in its new report on *Community Perceptions and Information Needs of Persons at Risk of Irregular Migration*.
• The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) emphasised the need to **support those at risk from human and natural disasters** and the need to accelerate disaster risk reduction, early action, and preparedness. • UNHCR noted that **migrants must have access to protection** in both transit and destination countries.	• The **Bali Process Taskforce on Planning and Preparedness (TFPP)** supports Members in enhancing regional preparedness for irregular migration events. The latest Policy Expert Gathering of the TFPP explored how emerging technologies can inform planning and preparedness for **large-scale movements** within the region. Continued efforts in this space to convene Members for strategic regional planning can be facilitated through the Bali Process and the RSO.
• The ILO highlighted the <u>Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM)</u>, which emphasises the need for well-governed migration pathways to manage demographic shifts, labour market needs and climate displacement.	• Regional donors, origin, transit and host countries can build on examples such as the **<u>EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership</u>** and **<u>Australia's Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot</u>**, to work collaboratively in expanding complementary pathways for migration. • This may include **labour mobility and education opportunities** for refugees and displaced persons. • Raising awareness of **alternative pathways, including local opportunities**, is critical. • **Viet Nam** is carrying out work to address root causes of migration, including economic hardship. This work may provide learning for others.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

CONTEXT	ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS
• **Enhancing access to legal identity** has been shown to support use of regular, safe routes for migration, rather than irregular pathways that expose migrants to exploitation.	• **Thailand's accelerated pathway to citizenship** for around 480,000 stateless people provides a strong case study for the region. Insights from the implementation of **Cambodia's new law** on civil registration, vital statistics, and identification can also support progress in the region. **ASEAN Members** have potential to show global leadership on this policy.
• Frontline officers attending the Third RSO Border Forum highlighted that **smuggling networks are constantly adapting their approach**, testing new routes, and exploiting weaknesses in migration policies. • Visa-free policies introduced to encourage tourism are, for example, **providing new routes for smugglers and traffickers to exploit**. • In contrast, government agencies often have **limited manpower at key border crossings** to sustain robust screening processes, including flagging and interviewing potentially vulnerable travelers.	• Frontline officers, including from **Bangladesh, Indonesia and Sri Lanka,** called for **enhanced resourcing and focus on capacity development at border crossings**—including at more rural or remote crossing points. • They noted that despite technological advances in border management including e-gates and biometric systems, **human interaction remains essential in detecting potential victims of trafficking**, as technology cannot always identify irregularities or fraudulent behavior. • The **Bali Process Government and Business Forum (GABF)** emphasised the **importance of government and private sector collaboration,** to safeguard good practices in supply chains and migrant worker recruitment.

ENHANCING LAW ENFORCEMENT, BORDER AND IMMIGRATION CAPABILITIES AND STRENGTHENING CROSS-BORDER INFORMATION SHARING

Criminal networks utilise new technologies and rapidly adapt their operations; law enforcement and border and immigration authorities must also leverage technology and collaborate with the private sector to provide an agile response to identify potential risks and disrupt trafficking in persons and people smuggling activities.

Enhancing coordinated, real-time data-sharing between agencies and across borders is critical to counter the operations of organised criminal networks, and to support victim identification and protection.

Strengthening law enforcement and border and immigration capabilities includes addressing corruption—which remains an under-discussed and critical topic for governments to address.

SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBER AND OBSERVER STATES AND ORGANISATIONS PROMISING PRACTICES AND SOLUTIONS

AUSTRALIA's Airline Liaison Officers Network emphasises proactive risk identification, with Airline Liaison Officers (ALOs) stationed globally to work closely with airlines, security agencies, and governments. ALOs utilise document security assessments and facial comparison techniques to assess travel document legitimacy and facilitate legitimate travel while intercepting high-risk cases and are trained to identify and refer potential indicators of trafficking in persons through the Australian Federal Police's Look a Little Deeper program.

NEW ZEALAND actively supports investigation skills training and collaborates with regional partners to address trafficking in persons and people smuggling in the region. New Zealand highlighted the importance of international partnerships to effectively manage migration risks, including through joint operations, such as the INTERPOL-led Operation Liberterra II.

THE PHILIPPINES Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) shared progress achieved through a 2023 Council resolution to hold corrupt public officials accountable for facilitating trafficking in persons. To date, 312 cases have been monitored across various agencies resulting in 23 dismissals or fines, 11 suspensions, and 48 terminations from government service. It was noted that corruption remains an under-discussed and critical topic for governments to address.

THE SOLOMON ISLANDS highlighted efforts led through its National Border Coordination Committee, the Anti-Human Trafficking Advisory Committee, and the National Security Committee, which facilitate intelligence exchange between law enforcement agencies and regional partners. The Solomon Islands' national strategy includes the development of MOUs and bilateral agreements to strengthen border security and information-sharing frameworks with neighboring countries.

THAILAND strengthens law enforcement cooperation through annual bilateral meetings with Laos, Vietnam, and Malaysia and trilateral meetings with Myanmar and China, alongside high-level discussions to strengthen regional efforts. The Anti-Human Trafficking Centre has been established to coordinate with neighbouring countries, receiving strong cooperation. Additionally, the Royal Thai Police has deployed police attachés in Myanmar, Cambodia, and China to enhance cross-border crime prevention.

THAILAND updated on new measures introduced in January 2025 to enhance border screening, surveillance, and investigations, including enhanced checks on high-risk groups using AI-powered surveillance and warning signs about fraudulent job offers, increased checkpoints in high-risk areas for people smuggling, enhanced checks at tourist sites, transport hubs and accommodation inspections, and expanded investigations—including against corrupt officials.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

CONTEXT	ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

• Frontline officers attending the Third RSO Border Forum highlighted that **information and intelligence sharing** remains an enduring challenge in the region.
• **Countries struggle to share sensitive information due to lack of trust and clarity** on what information can or cannot be shared. Formal routes are often slow or unavailable.
• **Differing privacy laws and jurisdictional issues** complicate information exchange, hindering cooperation between countries.
	• Frontline officers, including from **Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Sri Lanka** made suggestions for where efforts could support them in their work:
	  ○ **Development of bilateral or multilateral agreements** to address legislative and operational barriers.
	  ○ **Establishment of cross-border taskforces,** and operational 'fusion centres' as particularly effective approaches to facilitate improved information sharing.
	  ○ Development of **cross-border information sharing platforms and focal points**
	  ○ Development of **guidelines for sharing information,** along with greater adoption of technology improvements
	  ○ Uptake of informal networks, such as the **RSO Alumni Network**, to support coordinated, real-time data-sharing between government agencies.

• **Proactive risk identification** in the region has been effectively supported through Airline and Immigration Liaison Officer models, which supports the placement of Member State resources at key airports and transit points. This model has traditionally been employed by donor Member States. • In 2024, New Zealand funded the secondment of three Sri Lankan officers to the RSO to further regional information sharing efforts achieved through the **Bali Process Disruptions Working Group 2023-2024** Joint Period of Action, co-chaired by the governments of New Zealand and Viet Nam.	• The **secondment of officers from the Sri Lankan Department for Immigration and Emigration** has supported effective regional collaboration and capability development through regular meetings established with Thailand law enforcement agencies, Airline and Immigration Liaison Officers based in Bangkok, and other regional actors. • There is interest **to build on this model** in the region, to expand the secondment route for placement of Member State officers in the RSO office to support regional information, liaison and outreach (further funding required).
• The Pacific Island States spoke to an **increased focus in resourcing, policy and framework development, and capacity development** to support national responses and strategy in countering trafficking in persons and spoke to challenges in supporting capacity building and awareness-raising across their numerous islands, which also hold different local cultural sensitivities.	• There are opportunities for **international partners to further support training and capacity building with Pacific Island states.**

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

CONTEXT	ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

• Frontline officers attending the Third RSO Border Forum highlighted that **organised criminal networks increasingly utilise advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), encrypted communications, and digital currencies** to improve their operations and complicate detection.
• Many agencies **lack the technical expertise and resources to fully monitor online activities** and disrupt digital trafficking operations.
• Governments are reviewing how to adopt/integrate technologies including AI and biometrics in counter-trafficking and smuggling efforts. Members discussed **the impact of safety, ethics and privacy legal and policy frameworks on their use or potential use of AI.**
	• **The Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons**, co-chaired by the Governments of Australia and the Republic of Indonesia, highlighted several key actions under its Forward Work Plan 2024-26:
	  ○ To **share information on trends, issues and initiatives** related to exploitation of lawful migration pathways by transnational serious and organised crime groups for the purpose of trafficking in persons.
	  ○ In collaboration with the RSO, to build members' capacity and understanding of the **collection and use of digital evidence** for trafficking in persons cases
	  ○ To continue to build Members' understanding of, and capacity to combat, crimes that enable trafficking in persons, **including corruption and money laundering, especially in the context of online scam centres and casino operations.**

• **Gaps in border systems, institutional frameworks, and regulations** continue to be exploited by criminal networks, and document fraud remains a major tool for traffickers and smugglers. • Frontline officers attending the Third RSO Border Forum highlighted that inconsistent use of AI and biometric screening systems across the region, and **differing technological capabilities**, is a limiting factor in effective cross-border cooperation. • Human oversight remains important to detect errors and manipulation.	• Countries like the **Solomon Islands**, which **rely on manual systems due to limited technology,** must be considered in efforts to create harmonised regional approaches. • Initiatives led by IOM, such as its Document Examination Support Center (DESC) and The Asian Network for Document Examination (ANDEX) facilitate global information-sharing on documentary fraud. Members are encouraged to take up support offered through these platforms. • The IOM also supports **intelligence training and the establishment of passenger information units** to analyse Advance Passenger Information (API) data, to improve frontline officer responses.
• **Corruption is a facilitator** of people smuggling and trafficking in persons. The topic of corruption remains an under-discussed and critical topic for governments to address, and barriers remain in regional openness on this topic.	• **ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking** and **UNODC** have conducted a foundation activity involving a **legislative review** of anti-trafficking in persons and anti-corruption laws. This will be further socialised with Bali Process Members over 2025.

ELIMINATING DUPLICATION BY ALIGNING NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND MULTI-AGENCY EFFORTS

A unified approach to countering the activity of transnational crime, and robust identification and support for victims, requires alignment between national policies, regional frameworks, and strong multi-agency cooperation.

Advancing regional standards—for example in migrant registration, victim indicators and practical identification tools—can support joined-up efforts across borders.

Coordination is also important to allow agencies to implement agile responses to downstream effects of disruption measures. For example, in Lao PDR, efforts to improve the registration and regulation of businesses employing migrants has disrupted the modus operandi of smugglers, leading to shifts in smuggling routes to other cities.

Enhancing cooperation beyond the Bali Process region is also critical, with trafficking into forced criminality a global issue—and cyber-scam centre operations emerging as a significant illicit economy and threat for the global public.

The Republic of Kenya was invited to attend the Forum to speak to the urgent need for cross-regional collaboration—calling for stronger partnerships between African nations, Asia-Pacific countries, and beyond. Kenya noted the Bali Process as a vital platform for such cooperation, despite limited historic participation by African nations—resulting from limited numbers of African nations holding Member or Observer status of the Bali Process.

SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBER AND OBSERVER STATES AND ORGANISATIONS PROMISING PRACTICES AND SOLUTIONS

CAMBODIA highlighted the need to prioritise migrant registration at a regional level, both domestically and in destination countries, particularly for unregistered workers facing language barriers and nationality uncertainties. This can support more effective information sharing and identification of individuals by government actors.
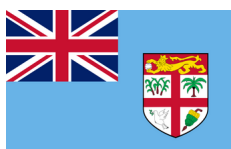
FIJI updated on the establishment of a Case Management Coordination (CMC) Unit within the Ministry of Immigration. This unit manages trafficking in persons cases from start to finish, to improve access and monitoring of case files. Regular inter-agency meetings are held to track case progress, verify data, and strengthen collaboration through Fiji's national task force, which includes representatives from law enforcement, immigration, social services, and civil society actors.

INDONESIA highlighted efforts to strengthen victim identification and legal protections including the introduction of enhanced screening processes. These efforts aim to protect victims from being further harmed and criminalised for acts they were forced to undertake following trafficking for forced criminality. Indonesia has collaborated with Thailand to apply a victim-centred certification process through Thailand's National Referral Mechanism, supporting application of the non-punishment principle before repatriation.

KENYA called for deeper engagement between ASEAN nations, the East African Community and the African Union to address trafficking in persons. Kenya called for a greater focus on advocacy and prevention efforts, engagement with technology companies, and cross-border taskforces, as well as a continued focus on corruption as an enabler of trafficking in persons.

THE PHILIPPINES' One Country Team Approach (OCTA) is a policy framework implemented through the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT). OCTA unites 25 national agencies in a coordinated response to trafficking in persons, aiming to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks, and adopt a victim-centred approach to provide assistance and intervention for both Filipino and foreign trafficking victims in the Philippines. This includes through cooperation with NGOs and local actors.

SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBER AND OBSERVER STATES AND ORGANISATIONS PROMISING PRACTICES AND SOLUTIONS

THE UNITED NATIONS REFUGEE AGENCY (UNHCR) introduced its <u>routes-based, whole-journey approach,</u> which seeks to address challenges along key migration routes through targeted, coordinated interventions by governments, UN agencies, civil society, and refugee organisations. UNHCR is implementing this panoramic approach in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly along routes from Myanmar through South and Southeast Asia and from Afghanistan through Southwest Asia towards Europe. UNHCR invited interested states and entities to collaborate with UNHCR on this initiative.

THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP) updated on efforts in the Greater Mekong Subregion driven through the <u>Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT Process),</u> including the development of a new 10-year subregional plan of action, which prioritises actions to address trafficking, forced criminality, and scam centre-related crimes. Opportunities to support alignment across the COMMIT and Bali Process Forward Work Plans are being explored.

VIET NAM is advancing regional standards in victim identification through the COMMIT Process, through practical identification tools. This work aims to support the establishment of neutral recognition structures and shared identification standards.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

CONTEXT	ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS
- Frontline officers attending the Third RSO Border Forum highlighted that **coordination gaps and overlap in efforts** wastes resources and slows down response times. - Integration challenges and siloed data (both within and across borders) hinders effective coordination.	**Integrated task forces and joint operations** support effective information and intelligence sharing and strengthens trust and cooperation across borders. - Frontline officers, including from **Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Sri Lanka** view the importance of this model as an agile, responsive means to support cross-border cooperation on an issue. - Multidisciplinary teams are particularly **effective in vulnerable areas** – i.e. around cyber-scam compounds to enhance regional coordination and support across language barriers.
- Frontline officers attending the Third RSO Border Forum highlighted **inconsistent victim identification frameworks across countries.** - Slow legal proceedings, lack of funding, and stigma can hinder reintegration efforts for victims of trafficking. - Strengthening migrant registration systems may support easier identification of individuals, once they are identified as victims.	- Development of **regional standards for migrant registration, and victim identification**, can support effective information sharing and identification of individuals by government actors. - Development of regional standards for victim identification is being advanced under **Viet Nam's** leadership and through the **COMMIT Process.** **Bilateral agreements,** such as that between **Indonesia and Thailand** to apply a victim-centred certification process through Thailand's National Referral Mechanism, provides a helpful model to support coordination around an individual's return across jurisdictions. **Cambodia** has bilateral arrangements in place with other **ASEAN nations**, and the progression of a bilateral framework between **Cambodia and Indonesia** is being explored. **Cambodia's** call to strengthen migrant registration, both in host and origin countries, may be developed further through the region's efforts in strengthening legal identity.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

CONTEXT	ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS
• Coordination is important to allow agencies to implement **agile responses to downstream effects of disruption measures**, particularly as relates to people smuggling routes.	• **Robust data collection** is required to understand downstream effects of disruption measures introduced. • **Close coordination, and open sharing of planned interventions** can support planning and preparedness across agencies and borders.
• Kenya called for enhanced cross-regional collaboration—and in particular **the strengthening of partnerships between African nations, Asia-Pacific countries, and beyond**—noting the Bali Process as a vital platform for such cooperation.	• **Kenya** has brought together a group of affected ambassadors to establish a forum for diplomatic engagement, to support the repatriation of nationals from cyber-scam compounds in Myanmar. This may be a model that can be further built on. • The continued **inclusion of cross-regional perspectives** is encouraged in efforts going forward.

CLOSING PROTECTION GAPS BY GROUNDING POLICIES IN THE EXPEREINCES OF VICTIMS AND MIGRANTS WHO MAY BE IN VULNERABLE SITUATION

An estimated one-third of migrant workers in the Asia-Pacific region have an irregular status in their country of destination.[2]

Migrants may leave their home countries without international protection needs, but such needs may arise later due to trafficking, gender-based violence, or changing conditions in their home country. Migrants with an irregular status, and those who have employed the services of people smugglers, are particularly vulnerable to trafficking in persons and modern slavery, as they hold limited options to obtain employment and security and may be more easily exploited and coerced.

Victim-centered approaches must inform institutional responses, to provide meaningful and sustainable solutions for vulnerable individuals that can deter repeated irregular migration attempts, recognise and protect victims, and prevent re-exploitation.

This includes through principles such as that of non-punishment for victims of trafficking, which encourages States to safeguard the rights of victims and prevent further harm, for example, through state-sponsored detainment, penalisation, or prosecution for acts and misdemeanors committed by victims as a result of being trafficked.

Application of the non-punishment principle encourages victims to report crimes committed against them and participate as witnesses. Supporting robust collection of evidence from victims is crucial to building understanding of organised criminal network operations, and to support disruption and prosecution of criminal actors.

Where the non-punishment principle is not applied, State capacity to disrupt and dismantle organised crime is severely weakened, as organised criminals divert the risk of being arrested and prosecuted away from themselves, and onto the people whose exploitation they are profiting from.

Finally, in the context of a less secure international landscape, a stark reality is that counter-trafficking efforts remain severely underfunded, and securing and allocating resources will be a notable challenge for the region.

[2] Migration Data Portal. (n.d.). Irregular migration. International Organization for Migration. https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/irregular-migration

SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBER AND OBSERVER STATES AND ORGANISATIONS PROMISING PRACTICES AND SOLUTIONS

THE PHILIPPINES has institutionalised key programs, including livelihood and employment support, healthcare and welfare services, and skills training initiatives to help returnees transition into new careers. The aim is to redefine reintegration as a long-term development pathway, to support and empower returnees to rebuild their lives with stability and dignity—and position any repeated migration as a choice rather than a necessity.

INDONESIA has led on the development of ASEAN Guidelines on the Implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, a joint initiative initiated by ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR-Indonesia) and ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC-Philippines), with support from ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking (ASEAN-ACT).

THAILAND's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) provides a crucial framework in the country's anti-human trafficking efforts, enabling early identification and comprehensive victim support. Designed as a protection-led mechanism, the NRM includes a reflection period to allow victims time to make informed decisions about their participation in legal proceedings, and provides a well-know best-practice example for the region.

TONGA launched its first National Action Plan to Counter Trafficking in Persons and Protect Vulnerable Migrants, developed with IOM and The Asia Foundation. The government funds non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that provide counselling and legal services for female and child victims and has partnered with civil society organisations to offer housing and support services.

VIET NAM updated on its new anti-trafficking law, which introduces common indicators and frontline screening questions to provide a more consistent approach to identifying victims of trafficking for forced criminality. This new law is a significant step in strengthening victim identification and equips frontline officials with the necessary tools to protect vulnerable individuals.

The INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC) noted its continued commitment to supporting states in protecting and assisting migrants, in line with the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement maintains a permanent presence along migration routes, to witness and document humanitarian challenges, advocating for their inclusion in regional and global processes.

People with lived experience play an important role in shaping **AUSTRALIA's** response to trafficking in persons and other forms of modern slavery. Australia's experience has included partnering with The Salvation Army to establish the Lived Experience Engagement Program and its pilot Survivor Advisory Council, and publishing a foundational guidance document to help organisations seeking to engage with and empower people with lived experienced of modern slavery in Australia in a manner that is safe, ethical and trauma-informed.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

CONTEXT	ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS
• Implementation of the **Non-Punishment Principle** for victims of trafficking in persons will **support consistent identification, support and protection for victims,** particularly in cases where victims of trafficking have been forced to commit crimes. • Successful **victim identification can support robust collection of evidence** to build understanding of organised criminal network operations, and disruption and prosecution of criminal actors.	• Uptake by governments of the new **ASEAN Guidelines on the Implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle** for Victims of Trafficking in Persons. • Learning from the implementation of these new guidelines will support broader regional efforts in implementing shared guidelines around the application of the non-punishment principle, and support for evidence collection from victims.
• Support for sustainable return and reintegration practices that can redefine reintegration as a long-term development pathway, to position repeated migration as a choice rather than a necessity, and **empowering returnees to rebuild their lives with stability and dignity.**	• Provision of livelihood and employment support programmes, healthcare and welfare services, and skills training initiatives that help returnees transition into new careers support sustainable reintegration. • **The Bali Process Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration (TEGRR),** co-chaired by the governments of the Republic of the Philippines and Australia, reaffirmed its commitment to victim-centred solutions that support safe and dignified return and reintegration. • The TEGRR has developed a new **Work Plan for 2024-2029**, and produced a Returns and Reintegration Register, that provides an overview of current and promising practices across Working Group Members.
• The Pacific Links Foundation, an NGO working in Viet Nam, warned that despite **two decades of progress, counter-trafficking efforts remain severely underfunded**. The sudden termination of US funding has made prevention and victim support even harder to sustain and provides a notable challenge for the region.	• Pressure on resources will require even closer working across the region to maximise where resources and effort is spent. **Close coordination between governments, donors and actors to minimise duplication, and support agile responses to a changing funding and policy landscape** will be critical in supporting regional stability and protection for those most vulnerable.

LOOKING AHEAD

Participatory and consultative engagement through RSO flagship events supports the RSO to be responsive and adaptive to needs and emerging priorities noted by Bali Process members—as set out as one of the four RSO Core Purposes: **RSO Core Purpose 1—Responsive to Bali Process Members and Working Groups**.

As the RSO's Annual Meeting, Senior Official level discussions and recommendations captured at the Third RSO Constructive Dialogue provide an active reference document for Bali Process members, Working Groups and the RSO in continued efforts in months ahead.

The RSO will consider discussions captured in this Outcome Statement against the 2024-2026 RSO Work Plan—and identify opportunities to refine or readjust proposed activity in line with the needs and priorities identified at the Third Constructive Dialogue, and at the Third RSO Border Forum.

The document will also provide a blueprint for reference at the Fourth RSO Constructive Dialogue, and the RSO will invite updates and reflections from members accordingly.

PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT

The RSO extends its sincere gratitude to all participants in the Third RSO Constructive Dialogue for their continued partnership and valuable contributions.

The Third Constructive Dialogue was attended by Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Canada, Fiji, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Nauru, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Viet Nam.

Organisations represented include the ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking Program, European Commission, Humanity Research Consultancy, the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Mixed Migration Centre, the Pacific Links Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Bali Process Working Groups represented included the Bali Process Government and Business Forum, the Task Force on Planning and Preparedness, the Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration, the Working Group on Disruption of Criminal Networks Involved in People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons, and the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons.