

**Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration Co-Convenors' Statement  
following discussion of crises in Afghanistan and Myanmar  
[3 August 2022]**

The Indo Pacific region is facing unprecedented and urgent challenges for political stability, health, economy and climate change, all of which are intensifying existing forced migration crises and the scale and scope of human suffering.

In the context of the varied impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the prospects of even greater social and political instability from soaring food, commodity and energy prices following economic instability in Sri Lanka, Russia's invasion of the Ukraine, the serious humanitarian crises in the region are worsening and raise the likelihood of becoming catastrophes.

In Afghanistan, an [estimated](#) 3.5 million are internally displaced and 2.6 million registered refugees living in neighbouring countries. Ongoing attacks, particularly against ethnic Hazaras and other minorities, are continuing, and restrictions on women have only worsened since the Taliban take-over in August 2021. The recent earthquake only worsened the humanitarian crisis on the ground, with over half the population [estimated](#) to be facing acute hunger.

In Myanmar, 1.2 million are [now estimated](#) to be internally displaced, (866,000 newly displaced since the coup), while tens of thousands of others have sought protection in neighbouring countries. The country is in a de facto state of civil war with the violence causing severe economic, health and social instability. Recent unconscionable executions of human rights and democracy supporters by the junta are indicative of worse to come.

In addition, nearly one million Rohingya taking refuge in Bangladesh continue to live in protracted displacement following the violence in August 2017 that the United Nations has called "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" on the part of the Myanmar junta.

To develop more effective options for governments to respond to these crises, the Track 1.5 [Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration \(ADFM\)](#) convened virtually on 1 July. Participants joined from ten countries, including current and former government officials, representatives from international organisations including UNHCR and IOM, civil society actors and academics. ADFM Co-Convenors welcomed agreement by participants on seven priority actions for governments, including:

- Most immediately, the international community must uphold the decisions of the International Court of Justice in The Gambia vs Myanmar case regarding Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya, and be unwavering in support of international legal accountability processes against all humanitarian crimes resulting in forced migration.
- In addition to multilateral and regional action through established groupings, states should explore flexible 'minilateral' groupings to enable more focused, effective and efficient consultations and advance constructive and actionable assistance and solutions.
- While both the Afghanistan and Myanmar crises are unique, what they have in common is that they are unlikely to be resolved in the short-term, creating a simultaneous need for states to pursue sustainable long-term solutions while, in the interim, more practical support and assistance to host countries for protection, access to education and livelihoods for those displaced.
- Consistent with the 2018 Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees, states are urged to convene an International Crisis Conference on Displacement to maintain focus on these crises and increase support for

both displaced and host communities. This would not be another donor pledging conference, but rather one focused on concrete action to make step-change improvements.

- Bali Process member states should urgently activate the Consultation Mechanism established in 2016 and make use of the Task Force on Planning and Preparedness to plan and prepare for potential further displacement.
- Resettlement countries with quotas should work to ensure these are filled and refugees and migrants are well supported on arrival.
- Further targeted consultations and research must be carried out, including options for greater protection and what onward movements could look like beyond first asylum countries.

Across all of the above actions, it is key that those with lived experience of forced migration be consulted and their perspectives used to shape the responses to both crises. This is critical for the long-term success of any response and should be a priority for states and multilateral institutions.

While the challenges facing our region are severe, there is still cause for hope. There are a number of upcoming opportunities which states can use to develop more humane responses to forced migration challenges.

These include the [opportunity for reform](#) this year at the 20th anniversary of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, Indonesia's assumption of as the ASEAN Chair in 2023, the election of a new Australian Government with a greater public commitment to peace and stability in the Indo Pacific region, and increasing global awareness of the critical importance of centring the lived experience of displacement in developing policy responses.

### **About the Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration**

Established in August 2015, the Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration (ADFM) is a 'second track' process pursuing more effective, durable and dignified approaches to forced migration in the Indo Pacific. The ADFM brings together government and nongovernment decision makers from nine affected countries and representatives from UNHCR and IOM, each of whom act in their personal capacities. The ADFM is led by a regional Secretariat, convened by the Centre for Policy Development in Australia, in partnership with the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) in Indonesia, the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP) at Mahidol University, Thailand, and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia.