

Summary
Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean
29 May 2015, Bangkok, Thailand

1. In response to the alarming rise in the irregular movement of persons in the Indian Ocean, the Royal Thai Government organized the Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean on 29 May 2015 in Bangkok.
2. High-level representatives from the countries in the region, namely Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, and Thailand, as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Thailand attended as participants. Representatives of Japan, Switzerland, and the United States of America attended as observers. A number of Ambassadors and Chargé d'Affaires based in Bangkok also observed the meeting.
3. The meeting was opened by H.E. General Tanasak Patimapragorn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and chaired by Mr. Norachit Sinhaseni, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, was also present at the opening.
4. H.E. General Tanasak Patimapragorn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his opening statement, reaffirmed Thailand's commitment to its tradition of hosting refugees and displaced persons since the 1970s, with some 130,000 persons still remaining under its care. The Royal Thai Government recently stepped up its efforts by setting up a special taskforce to respond to the immediate humanitarian situation and to provide assistance to those migrants found at sea. Two Royal Thai Navy vessels have been deployed as floating platforms to provide necessary assistance and medical help. Aircrafts from both the Royal Thai Navy and the Royal Thai Air Force have also been deployed to patrol and assist in the humanitarian operation.
5. The IOM and UNHCR provided overviews of recent trends and challenges regarding irregular maritime movements that created tremendous impacts on the life of migrants, national security and development of the affected countries. The IOM underlined the importance of comprehensive migration management while the UNHCR called for innovative solutions to the complex problem and to ensure assistance for those in need of protection.
6. Representatives of the five most affected countries, namely Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand briefed the meeting on the efforts and measures each country was undertaking. They also reaffirmed their full commitments to continue to provide proper humanitarian assistance to the

migrants currently stranded at sea and victims of trafficking and to strengthen their cooperation on law enforcement to put an end to the activities of the criminal networks.

7. Indonesia and Malaysia agreed to continue to provide humanitarian assistance and temporary shelter to those 7,000 irregular migrants still at sea provided that the resettlement and repatriation process will be done in one year by the international community.
8. The meeting welcomed the efforts of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand which have intensified search and rescue operations as well as deployment of the United States aircraft in close collaboration with Malaysia and Thailand;
9. The meeting expressed grave concern and fully recognized the urgency of the current situation which requires immediate regional responses. The meeting also emphasized the need for relevant countries and the international community to resolve irregular maritime migration, in particular, human trafficking and people smuggling, in a comprehensive and sustainable manner by addressing the root causes and other contributing factors in the spirit of cooperation, international burden sharing and shared responsibility.
10. The following proposals and recommendations were put forward:

(Immediate Response: Protection of People Stranded at Sea)

- a) **Regional response:** The meeting noted with appreciation the agreement among Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand as reflected in the Joint Statement adopted on 20 May 2015 in Putrajaya, Malaysia;
- b) **Intensifying search and rescue operations** to ensure safety of the irregular migrants at sea;
- c) **Exploring further means for identifying predictable disembarkation options and proper and harmonized reception arrangements for those rescued;**
- d) **Ensuring that UNHCR and IOM have access to the migrants;**
- e) **Identifying those with protection needs through effective screening processes, paying particular attention to the protection of the vulnerable groups,** including women, children, and unaccompanied minors, who are often most affected;
- f) **Strengthening information and intelligence sharing mechanism** to provide accurate data on whereabouts of migrants and vessels stranded at sea, and ensure timely response in terms of search and rescue operations;
- g) **Establishing a mechanism or joint task force to administer and ensure necessary support,** including resources as well as resettlement and repatriation options from the international community to countries that provide humanitarian assistance to the irregular migrants;

- h) **Mobilizing resources of the international community to the appeals of international organizations to support emergency responses** in the spirit of international burden-sharing, and in this regards, welcomed the United States of America's 3 million USD pledge to IOM's appeal and Australia's pledge for an additional 5 million AUD in humanitarian assistance to Rakhine State and Cox's Bazaar.

(Comprehensive Prevention of Irregular Migration, Smuggling of Migrants, and Trafficking in Persons)

- i) **Strengthening national law enforcement to combat people smuggling and human trafficking and cooperate in eradicating the transnational organized criminal syndicates** through sharing investigation information, strengthening cooperation on mutual legal assistance and cooperation in extradition, where applicable, and build on available tools and frameworks, in particular, the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its protocols;
- j) **Identifying national contact points** among key law enforcement officers to coordinate and exchange real time information / intelligence to enable early detection and alert as well as to facilitate prompt response and effective action against transnational smuggling and trafficking syndicates;
- k) **Strengthening operations**, where applicable, in accordance with existing mechanisms, among law enforcement authorities to curb transnational criminal networks and their activities, bilaterally and regionally, and in this regard, took note of relevant regional initiatives, in particular current Port Intelligence Units, Border Liaison Office Networks and the Joint Period of Action led by New Zealand and Sri Lanka, with support of Australia, under the Bali Process;
- l) **Establishing a special investigation taskforce among the key affected countries** in accordance with existing mechanisms to suppress the transnational organized criminal syndicates that have committed crimes of people smuggling and human trafficking in accordance with the UNTOC in order to bring the perpetrators to justice;
- m) **Strengthening data collection, analysis and information sharing** on irregular maritime migration among countries in the region including by cooperating with and utilizing the existing mechanisms and tools of related international organizations such as UNHCR, UNODC, and IOM;
- n) **Underlining the need for a transparent and efficient recruitment process** as well as the vital role of the private sector in eliminating contributing factors that enable unsafe irregular migration and give birth to criminal elements preying on vulnerable migrants;
- o) **Developing and implement comprehensive multimedia regional communication campaigns** to send a strong message to transnational

criminal syndicates of relevant countries' determination to seriously suppress their activities; to deter people in targeted areas from falling prey of those syndicates and taking dangerous and irregular maritime migration; to sensitize local communities in transit areas of the threat of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons; and to communicate with members of the diaspora communities in destination areas who pay for their relatives to leave homes to fully understand the risks involved;

- p) **Enhancing legal, affordable and safe channels of migration** among relevant countries to promote opportunities and deter irregular migration activities, such as through bilateral employment MOUs, setting up national mechanism responsible for overseas employment to encourage safe and legal migration for work, and increasing capacity of countries in the region to empower people to pursue migration in a legal and dignified manner.

(Addressing Root Causes and Improving Livelihood in At-Risk Communities)

- q) **Addressing factors in the areas of origin including, among others, capacity building of local communities, providing economic incentives that create more jobs**, promoting trade and investment and development assistance to the at-risk areas, providing skills training, infrastructure development, enhancing a sense of security and belonging, promoting full respect for human rights and adequate access of people to basic rights and services such as housing, education and healthcare, with involvement of the private sector and relevant stakeholders, and in this regard, took note with appreciation humanitarian and development assistance offered by countries both inside and outside the region towards at-risk areas;

11. The participants welcomed the contributions and pledges of contribution made by various countries, towards immediate humanitarian assistance as well as improve livelihood and create opportunities in at-risk communities.
12. The participants agreed to pursue further discussions as well as to bring the matter to related frameworks including bilateral consultations; the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) to be hosted by Malaysia; the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process), particularly the next Ministerial Conference to be held in 2015; and other relevant regional frameworks.
13. The participants expressed appreciation to the Royal Thai Government for the initiative in convening this timely meeting and for the hospitality extended.
