

BALI PROCESS WORKSHOP ON BEST PRACTICE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS TO COMBAT PEOPLE SMUGGLING

BANGKOK, THAILAND, 28-30 OCTOBER 2009

CO-LEADERS' STATEMENT

1 We, the heads of delegation of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and New Zealand, were tasked by the Co-Chairs of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Organized Crime to lead the workshop on “Best Practice Information Campaigns to Combat People Smuggling” in Bangkok, Thailand on 28-30 October 2009.

2 The workshop was convened under the ad hoc group (AHG) mechanism which Ministers at the Third Bali Process Regional Ministerial Conference agreed to reactivate to develop regional responses to specific people smuggling and trafficking in persons challenges in the region.

3 At the first AHG meeting in Bali, Indonesia on 27-29 July 2009 participants observed that more work was needed on communication strategies in source, transit and destination countries. The meeting therefore welcomed the proposal to hold a workshop before the end of 2009 to share best practices on developing and implementing information campaigns from the perspectives of source, transit and destination countries.

4 The communications workshop was attended by representatives of source, transit and destination countries for common people smuggling migrant flows, namely, Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) also attended.

5 Participants reaffirmed their continuing commitment to combating people smuggling and trafficking in persons and, to this end, agreed on the importance of public awareness campaigns as a means of preventing these crimes. People smugglers were engaged in spreading disinformation to potential irregular migrants and, unless Bali Process members acted to counter this information, unhelpful messages would continue to stimulate people smuggling ventures.

6 It was widely acknowledged that public awareness campaigns complemented other measures to combat smuggling, such as law enforcement cooperation, capacity building and information sharing, and that sustained action was necessary at all points along the migration continuum. Given their effect of reducing demand at source, information campaigns present a relatively cost effective means of addressing the problem.

7 The potential for partnerships between governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society was acknowledged as a core consideration in designing and implementing effective information campaigns.

8 Participants were of the view that messages that solely conveyed the danger or illegality of people smuggling ventures to potential irregular migrants were generally not effective. It was thought that, depending on the culture and perspectives of the target group in question, more effective messages:

- countered the belief that irregular migration to a destination country was likely to be financially lucrative;
- pointed out that people smugglers are driven by greed and profit and do not have migrants' interests in mind;
- explained that irregular migration to a new country would result in the loss of community networks, including family; and
- irregular migration to a new country could result in a loss of dignity and status and vulnerability to exploitation.

Potential irregular migrants needed to be given the necessary information to reduce the likelihood of entering into illegal smuggling operations.

9 UNHCR joined other participants in highlighting that irregular migrants are motivated by a number of concerns. Some were motivated by protection concerns and this should be taken into account in messaging. In situations where security issues are the main driver of irregular migration, contextually relevant information is particularly important to inform decisions.

10 Participants agreed that messaging should also inform about legal avenues for migration and viable alternatives to migration in the source country. Sources for this information should be made clear. Too many negatives in messaging might reduce the credibility of the message.

11 Participants discussed the importance of research in identifying and disseminating messages that audiences would identify with and agreed that in the context of messaging to combat people smuggling the following approaches could be useful, depending on local conditions:

- Spreading messages by word of mouth was often the most effective, particularly in communities where print and electronic media were scarce. Places of worship and religious leaders were important channels of communication in many communities. Hotlines had also proved effective.
- Visual, non-verbal messaging, for example, through posters and drama (e.g. street theatre and radio soap operas), was important in predominantly illiterate communities. It was noted that just because a target group was illiterate it did not mean that the messages should be any less sophisticated.
- The use of high profile cultural figures (e.g. pop artists) was useful in some contexts.
- It was important to maximize cost effective methods for disseminating messages, for example, through free media.
- Timing of messaging was important. For example, smuggling by sea was seasonal in nature given variable sea conditions so it was best to time messages before, or at the beginning of the season.
- Civil society, the private sector and other partners could help with dissemination.
- Sharing experiences was a powerful means of conveying messages, especially among peers.

12 Participants undertook to use the information, experience and expertise exchanged at the workshop in the development and implementation of anti-people smuggling public awareness campaigns in their own countries. They

recognized both the value of and the need for ongoing evaluations to promote sustainability. The important role of international organizations, in particular the International Organization for Migration, and the Bali Process itself as a repository for best practices was acknowledged as well as the importance of the mobilization of resources for this purpose.

13 Participants agreed to recommend intensifying regional cooperation in information exchange and in designing and implementing information campaigns in the interests of achieving more effective results in addressing irregular migration. In this regard they recommended that the Steering Group consider ways to deepen linkages between information campaigns already underway in Bali Process countries; review progress with the uptake and effectiveness of information campaigns in all participating countries; identify common messages that could be used region-wide; and make more use of the Bali Process website for making available sample messaging in regional languages. Participants discussed the possibility of raising public awareness and the visibility of the Bali Process as a force for regional cooperation on people smuggling, but acknowledged that timing and other considerations needed to be taken into account.

14 Finally, participants acknowledged with gratitude the Royal Thai Government, New Zealand and the International Organization for Migration for

the excellent arrangements that were made for the workshop, and the Thai people for their hospitality.