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ADVANCING BORDER SECURITY AND DATA-SHARING COLLABORATION ACROSS THE ASIA PACIFIC AT THE 9TH ANDEX ANNUAL MEETING

KUALA LUMPUR, 14 May 2025 - The Immigration Department of Malaysia, as host and Chair, successfully led the conclusion of the 9th Annual Meeting of the Asian Network for Document Examination (ANDEX) today in Kuala Lumpur, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 13 Member countries, and 11 observer countries. Held in a hybrid format, the two-day event brought together over 100 delegates from national immigration agencies, enforcement bodies, international organizations, and development partners to advance collective action against transnational organized crime, with a particular focus on migrant smuggling through travel document fraud and irregular migration.

The opening remarks were delivered by Mr. Iori Kato, IOM Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, who commended the Immigration Department of Malaysia for its central leadership role as ANDEX Chair, and acknowledged the Government of Malaysia in general, as well as the Korea Immigration Service for their exemplary stewardship in the previous term. "This year's meeting reaffirmed the indispensable leadership of national immigration authorities in driving regional cooperation, enhancing information-sharing frameworks, and leveraging platforms like DESC to provide the data needed for coordinated, route-based responses to disrupt migrant smuggling networks," said Mr. Kato.

Key outcomes of the 9th ANDEX Annual Meeting include:

- Formal endorsement of two new member countries: Kazakhstan and Mongolia officially joined ANDEX, reflecting the network's growing inclusivity and regional significance. Both countries were recognized for their contributions to information sharing and commitment to collaborative border governance.
- Renaming of the network: To reflect its expanded geographical coverage, the ANDEX will now be known as the Regional Network for Document Experts (ANDEX) – Asia and the Pacific, while maintaining its original

acronym. This shift marks a renewed focus on regional representation, with stronger integration of Pacific Island Countries.

- Renewed commitment to DESC: Member and observer countries expressed strong interest in piloting or engaging with the Data Exchange Solution for Counter-smuggling (DESC). The DESC initiative was praised for offering a route-based, secure, and non-sensitive data-sharing mechanism that helps monitor and analyze trends along smuggling routes.
- National presentations and technical exchanges: Country delegations shared their latest developments and challenges in document examination and identity fraud detection, reinforcing the importance of operational learning. Presentations from international partners including INTERPOL and the Embassies of the Netherlands and Norway on behalf of the ICE team based in Bangkok provided valuable global perspectives and irregular migration trends observed by EU Member States involving routes originating from Asia and the Pacific.
- Operational study visit: Delegates were invited to a hands-on site visit at Kuala Lumpur International Airport to observe Malaysia's document screening practices in both frontline and secondary inspections. This study visit aimed to deepen peer learning through practical exposure to immigration operations.

In his closing remarks, ANDEX Chair, Mr. Ayub Bin Abd. Rahman, Director of the Foreign Worker Division of the Immigration Department of Malaysia, emphasized Malaysia's commitment to supporting the ANDEX network. "Let us continue to build on the momentum of this meeting and translate our shared discussions into concrete action at national and regional levels. Malaysia remains dedicated to promoting information exchange and capacity-building to protect our borders and our people".

Established in 2013, ANDEX is a state-led, non-binding forum coordinated by IOM's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. It brings together experts in travel document examination from across Asia and the Pacific to exchange information, identify trends, and build technical capacity to address irregular migration and identity fraud. With a broadened mandate and growing membership, ANDEX remains a vital platform for collective action and shared learning.

For more information about ANDEX or the DESC initiative, please contact: Desc@iom.int