

10 June 2013, Canberra - UNHCR today expressed its deep concern at the loss of life which occurred off Christmas Island over the weekend, and expressed its solidarity and sympathy for the families and friends of those affected by this tragedy. Despite the search and rescue effort undertaken by Australian authorities and merchant vessels, it appears that more than 50 people - presumed to be asylum-seekers - have lost their lives.

The reality of yet more lives lost on the high seas highlights the dangers of these journeys and the need to redouble efforts to find effective and humane regional solutions.

UNHCR encourages States to continue working toward this goal through the Bali Process which, as recently as April, agreed to work towards practical ways of managing irregular maritime movements in a protection-sensitive regional approach.

Regional cooperation, building on fair, efficient and robust national asylum systems, can help asylum-seekers find the protection they need without resorting to dangerous and exploitative boat journeys.

Ends.