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Statement

UNHCR Regional Office Canberra

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Expert Panel Report

UNHCR notes with deep interest the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Asylum-Seekers, in its report released today.

UNHCR agrees that there are no quick or simple solutions to the complexity of irregular

movement of people coming into and through the region, including, but by no means exclusively to Australia.

In principle, UNHCR supports the Report's conclusion that a sustained and strategic engagement, that is multi-dimensional, comprehensive and equitable, is required across the region

We are pleased that the Panel recommends a continued, high-level engagement with other states within the context of the Regional Cooperation Framework of the Bali Process and its emphasis on expanded capacity-building initiatives and the allocation of additional resources for the support and protection of refugees in South east Asia.

UNHCR believes that genuine cooperative approaches in the region, which build and complement effective national asylum procedures and promote responsibility-sharing, can lead to asylum-seekers and refugees being able to find viable protection options other than through dangerous and exploitative boat journeys.

UNHCR will need to study in more detail the proposals for off-shore processing in Nauru and Papua New Guinea. However, the efficacy and integrity of such proposals will need to be assessed against their ability to deliver effective protection outcomes to refugees identified as needing protection under international law, not least through the 1951 Refugee Convention to which Australia is a party

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