

# Committee Guide

ASEAN



**Tackling Trafficking  
Networks and Labour  
Exploitation**



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## 1. Letter from the Chairboard

Dear Participants of OLMUN 2026's ASEAN committee,

On behalf of everyone involved with making this year's OLMUN possible, we would like to warmly greet you to the ASEAN committee and thank you for choosing our committee. We hope that you will leave the committee full of new experiences, friendships and even more passion for geopolitics and diplomacy!

To begin, a few important pieces of information for you. This study guide is only meant to be a foundation for your research, we expect you to duly fulfil yourselves from your obligations as delegates and perform research as comprehensive as possible, in order for our committee to be productive and developed as much as it can be. You may use all tools at your disposal to perform research, however please note that we will check all documents submitted officially to us for plagiarism, and it will be taken into consideration. Keep also in mind that we will be immersing ourselves in a United Nations environment, meaning that we expect professionalism from you, meaning that we will frown upon things such as "friendship alliances" or anything that can be considered anti-diplomatic behaviour. That is not to say we will not have fun in the committee, but there is time and place for everything and we expect you to maintain decorum and professionalism when we conduct debates and the committee is in session.

We will be keeping in touch with you all the time throughout your OLMUN journey, including in regard to all the deadlines and to-do tasks for you, and we remain at your disposal, shall you need any support from us, via all communication channels. We hope that OLMUN 2026 will be as fulfilling and satisfactory for you as possible, and we will do everything in our power to make it as such. See you in Oldenburg!

Your Chairs,  
Norbi & Aang

## 2. Introduction to the committee

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967 through the Bangkok Declaration, originally signed by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Since its founding, the association has expanded to encompass all ten Southeast Asian nations: Brunei Darussalam (1984), Vietnam (1995), Laos and Myanmar (1997), Cambodia (1999), and, as a Special Observer and prospective eleventh member, Timor-Leste, which applied for full membership in 2011 and became a member on 26 October 2025.

ASEAN's overarching framework is the ASEAN Community, structured around three interlocking pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The organisation operates on foundational principles of consensus-based decision-making, non-interference in the internal affairs of member states, and respect for national sovereignty, which are principles that both define ASEAN's distinctive character and create enduring challenges when collective action on sensitive human rights issues is required.

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), established under the ASEAN Charter in 2009, is the overarching intergovernmental body for the promotion and protection of human rights across the region. AICHR's mandate is primarily promotional and consultative rather than investigative or enforcement-oriented, reflecting the constraints of the non-interference norm. Nevertheless, it plays an important normative role in shaping regional standards and coordinating member state responses.

This special joint session brings together ASEAN's ten members alongside Timor-Leste, ASEAN dialogue partners (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia, and the United States), the European Union as a formal partner, Taiwan as a de facto economy and special observer, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as a relevant state actor, and two critical non-state actors: Liberty Asia (an anti-trafficking NGO) and the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

## 3. Introduction to the topic

### 3.1. Historical context

Human trafficking and labour exploitation are not modern inventions. The deliberate coercion of persons into forced labour, sexual servitude, or debt-bound work stretches back across millennia, and in the context of Southeast Asia it is inextricably entangled with the history of colonial economic extraction, racialised systems of migration management, and the structural inequalities those systems produced.

During the era of European colonial administration across much of Southeast Asia, in places like British Malaya and Borneo, the Dutch East Indies, French Indochina, and the American Philippines, plantation and extractive economies were built upon systems of indentured labour, typically described through the administrative euphemism of “contract labour” or, in the Chinese context, the “coolie trade.” Chinese and Indian migrant workers were transported under conditions of coercion and debt bondage to work on rubber plantations, tin mines, sugar estates, and infrastructure projects throughout the region. Workers typically arrived in debt for their passage, their tools, and even their food, legally bound to their employer until repayment, which was routinely delayed or denied through fraudulent accounting. The British colonial administration in Malaya formalised aspects of this system through the Straits Settlements Labour Ordinances, while the Dutch employed the so-called *poenale sanctie* (penal sanction) system in Sumatra, under which contract labourers who fled or failed to work could be criminally prosecuted.

The post-World War II period saw the international community begin to formalise prohibitions against trafficking and forced labour, though progress was halting. The 1949 UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others was among the first international instruments to address trafficking, though it was narrowly focused on sexual exploitation, poorly ratified, and inadequate to address the labour dimension. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions No. 29 (Forced Labour, 1930) and No. 105 (Abolition of Forced Labour, 1957) provided foundational obligations, although enforcement mechanisms remained weak, particularly in states still constructing post-colonial legal institutions.

Throughout the Cold War, migration patterns within and from Southeast Asia intensified dramatically, shaped by economic inequality, armed conflict, and authoritarian governance. The Vietnam War and subsequent conflicts displaced millions, creating vulnerable populations easily exploited by recruitment networks. During this period, a thriving sex tourism industry

developed in Thailand, partially traceable to the Rest and Recuperation (R&R) programmes for US military personnel during the Vietnam War, which generated lasting demand structures for trafficked women and children that persist to the present. The Mekong subregion, encompassing Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Yunnan province in China, emerged as one of the world's most active trafficking corridors.

Japan's post-war labour shortage and economic growth produced another significant trafficking dynamic: the Entertainer Visa system, under which tens of thousands of women from the Philippines and Thailand, and eventually other Asian nations, entered Japan annually as "entertainers," many of them channelled into exploitative work in the sex industry. At its peak in the early 2000s, more than 130,000 Filipina women per year entered Japan on Entertainer Visas. Sustained advocacy by Filipino civil society and diplomatic pressure from the United States led Japan to substantially tighten the system from 2005 onward, dramatically reducing but not eliminating the exploitative flows.

The landmark turning point in the global legal response came with the adoption of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol) in 2000, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). The Palermo Protocol provided for the first time a universally accepted definition of trafficking in persons, centred on the triad of act (recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt), means (force, fraud, coercion, deception, abuse of power, or position of vulnerability), and purpose (exploitation, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or organ removal). This definition decisively widened the conversation from a narrow focus on female victims of sex trafficking to a recognition of trafficking as a spectrum of exploitation affecting men, women, and children across virtually every labour sector.

Within Southeast Asia, regional frameworks developed more slowly. The 2004 ASEAN Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons reflected growing consensus but remained non-binding. The ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP, 2015), which entered into force in 2017 upon ratification by all ten ASEAN members, provided for the first time a legally binding regional treaty framework with obligations on criminalisation, victim protection, data sharing, and mutual legal assistance.

### 3.2. Present development

Contemporary trafficking and labour exploitation in Southeast Asia are characterised by a degree of sophistication and adaptability that consistently outpaces state and institutional responses. Perpetrators operate across national borders, exploit legal migration channels,

leverage digital technology, corrupt local officials, and embed themselves in legal supply chains to maintain impunity. The COVID-19 pandemic substantially worsened conditions: border closures trapped migrant workers in exploitative situations abroad, economic devastation at home increased vulnerability to fraudulent recruitment, and disrupted oversight mechanisms allowed abuses in isolated workplaces to go undetected.

Several macro-trends define the current landscape and must inform your policy proposals:

The scam compound crisis, perhaps the most alarming development of the 2020s has been the emergence of large-scale, cyber-fraud compounds operating primarily from border zones in Myanmar (particularly areas controlled by ethnic armed groups near the Thai border), Cambodia (Sihanoukville and surrounding Special Economic Zones), and to a lesser extent Laos (the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone near the Thai and Myanmar borders). These compounds lure job seekers, typically young, educated people from across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, with fraudulent advertisements for customer service, IT, or marketing roles. Upon arrival, victims find their documents confiscated, movement restricted, and themselves forced under threat of violence to conduct online scams targeting people in third countries, such as romance fraud, cryptocurrency investment scams, and "pig butchering" schemes. Those who do not manage to meet quotas are beaten, electrocuted, deprived of food, or sold to other compounds. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated in 2023 that as many as 220,000 people may be held in Myanmar's Kayin State alone, with comparable populations across Cambodia. This represents one of the largest mass forced labour situations in the world today. The compounds create a uniquely complex legal problem: trafficking victims are simultaneously perpetrators of financial crime against a third set of victims, complicating identification, protection, and prosecution.

The Thai fishing industry and, to varying degrees, Indonesian and Filipino fleets, have been repeatedly documented as sites of severe labour exploitation, including forced labour, debt bondage, physical violence, and murder at sea. Migrant workers, primarily from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos, are recruited through labour brokers who charge extortionate fees, creating debts that trap workers on vessels for months or years without pay. The remote, extraterritorial nature of fishing operations makes oversight extraordinarily difficult, as vessels spend long periods at sea, far from port-state control, and workers have no practical means of escape or communication. The 2015 Associated Press investigation, which revealed Thai fishing workers held against their will on Indonesian islands, supplying seafood to global supermarket chains, prompted significant legislative reform in Thailand and international pressure, but independent monitoring continues to document persistent abuses.

There is also a gross issue regarding domestic workers. An estimated 4–5 million domestic workers across Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific work in private households in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Gulf states, and elsewhere. Overwhelmingly women from Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka, they face acute structural vulnerabilities: invisibility within private homes, exclusion from standard labour law protections in many destination countries, and dependency on their employer for immigration status. Common abuses include wage theft, document confiscation, physical and sexual violence, denial of rest periods, and confinement. Taiwan's system of labour brokers for migrant domestic workers and caregivers has been particularly scrutinised, with documented excessive broker fees creating debt bondage conditions. South Korea's Employment Permit System for agricultural and fishery workers has also faced criticism from human rights groups.

Global supply chains sourcing from Southeast Asia have also been implicated in forced and child labour across multiple industries. Palm oil and rubber in Malaysia and Indonesia, garments in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Myanmar, electronics manufacturing in Malaysia, sugar cane in Thailand, and tobacco in Indonesia have all been subjects of major investigations and, in some cases, trade enforcement actions. The US Tariff Act of 1930 Section 307, enforced through Withhold Release Orders by US Customs and Border Protection, has been used against multiple Malaysian palm oil producers and Cambodian garment exporters. The European Union's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D, adopted 2024) will require large European companies to conduct human rights due diligence across their supply chains, creating significant compliance pressure on Southeast Asian producers.

Digital recruitment and technology-enabled trafficking is also on the rise. Social media platforms (Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, Telegram) and job recruitment applications are now primary vectors for fraudulent recruitment across the region. Traffickers create professional-looking advertisements and fabricate company profiles on LinkedIn and regional job platforms. The encrypted nature of messaging applications makes communication between trafficking networks resistant to law enforcement monitoring. Simultaneously, law enforcement agencies are increasingly using digital forensics to trace networks, though technical capacity remains highly uneven across the region.

The principal methods used by trafficking networks operating in and from the ASEAN region include:

#### Debt Bondage:

Workers are charged excessive, often illegal, recruitment fees creating debts they must work

off under exploitative conditions. The debt is systematically inflated and rarely fully repaid.

#### Document Confiscation:

Passports, national identity cards, and work permits are seized by employers or brokers upon arrival, leaving workers unable to move, seek help, or prove legal status.

#### Fraudulent Recruitment:

Victims are offered legitimate-seeming employment through fake advertisements, deceptive brokers, or corrupt licensed agencies. Promised job terms are changed or fabricated upon arrival.

#### Threat and Physical Violence:

Workers are threatened with arrest if undocumented, harm to family members, or direct physical violence to prevent escape, complaints, or union organising.

#### Isolation and Confinement:

Workers are housed in controlled facilities, plantations, factory dormitories, fishing vessels, private homes, or scam compounds, with physical movement restricted.

#### Wage Theft and Withholding:

Wages are delayed, denied, or subjected to illegal deductions for accommodation, food, tools, or arbitrary "fines," leaving workers effectively unpaid over extended periods.

#### Abuse of Irregular Status:

Undocumented workers are deterred from reporting abuse by the threat of detention and deportation. Some states' criminalisation of irregular migration inadvertently reinforces traffickers' coercive power.

#### Online Luring (Scam Compounds):

Fraudulent digital job advertisements attract educated victims with lucrative-seeming offers. Victims are trafficked across borders and forced into online fraud under threat of violence.

### 3.3. Legal frameworks

The global architecture for combating trafficking rests on several interlocking instruments. The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC, 2000) and its Palermo Protocol provide the foundational criminal law framework, obligating states to criminalise trafficking, protect victims, and cooperate across borders. ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced

Labour (1930) and the 2014 Protocol to it, which explicitly addresses modern forms of forced labour, alongside ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999), provide the core labour rights framework. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Ruggie Principles, 2011) establish a framework for corporate accountability across supply chains, though binding treaty obligations in this area are still under negotiation at the UN level.

At the regional level, the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP, 2015/2017) is the primary legally binding instrument, covering criminalisation, victim protection and return, data sharing, and mutual legal assistance. The ASEAN Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons (APA), the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (Cebu Declaration, 2007), and the 2017 ASEAN Consensus on Migrant Workers constitute the broader normative framework. The ILO's TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme has provided technical assistance and operational cooperation across the Greater Mekong Subregion since 2012.

Despite these frameworks, significant accountability gaps remain. The ASEAN norm of non-interference constrains collective action against member states for internal abuses. National legislation implementing international obligations varies enormously in scope and quality. Victim identification systems are often inadequate, and survivors risk detention and deportation rather than protection. Anti-money-laundering frameworks are weakly applied to trafficking proceeds.

## 4. Case studies

### 4.1. Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam is a small, wealthy destination country for trafficking in persons, primarily from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Bangladesh. The country's economy is heavily reliant on migrant labour, both for domestic service in private households and for construction and service industries, creating structural conditions for exploitation. Brunei's per-capita income among the highest in Southeast Asia, combined with relatively open migration pathways, attracts large numbers of workers who are then vulnerable to employer coercion.

Domestic workers are the most acutely vulnerable group. They are excluded from Brunei's core labour protections under the Employment Order (2009) and work in isolated private

homes, often with little contact with the outside world. No dedicated shelter for male trafficking victims exists in Brunei. The government has enacted the Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons Order (2004), which criminalises trafficking, and operates victim identification and referral mechanisms, but the prosecution record is limited relative to the scale of exploitation documented by NGOs and source-country governments.

Brunei's immigration sponsorship system creates structural dependency between workers and employers that mirrors coercive elements seen in Gulf Kafala systems: a worker's legal residence is tied to their employer, and changing employers, even when fleeing abuse, is legally complex. Brunei has periodically appeared on the US State Department's TIP Report Tier 2 Watch List for insufficient law enforcement efforts, inadequate victim identification, and the legal exclusion of domestic workers from labour protections.

### 4.2. Cambodia

Cambodia occupies one of the most critical and complex positions in the regional trafficking landscape: simultaneously a source, transit, and destination country, and the geographic epicentre of the global scam compound crisis. Cambodia functions as a source country for labour migration to Thailand, Malaysia, and beyond; many of these migrants travel through irregular channels and are exploited upon arrival. Internally, child trafficking for sexual exploitation and domestic labour remains well-documented, particularly affecting children from impoverished rural communities in Prey Veng, Kampong Cham, and Svay Rieng provinces.

The scam compound phenomenon in Cambodia is centred in Sihanoukville, Kandal province (particularly Phnom Penh's outskirts), and border Special Economic Zones along the Thai and Vietnamese frontiers. Following the collapse of Sihanoukville's legal casino economy during COVID-19 shutdowns and a Chinese government crackdown on offshore gambling, criminal networks, many with connections to Chinese organised crime syndicates, notably those linked to Zhao Wei's Kokang operations and affiliated groups, repurposed casino infrastructure for online cyber-fraud operations. Workers from across Asia, Africa, and Latin America are lured with fraudulent job offers, then forced to conduct cryptocurrency fraud, romance scams, and investment fraud. UNODC estimated in 2023 that tens of thousands of victims are held in Cambodian compounds at any given time.

Corruption at multiple levels of government has been extensively documented as enabling the compounds. Investigations by Al Jazeera, Reuters, and the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) have identified links between compound operations and figures connected to the ruling Cambodian People's Party. The government conducted

waves of raids and repatriations following intense diplomatic pressure, especially from China and the Philippines, but critics characterise these as selective enforcement that protects politically connected operators while prosecuting smaller or rival networks.

Cambodia enacted the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (2008), which is regarded as relatively comprehensive legislation, though institutional enforcement capacity, judiciary independence, and anti-corruption measures remain serious weaknesses.

### 4.3. Indonesia

Indonesia is the largest source country of migrant workers in Southeast Asia, with approximately 3.7 million Indonesians working abroad through documented channels and a substantial additional undocumented population. Indonesian workers are found in exploitative conditions across Malaysia (palm oil, rubber, manufacturing, domestic work), Saudi Arabia and Gulf states (domestic work, construction), Taiwan and Hong Kong (domestic work and caregiving), and on fishing vessels throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The Indonesian fishing sector, both domestic vessels and Indonesian workers on foreign-flagged vessels, has been extensively documented as a site of serious labour exploitation. Investigations by Destructive Fishing Watch, Human Rights Watch, and investigative news organisations have found Indonesian fishers trafficked onto Taiwanese, South Korean, and other foreign-flagged vessels operating in remote Pacific and Atlantic waters, subjected to debt bondage, physical abuse, wage theft, and in documented cases, death and burial at sea. The extraterritorial nature of fishing makes oversight extremely difficult and port-state control mechanisms in many Pacific island states inadequate.

Internal trafficking in Indonesia follows patterns of rural-to-urban recruitment for domestic, restaurant, and industrial work, as well as trafficking of girls for sexual exploitation. Child labour remains a serious problem in tobacco cultivation (primarily in East Java), palm oil, and fishing across multiple provinces, including Sumatra and Kalimantan. The phenomenon of under-age and coerced “syariah marriages” in some communities has been documented as a form of trafficking, with girls from poor families channelled into exploitative arrangements.

Indonesia’s Law No. 21 of 2007 on Eradication of the Crime of Trafficking in Persons is generally regarded as comprehensive legislation. The government established a National Task Force on Trafficking and mandated pre-departure training for migrant workers. However, the ILO, Human Rights Watch, and successive US TIP Reports have noted persistently

weak enforcement of recruitment agency regulations, endemic corruption in the placement system, and inadequate victim services for returning workers, particularly those stranded abroad during the COVID-19 crisis.

### 4.4. Lao PDR

Laos is one of the most significant source countries for trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion, and is increasingly implicated in the global scam compound crisis through activities in the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone (GTSEZ) in Bokeo province, a semi-autonomous enclave near the Thai and Myanmar borders operated by the Kings Romans Group, a Chinese-linked conglomerate led by Zhao Wei. The GTSEZ was sanctioned by the United States Treasury Department (OFAC) in 2018 for drug trafficking, human trafficking, and other criminal activities. Multiple survivor testimonies, UNODC assessments, and investigative reports identify it as a significant site of scam compound operations, forced labour, sexual exploitation, and gambling-linked criminal activity, where Lao law has historically had minimal practical reach.

Laos functions primarily as a source country for trafficking to Thailand, where Lao women and girls face sexual exploitation or domestic servitude, and Lao men face forced labour in fishing, agriculture, and construction, and increasingly to scam compound operations across Myanmar and Cambodia. Internal trafficking from rural highland communities, particularly among ethnic minority groups in Houaphan, Phongsali, and Luang Namtha provinces, is well-documented. Poverty, limited educational and economic opportunity, and porous borders with Thailand and China all facilitate vulnerability.

The Lao government has enacted national anti-trafficking legislation and ratified ACTIP, but enforcement capacity is severely constrained by under-resourced institutions, geographic remoteness, and the structural authority vacuum in border zones where ethnic armed groups, Chinese business networks, and local military units operate with limited accountability. The government has been criticised by international observers for facilitating rather than effectively regulating the GTSEZ and for failing to prosecute high-level trafficking networks with political and commercial connections.

### 4.5. Malaysia

Malaysia is one of the most extensively documented destination countries for labour trafficking globally. Its economy is structurally dependent on migrant labour: an estimated 2–3 million documented migrant workers, with a comparable or larger undocumented popula-

tion, work across plantation agriculture (palm oil and rubber), semiconductor and electronics manufacturing, construction, and domestic service. Abuses across all these sectors have been documented extensively through NGO investigations, independent supply chain audits, and government enforcement actions in importing countries.

In the palm oil sector, Human Rights Watch's 2019 investigation and multiple independent supply chain audits documented systematic debt bondage, wage theft, document confiscation, and restricted movement on plantations operated by major Malaysian producers supplying global supply chains. US Customs and Border Protection issued Withhold Release Orders (WROs) against FGV Holdings (Malaysia's largest palm oil producer) and IOI Group, effectively banning their palm oil from the US market pending remediation evidence. Both companies subsequently engaged remediation processes, though independent monitors continue to find persistent violations.

In electronics manufacturing, investigations into Penang-based factories supplying global technology companies documented migrant workers, primarily from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, paying large recruitment fees to brokers, arriving in debt, with documents withheld and housed in controlled dormitories. Responsible Business Alliance (RBA) auditing, the industry standard, has been found by academic researchers to systematically undercount recruitment fee payments through audit manipulation and sub-contractor opacity. The US Department of Labor has listed several Malaysian electronics products on its List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor.

Domestic workers remain among the most severely unprotected. An estimated 100,000–150,000 documented domestic workers, primarily from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Cambodia, work in private Malaysian homes. Malaysia's Employment Act historically excluded domestic workers from core protections including rest day entitlements, maximum working hours, and unfair dismissal protections, though 2021 amendments introduced some improvements. The sponsorship structure ties workers' legal status to individual employers, and those who flee abusive situations face arrest as irregular migrants. Government-operated shelters frequently function more as immigration detention than as survivor support.

Malaysia has been classified on Tier 2 Watch List and, in 2014, on Tier 3 (the lowest ranking) of the US TIP Report. The government has committed to significant reforms, including the Foreign Workers' Centralized Management System and amendments to the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act (ATIPSOM), but implementation has been inconsistent, and complicity of labour officials in trafficking schemes remains documented.

#### 4.6. Myanmar

Myanmar represents the most severe and multi-dimensional trafficking situation in the region, dramatically worsened by the military coup of 1 February 2021 and the subsequent collapse of governance, economic crisis, and expansion of armed conflict across the country. Myanmar is simultaneously one of the world's most significant source countries for trafficking victims, the primary geographic location of scam compound operations, and a country where internal trafficking for armed group conscription, sexual exploitation, and forced labour has reached alarming levels.

The post-coup environment has been catastrophic for trafficking vulnerability. Myanmar's GDP contracted by approximately 18% in 2021 alone. The military's systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure, displacement of over two million people, and targeting of ethnic minority communities, particularly in Chin, Kayah/Karenni, Sagaing, and Kachin States, has created enormous pools of vulnerable persons with nowhere to turn. The military junta (the State Administration Council/SAC) lacks international legitimacy and has demonstrated no meaningful will to address trafficking, having itself been implicated in the use of forced labour in military-held areas and the trafficking of Rohingya civilians.

Large portions of Myanmar's border zones are controlled by ethnic armed groups (EAGs): the Karen National Union (KNU), the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S), the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the Kokang Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and dozens of smaller factions. Many of these groups have permitted or actively facilitated scam compound operations in their territories in exchange for taxation revenue and protection fees. The Myawaddy district in Karen State, adjacent to Thailand's Mae Sot, has become the geographic epicentre of the global scam compound crisis. Compounds in areas controlled by the Karen Border Guard Force (KBGF) and affiliated warlords have held tens of thousands of people from across Asia and beyond, forced to conduct cyber-fraud around the clock, subjected to violence for failing to meet quotas, and sold between operators. UNODC estimated in 2023 that as many as 120,000 people may be held in Kayin State compounds alone.

Myanmar is also a significant source of trafficking victims for Thailand's fishing, agricultural, and sex industries. An estimated 2–3 million Burmese work in Thailand, many through irregular channels and in exploitative conditions. The post-coup surge in displacement and economic desperation has accelerated these flows significantly, with new reports of Burmese workers paying smugglers to cross into Thailand in worsening conditions. Delegates representing Myanmar face the challenge of representing a country whose de facto governing

authority is fragmented between the military junta, the National Unity Government (NUG), and multiple ethnic armed actors, none of whom have effective control over the trafficking networks operating in the country's border zones.

#### 4.7. Philippines

The Philippines is one of the world's largest exporters of migrant labour, with approximately 2 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) deployed annually to more than 200 countries. While the majority migrate through regulated government channels, the scale of outmigration creates vulnerabilities systematically exploited by fraudulent recruitment agencies, corrupt officials, and receiving-country employers. Filipino workers, particularly women recruited for domestic work, entertainment, or hospitality, are trafficked to the Gulf states, East and Southeast Asia, and parts of Europe. The Philippines is also a primary origin country for victims trafficked into ASEAN scam compounds, with multiple high-profile rescues of Filipino nationals from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos compounds documented since 2021.

The Philippines has constructed one of the most advanced anti-trafficking legislative frameworks in the region. Republic Act No. 9208 (Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003), substantially amended by RA 10364 (2012), provides comprehensive criminalisation, victim protections, interagency coordination through the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), and meaningful penalties including life imprisonment for qualified trafficking. The government operates the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), and dedicated OFW legal assistance programmes. The Philippines has consistently achieved Tier 1 status on the US TIP Report, reflecting institutional compliance though not the elimination of trafficking.

Despite this infrastructure, Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) has emerged as one of the Philippines' most severe domestic trafficking challenges. Filipino children, and in some documented cases adults, are abused in the Philippines while foreign perpetrators pay for live-streamed abuse via encrypted digital platforms. Investigations by Terre des Hommes, the International Justice Mission (IJM), and the Philippine National Police identified the Philippines as the world's largest identified source country for OSEC material. Dedicated law enforcement units, international partnerships with the Australian Federal Police and US Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and landmark prosecutions have established the Philippines as both a primary site of OSEC and, increasingly, a leader in prosecuting it. However, the problem's scale remains immense and has expanded further during COVID-19 lockdowns.

Corruption within POEA-accredited recruitment agencies, some of which function as fronts for trafficking networks, and inadequate protections for OFWs in destination countries where Philippines has limited diplomatic leverage continue to be documented weaknesses.

#### 4.8. Singapore

Singapore is primarily a destination country for trafficking in persons, though its status as Southeast Asia's preeminent financial centre gives it additional strategic significance as a potential site for anti-money-laundering action targeting trafficking proceeds. Approximately 250,000 migrant domestic workers, primarily from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Myanmar, and a larger population of construction, marine, and process workers (from Bangladesh, India, China, and Myanmar) work in Singapore under regulated but imperfect conditions. Singapore enacted the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) in 2015, providing criminalisation of trafficking and some victim protections. The government has prosecuted cases of severe domestic worker abuse and employer exploitation. However, civil society organisations note that Singapore's enforcement definition of "trafficking" is historically narrow, and many cases involving debt bondage, document confiscation, or systematic labour exploitation fall below the prosecution threshold while still constituting serious violations of ILO standards. Domestic workers, though entitled since 2013 to at least one rest day per week and protected by the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, remain excluded from the Employment Act's core protections including unfair dismissal rights and standard working hour limits.

Singapore's most significant potential contribution to the regional anti-trafficking response lies in financial investigation. The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and Singapore's law enforcement agencies, which achieved a landmark money laundering enforcement operation in August 2023, seizing over S\$2.8 billion in assets linked to Chinese criminal networks, have among the strongest financial crime investigation capacities in the region. Trafficking networks move substantial proceeds through Singapore's banking and corporate services sector. Strengthening MAS guidance on trafficking-related financial flows, developing specific typologies for trafficking-linked transactions, and sharing financial intelligence with UNODC and regional partners could significantly constrain trafficking network operations. Singapore has begun developing this capacity but has further potential to exploit.

#### 4.9. Thailand

Thailand occupies a uniquely central position in the regional trafficking landscape, functioning simultaneously as the region's largest destination country for migrant labour, a major transit point, and a source of Thai nationals trafficked abroad for sexual exploitation. Thailand has also been the site of some of the most extensively documented labour trafficking abuses globally, particularly in its fishing and seafood processing industries, as well as a country that has undergone significant, if incomplete, legislative and enforcement reform

under sustained international pressure.

The fishing industry crisis of 2014–2016 brought Thailand’s trafficking problem into global focus. The Associated Press investigation revealed workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos held in conditions amounting to slavery on Thai fishing vessels and on islands in Indonesia’s Maluku archipelago, processing seafood that entered global supply chains supplying major international retailers. The European Union issued a formal “yellow card” warning in 2015 under its IUU Fishing Regulation, threatening to ban Thai seafood exports, a trade sanction that carried enormous economic weight given Thailand’s position as one of the world’s largest seafood exporters. In response, the Thai government undertook substantial legislative reform: strengthening the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, introducing port-in-port-out vessel monitoring, mandating labor inspection on fishing vessels, ratifying ILO Convention No. 188 on Work in Fishing, and mandating worker identity documents. The EU yellow card was lifted in 2019.

Despite this reform trajectory, independent monitoring continues to document serious ongoing problems. Labour rights organisations in Thailand report debt bondage, wage theft, and freedom of movement restrictions among migrant workers in agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. The Mae Sot border zone with Myanmar, the largest land border labour migration crossing in Southeast Asia, remains a major trafficking transit point, with both documented migrants and trafficking victims using the same crossing infrastructure. Thailand’s complex system of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on labour migration with neighbouring countries provides a formal framework but is inconsistently enforced. The sex industry, while legally regulated around entertainment venues, continues to function as a significant site of trafficking for sexual exploitation, particularly of migrants from Myanmar. Thailand has maintained Tier 2 Watch List status on the US TIP Report for several years, reflecting ongoing concerns alongside acknowledged progress.

#### 4.10. Vietnam

Vietnam is primarily a source country for trafficking, with documented flows toward China, Cambodia, Laos, and, increasingly, into Europe, particularly the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. Internal trafficking from rural northern and central highland communities toward urban industrial zones is well-documented. Vietnamese nationals are found in a wide range of exploitative situations: sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labour in cannabis cultivation facilities in the UK, nail salons across Western Europe, and online scam compounds across Southeast Asia.

The trafficking of Vietnamese women and girls to China, as sexual exploitation targets or as “brides” sold to rural Chinese families facing a severe gender imbalance stemming from the historical one-child policy, is among the longest-established trafficking routes in the re-

gion. Victims cross into Yunnan province via jungle paths and river crossings facilitated by brokers with networks on both sides. Once in China, women may be sold multiple times across different provinces and face extreme barriers to accessing consular help given their lack of legal status and inability to speak local languages. The Chinese gender imbalance, estimated at approximately 34 million more men than women of marriageable age, sustains ongoing demand.

The October 2019 Essex lorry deaths, in which 39 Vietnamese nationals suffocated in a refrigerated container truck discovered in Grays, Essex, UK, horrified Europe and drew global attention to the Vietnamese trafficking-to-Europe pipeline. Subsequent investigations revealed a sophisticated multi-jurisdictional network of recruiters, brokers, and transporters routing victims through Russia, Belarus, and Eastern Europe. Most victims had paid the equivalent of multiple years’ wages to reach the UK, having been recruited with promises of employment. The case prompted tightened cooperation between the Vietnamese and British governments on prosecution of trafficking networks, though the structural pull factors, economic inequality and demand for undocumented labour in destination countries, remain. Vietnam enacted the Law on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking in 2011, comprehensively amended in 2022, and cooperates with ILO’s TRIANGLE programme and bilateral working groups with China and European partners. Enforcement capacity varies significantly by province, and corruption among local brokers and border officials has been documented.

#### 4.11. Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste is one of Asia’s youngest and poorest nations, having gained independence from Indonesia in 2002 after a decades-long occupation. Timor-Leste functions primarily as a source country for trafficking, with documented flows of Timorese men and women recruited under exploitative or fraudulent conditions for work in Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, and South Korea. The country’s extreme economic vulnerability, it has one of the highest rates of food insecurity and unemployment in the region, makes its population acutely susceptible to fraudulent recruitment offers.

Internal trafficking for sexual exploitation is documented in Dili and other urban centres, with girls from rural communities trafficked into the capital under the guise of domestic work. Timorese migrant workers in Australia’s Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme have in some cases reported exploitative conditions, wage theft, and freedom-of-movement restrictions, raising concerns about the application of trafficking indicators to government-facilitated labour migration channels.

Timor-Leste’s legal and institutional framework for addressing trafficking is developing but limited in capacity. The Law Against Trafficking in Persons (2017) provides a legal basis for prosecution, and the government cooperates with IOM and UNODC technical assistance

programmes.

#### 4.12. Australia

Australia occupies a dual role in the regional anti-trafficking landscape: as a destination country for trafficking (primarily for sexual exploitation and labour exploitation in agriculture, horticulture, and domestic service), and as one of the Indo-Pacific region's most significant funders, norm-setters, and institutional leaders in anti-trafficking efforts. Australia co-chairs the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime alongside Indonesia, providing the forum with both financial and diplomatic infrastructure. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) maintains dedicated human trafficking and slavery units that conduct complex cross-border investigations and provide capacity-building assistance to partner law enforcement agencies across ASEAN.

Australia enacted the Modern Slavery Act 2018, requiring companies with annual consolidated revenue above AUD 100 million to report annually on risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains, one of the first such mandatory reporting frameworks in the Asia-Pacific. Critics have noted the Act lacks penalties for non-compliance, limiting its deterrent effect, and that reporting quality varies enormously. A government-commissioned review in 2023 recommended strengthening the Act with financial penalties, mandatory due diligence obligations, and a more robust government procurement exclusion mechanism.

Australia's Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, which brings workers from Pacific islands and Timor-Leste to Australia for agricultural and hospitality work, has attracted human rights scrutiny. Investigations and academic research have documented exploitation including wage theft, substandard accommodation, and in some cases, freedom-of-movement restrictions. The government has introduced enhanced monitoring mechanisms in response. Australia's geographic proximity to Southeast Asia, strong institutional capacity, and long-standing regional partnerships make it a natural leader in any resolution calling for capacity-building assistance or regional institutional strengthening.

#### 4.13. China (People's Republic of)

China is not an ASEAN member but is arguably the single most consequential external actor in the regional trafficking landscape, simultaneously a destination country for trafficked women, the origin of criminal networks operating scam compounds across Southeast Asia, a major bilateral investor whose economic relationships create significant influence over smaller ASEAN states, and a diplomatic actor whose engagement or pressure substantially shapes the responses of those states.

The structural demand for trafficked women in rural China stems from the gender imbalance produced by the one-child policy's interaction with son preference and sex-selective practices over three decades, estimated to have created approximately 34 million more men than women of marriageable age. This imbalance sustains a persistent market for women sold as wives from Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and North Korea. Chinese law enforcement has increased prosecution of trafficking networks domestically, but the demand-side structural driver has not been addressed, and many victims, lacking documents, language skills, and legal status, have virtually no avenue to seek help.

Chinese organised crime networks are central to the scam compound ecosystem. UNODC, investigative journalists from multiple countries, and survivor testimonies collectively document that many of the largest and most sophisticated compounds in Myanmar and Cambodia are operated by Chinese criminal organisations, managed by Chinese nationals, and primarily target Chinese-speaking victims (though this is shifting toward a more global victim profile). The operations rely on Chinese-language technology platforms, Chinese financial systems, and logistical networks with bases in mainland China, Hong Kong, and overseas Chinese diaspora communities.

Beijing's response to the scam compound crisis has been shaped primarily by the victimisation of Chinese nationals, which created domestic political pressure. China has exerted bilateral diplomatic pressure on Cambodia and Myanmar's ethnic armed groups to release Chinese victims, in some cases with meaningful results. Critics, including UNODC and NGOs, argue this pressure is selective and does not address the Chinese criminal networks responsible for the compounds, and that China's influence over EAGs like the UWSA and MNDAA could be more forcefully applied. China's Belt and Road Initiative investments across the region have created economic dependencies that both increase China's leverage and create potential infrastructure that traffickers exploit.

#### 4.14. India

India occupies a significant position in the global trafficking landscape as both a major source and destination country. With a population of 1.4 billion and deep structural inequalities along caste, class, and gender lines, India experiences both internal trafficking on a massive scale and outbound trafficking of migrant workers, particularly to Gulf states, Southeast Asia, and beyond. India's relevance to this committee lies both in its status as an ASEAN dialogue partner and in the presence of Indian trafficking victims in ASEAN scam compounds and fishing industries.

Internal trafficking in India, for domestic labour, construction, manufacturing, brick kilns, and sexual exploitation, is among the most extensive in the world. The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (1976) outlaws bonded labour, but enforcement is weak in rural areas and

brick kilns, agricultural estates, and quarries continue to report bonded labour conditions, particularly affecting Dalit and Adivasi communities. India's Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act and subsequent amendments provide the legal framework for addressing sex trafficking, and the government operates a National Action Plan and dedicated anti-trafficking units in some states.

Indian migrant workers have been documented in exploitative conditions in ASEAN scam compounds, particularly in Myanmar and Cambodia, and on fishing vessels. The Indian government has conducted repatriation efforts for its nationals but has also been criticised for insufficient diplomatic pressure on destination countries and inadequate pre-departure information systems that leave migrants unaware of trafficking risks.

#### 4.15. Japan

Japan is primarily a destination country for trafficking, and over the past three decades has faced sustained international criticism for two specific systems that have enabled trafficking and severe labour exploitation: the Entertainer Visa system (substantially reformed from 2005) and the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), which since 2017 has been supplemented by the Specified Skilled Worker visa.

The TITP, established in 1993 ostensibly to transfer skills to developing countries' workers, has been widely and persistently documented by the ILO, Human Rights Watch, NGOs, and Japanese civil society as a vehicle for importing cheap labour under exploitative conditions. Trainees, predominantly from Vietnam, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Cambodia, pay large recruitment fees to brokers in their home countries creating debt bondage, arrive in Japan legally but are effectively unable to change employers or workplaces without losing their status, work in agriculture, construction, textile manufacturing, and food processing, and face document confiscation, wage theft, and in some cases physical abuse. The US State Department has placed Japan on Tier 2 Watch List of its TIP Report, citing the TITP as a significant concern.

In 2023, the Japanese government announced plans to phase out the TITP and replace it with a new framework, the Training and Specified Skills Program, designed to allow workers greater freedom to change employers. However, NGOs and labour advocates have expressed concern that the reform, while positive in direction, does not address the fundamental broker fee debt bondage problem or adequately empower workers to complain about abuses without fear of deportation. Japan's demographic crisis, severe population ageing and labour shortages, ensures that demand for migrant workers will intensify, making the design of ethical migration systems a central long-term challenge. Japan's financial resources and technical capacity make it a potentially significant contributor to regional capacity-building programmes.

#### 4.16. Republic of Korea

South Korea is a significant destination country for trafficking in persons from Southeast and South Asia, facing growing scrutiny for labour conditions in its agricultural, fishery, and manufacturing sectors, where migrant workers from ASEAN countries, particularly Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines, are employed under the Employment Permit System (EPS). The EPS, while providing a regulated framework, has been criticised by human rights organisations for tying workers to single employers (a structural feature that enables exploitation, paralleling Kafala systems), for inadequate inspection of agricultural worksites, and for the vulnerability of workers in remote rural areas to wage theft and freedom-of-movement restrictions.

South Korea's entertainment and nightlife industries have also been documented as sites of trafficking for sexual exploitation, with women from the Philippines and other ASEAN countries entering on Entertainment Visas (E-6) and in some cases ending up in exploitative or trafficking situations, continuing the pattern that historically characterised Japan's Entertainer Visa system. South Korea passed the Act on the Punishment of Acts of Arranging Sexual Traffic (2004) and has strengthened victim protection, but enforcement gaps, particularly for migrant women in entertainment industries, persist.

#### 4.17. New Zealand

New Zealand is a destination country for trafficking, primarily affecting migrant workers in agriculture, horticulture, and hospitality. The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, which brings workers from Pacific Island nations and Timor-Leste to New Zealand for horticultural harvesting, has been the subject of recurring complaints about exploitative accommodation, wage deductions, and movement restrictions, though the scheme is generally considered a more ethical model than comparable programmes elsewhere. New Zealand's Modern Slavery Act equivalent, the Transparency in Supply Chains Act, is still under development as of 2024, placing the country somewhat behind Australia on mandatory supply chain reporting.

New Zealand provides development assistance across ASEAN and Pacific island countries with anti-trafficking components, and its Pacific focus gives it particular relevance to discussions of Pacific labour migration governance.

#### 4.18. Russia

Russia's relevance to this committee is primarily as a major transit country on the trafficking route from Vietnam and other Asian nations to Western Europe. Russia and Belarus

serve as key waypoints on the clandestine migration corridor through which Vietnamese nationals travel overland toward Poland, Germany, and ultimately the United Kingdom and France, the same route taken by many of the 39 victims who died in the Essex lorry case. Russian territory is traversed by trafficking networks moving persons from Central Asia to Western Europe, and conflict-related displacement stemming from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has generated new vulnerability to trafficking, including of Ukrainian displaced persons in neighbouring countries.

Russia ratified the Palermo Protocol in 2004 and has enacted domestic anti-trafficking legislation, but enforcement is widely assessed as inconsistent, particularly regarding trafficking of Central Asian women into Russia's domestic sex industry and labour trafficking in construction and agriculture. Russia is a member of the Bali Process. Russia's geopolitical stance, particularly its 2022 invasion of Ukraine and subsequent international isolation, complicates its constructive engagement with regional frameworks and its relationships with ASEAN states, several of which have sought to maintain balanced diplomatic positions.

#### 4.19. United States

The United States is the single most consequential non-regional actor in the global anti-trafficking landscape, exercising influence through multiple channels: the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report (produced since 2001 by the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons/J/TIP), trade enforcement mechanisms (Section 307 of the Tariff Act of 1930 and WROs administered by US CBP), bilateral development and law enforcement assistance programmes, and diplomatic engagement. The TIP Report's tier rankings, placing countries on Tier 1 (compliance), Tier 2, Tier 2 Watch List, or Tier 3 (non-compliance, subject to sanctions), exert significant reputational and, in some cases, material pressure on governments assessed as failing to meet minimum standards.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA, 2000) and its reauthorisations provide the domestic and international framework for US policy. The US government funds anti-trafficking programmes across ASEAN through USAID, the Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), and the Department of Justice's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT). The US-ASEAN Connect programme and bilateral law enforcement partnerships have supported identification of victims, prosecution of networks, and legislative reform across the region.

The United States also maintains the List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor (ILAB) and the Executive Order on Combating Human Trafficking in Federal Contracts, and has used trade preference programmes (GSP) to pressure trading partners on labour rights. Recent US enforcement actions against Malaysian palm oil producers and Cambodian garment factories have had direct economic effects. Critics, including some ASEAN

governments, characterise the TIP Report as a unilateral, politically influenced instrument that applies different standards to US allies than to adversaries, and argue that trade-linked conditionality is coercive rather than cooperative.

#### 4.20. China (Republic of)

Taiwan is a significant destination economy for migrant workers from Southeast Asia, primarily from Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Taiwan's migrant labour system relies heavily on private labour brokers, whose fee structures have been the subject of sustained criticism from the ILO, Human Rights Watch, and source-country governments. Workers, particularly migrant caregivers and domestic workers, pay broker fees equivalent to months of wages in their home countries, creating debt bondage conditions before they even arrive. Taiwan's Home Migrant Workers (HMW) are excluded from the Labour Standards Act, leaving approximately 260,000 domestic and caregiving workers without protections for working hours, rest days, and minimum wage.

Taiwan's distant-water fishing fleet, one of the world's largest, has been the subject of significant international scrutiny. Multiple investigations, including by Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, and Associated Press, have documented forced labour, physical abuse, wage theft, and the use of Indonesian and Filipino fishers as forced labour on Taiwanese-flagged vessels operating in the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans. Taiwan enacted the Act for the Prevention of Human Trafficking (2009) and has progressively strengthened protections, but independent monitors continue to find systematic violations in the fishing sector and in migrant domestic work. The US government has placed Taiwanese fisheries products under scrutiny and Taiwan on Tier 2 Watch List status at various points in the TIP Report.

#### 4.21. European Union

The European Union is the world's largest trading bloc and exercises substantial influence on anti-trafficking and labour exploitation policy in Southeast Asia through its trade relationships, regulatory frameworks, and development assistance. The EU-ASEAN relationship encompasses a Strategic Partnership (established 2020) and bilateral free trade negotiations with multiple ASEAN member states, providing the EU with leverage to incorporate labour standards conditionality.

The EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP/GSP+/EBA) provides preferential tariff access to developing country exporters conditional on compliance with 27 international conventions including ILO core labour standards. The EU has withdrawn EBA (Everything But Arms) preferences from Cambodia since 2020 and threatened withdrawal from Myanmar, citing evidence of serious and systematic violations of human rights and labour rights.

These actions, significant given EU market access importance for ASEAN textile and garment exporters, represent the union's most direct coercive leverage on trafficking-related governance.

The EU's IUU Fishing Regulation, under which the European Commission can issue yellow and red cards that effectively ban fish and seafood imports from non-compliant countries, was the primary driver of Thailand's fishing industry reform between 2015 and 2019, when Thailand was carded and then cleared. Vietnam received a yellow card in 2017 (still in effect as of 2024) for inadequate IUU fishing controls, creating ongoing pressure for reform. The EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D, 2024) will require large European companies to conduct human rights and environmental due diligence across their value chains, with significant implications for ASEAN suppliers.

The EU is a major funder of anti-trafficking programmes across ASEAN through its development assistance instruments, including the Spotlight Initiative (a global EU-UN partnership focused on eliminating violence against women and girls) and specific anti-trafficking programmes through the Global Indicative Programme for ASEAN.

#### 4.22. The Bali Process

The Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime is a regional intergovernmental forum established in 2002 following the Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, hosted in Bali, Indonesia. Co-chaired by Australia and Indonesia, the Bali Process brings together 49 member states and 51 international and regional organisations, including all ASEAN member states, major dialogue partners, UNODC, IOM, UNHCR, and the ILO, making it the most geographically comprehensive regional forum specifically dedicated to trafficking and smuggling in the Indo-Pacific.

The Bali Process operates through Ministerial Conferences (held periodically), a Regional Support Office (RSO) based in Bangkok (operational since 2012), thematic Working Groups on Trafficking in Persons and on Policy Guides, and country-level capacity-building programmes. Its mandate is explicitly non-binding: the Bali Process is a forum for policy dialogue, information sharing, and practical cooperation rather than a treaty body with enforcement powers. This makes it less politically threatening to sovereignty-sensitive member states, but also limits its ability to compel action or hold members accountable.

Key Bali Process outputs include the Policy Guides on trafficking victim identification, criminal justice responses, and return and reintegration; the Bali Process Government and Business Forum (GPBF) engaging the private sector on supply chain due diligence; and practical capacity-building programmes in partner countries. The forum has been criticised by some civil society actors for prioritising border security and irregular migration management

over migrant rights and victim protection, reflecting the tension inherent in its dual mandate covering both trafficking and people smuggling.

#### 4.23. Liberty Asia

Liberty Asia is a specialist anti-trafficking non-governmental organisation headquartered in Hong Kong, operating across the Asia-Pacific region. Founded in 2012, Liberty Asia's distinctive approach focuses on three core areas: legal empowerment (building the capacity of pro bono lawyers and legal aid organisations to represent trafficking survivors), technology-for-good (developing digital tools to assist frontline practitioners in identifying trafficking situations, referring survivors to services, and preserving evidence for prosecution), and financial disruption (working with the banking and financial services sector to identify and report trafficking-related financial flows as suspicious transactions under anti-money-laundering frameworks).

Liberty Asia's legal network connects pro bono law firms, legal clinics, and survivor advocates across Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Australia, and beyond. The organisation has provided legal support in complex trafficking cases, including cases involving domestic workers stranded in Hong Kong without legal status, trafficking survivors seeking compensation through civil litigation, and cross-border cases requiring coordination across multiple jurisdictions. Their Survivor Alliance partnerships centre survivor voices in organisational strategy and programming.

In the technology space, Liberty Asia has developed or contributed to tools including the STOP APP (a trafficking identification and referral tool for frontline workers in Southeast Asia) and financial crime typologies for banks identifying trafficking-linked transactions, a growing area of partnership with financial institutions' compliance functions in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Australia. Their financial disruption work reflects a recognition that traffickers' primary motivation is financial, and that disrupting trafficking revenue is as important as criminal prosecution.

#### 4.24. Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea occupies a unique and deeply troubling position in the global trafficking landscape. North Korea is simultaneously a source country whose government itself operates what the US State Department and UN human rights bodies characterise as a state-directed system of forced labour, both domestically through the prison camp (kwanliso) system and internationally through the deployment of DPRK workers abroad, and a country whose citizens who attempt to flee are themselves highly vulnerable to trafficking by criminal networks in China and beyond.

The DPRK government has, for decades, operated a system of sending workers abroad under contracts with foreign employers. At its peak, an estimated 100,000 North Korean workers were employed in approximately 45 countries, primarily in construction, manufacturing, and logging, with wages sent directly to the DPRK state rather than to workers themselves. UN Security Council Resolution 2397 (2017) required member states to repatriate all DPRK workers by December 2019 in response to North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. Compliance has been partial: Russia and China have continued to host significant numbers of DPRK workers. Survivors and defectors report that these workers operate under conditions that meet the definition of forced labour, no freedom to refuse assignment, no control over earnings, and the threat of punishment for non-compliance, making this one of the clearest examples of state-directed trafficking of one's own citizens.

North Koreans who flee across the border into China, an estimated 20,000–30,000 at any time, are not granted refugee status by the Chinese government (which characterises them as illegal economic migrants subject to repatriation) and are therefore acutely vulnerable to trafficking networks. North Korean women in China are frequently trafficked into marriages with rural Chinese men (exploiting the same gender imbalance that drives demand for Vietnamese brides), into sexual exploitation, or into forced domestic servitude. Those who remain undocumented in China live in constant fear of arrest and repatriation, which prevents them from accessing any services or protection. The South Korean government operates resettlement programmes for DPRK defectors who manage to reach third countries.

## 5. Documents to prepare before the conference

### 5.1. Position paper

The Position Paper is a mandatory pre-conference document establishing your delegation's formal stance on the committee's topic. It is delivered to us prior to the event, will be accessible to all delegates, and cannot be retracted or amended after submission, although you may contact us for proof-reading and tips before official submission. Ensure it is thoroughly checked before uploading.

The Position Paper should go substantially beyond a summary of the study guide. Delegates are expected to conduct independent research: academic literature, NGO and ILO reports, government white papers, bilateral agreements, US TIP Report entries, and current news sources. The goal is a document that reflects genuine national interest calculation, internal policy tensions, and specific actionable proposals, not a restatement of international law.

While it is not mandatory to adhere to this scheme per se, we would like you to include information from every section mentioned here;

#### Section 1, Background and National Stance:

Identify your country's position in the trafficking system (source, transit, destination, or combinations). Establish its formal position on relevant international frameworks (ACTIP, Palermo Protocol, ILO conventions). Articulate core policy priorities and any tensions between national interest and international obligations. For non-state actors (Liberty Asia, Bali Process), define your mandate and core advocacy priorities.

#### Section 2, Historical Development:

Describe the evolution of the problem in your country and regionally, referencing key legislation, major incidents, investigations, tribunal findings, and bilateral or multilateral agreements that have shaped the current situation. For dialogue partners (US, EU, Australia, Japan, South Korea), include the evolution of your engagement with regional anti-trafficking efforts.

#### Section 3, Present Viewpoint and Current Actions:

Assess your country's current legal framework (legislation, enforcement agencies, victim protection and identification mechanisms, shelter and reintegration services). Evaluate participation in international and regional programmes (ACTIP compliance, ILO TRIANGLE, Bali Process, TIP Report status). Identify current strengths and acknowledged weaknesses with specificity and evidence.

#### Section 4, Proposed Solutions:

Articulate concrete, actionable proposals for the committee's resolution. Avoid generalities. Consider specific mechanisms: mandatory bilateral labour agreements with standardised wage protection, cross-border law enforcement intelligence sharing protocols, financial sector suspicious transaction reporting standards for trafficking-linked flows, supply chain due diligence mandates with independent verification, victim identification training programmes for border officials, extraterritorial jurisdiction for nationals committing trafficking offences abroad, or joint operations targeting scam compound networks. Proposals should reflect your country's national interests while advancing collective regional welfare.

#### Section 5, Bibliography:

Full citations for all sources in a consistent academic format (APA, Chicago, or similar). A minimum of 8–10 diverse, credible sources is expected. The study guide itself should not be

your primary source, it is a starting point for your research.

## 5.2. Policy statement

The Policy Statement, a 90-second speech at the opening of committee, should be strategically distinct from the Position Paper and composed to signal your delegation's key priorities, potential coalition partners, and readiness to engage on specific sub-issues. Following each Policy Statement, other delegates may raise a Point of Information (POI). Prepare POIs based on careful reading of other delegations' papers before the conference.

## 5.3. Sample resolution

We expect you to come into the committee with points for the resolution prepared beforehand. While your proposed resolutions do not necessarily have to be perfectly formatted, it would definitely be nice :) Keep in mind that the more points you have, the more potential you will have for lobbying and fostering alliances early on!

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