

**Statement of John Brandolino
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**Seniors Officials Meeting (SOM)
8-9 February 2017
Valletta, Malta**

Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,

On behalf of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Malta for hosting this Senior Officials Meeting, conducted under the auspices of the European Union. We have high hopes that this stock-taking meeting will foster greater engagement among all stakeholders to implement the Joint Valletta Action Plan.

The issue of migration has caught the world's attention, including as we move toward developing Global Compacts on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and on Refugees, and cast a spotlight on the need for humanitarian support and assistance to vulnerable people on the move.

Migrants and refugees can be vulnerable in many ways. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime has a particular interest and mandate relating to the vulnerability of these populations to unscrupulous individuals and organized criminal groups, who seek to take advantage of migrants and refugees in order to make a profit. Migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings are two common avenues for such profit. They are most despicable forms of enterprise, as increasingly recognised by the international community.

We agreed through the Valletta Declaration to jointly scale up the response to human trafficking and migrant smuggling. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2016, contains clear commitments by States to vigorously combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling, including through migrant protection and support. Similarly, target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) delivers the clear message that the facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration is essential for decreasing profit opportunities for migrant smugglers and human traffickers.

Even with these commitments, lack of opportunities to access regular migration channels, porous borders, as well as limited capacities, limited legal frameworks and limited

resources to combat migrant smuggling have enabled organized criminal groups to develop their networks to smuggle, for profit, large groups of migrants across the Mediterranean, exposing them to severe abuses, human rights violations, human trafficking and risks to their lives. Our latest Global Report on Trafficking in Persons establishes a clear link between the occurrence of human trafficking and armed conflict, and the UN Security Council adopted six weeks ago its first ever resolution to address the connection.

UNODC believes that the disruption of criminal groups' activities and their dismantling should be given more attention, while continuously upholding human rights and international humanitarian law. This is supported by both the Rabat and the Khartoum Processes. UN Member States will address these specific issues in Vienna in September in a thematic session on migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons as key issues in developing the content of the Global Compact on Migration.

UNODC continues drawing on its mandate to support States implement the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants in contributing to the Joint Valletta Action Plan. While almost all States represented in this Meeting are party to the Convention and the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, a dozen States have yet to become party to the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol. We are calling on those States to ratify or accede to these instruments, key to an effective joint response against migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

We stand ready to lend our expertise to any participating State to support legislative reforms and capacity-building necessary to implement Priority Domain 4 of the Action Plan. Niger and Nigeria, for example, have enacted anti-smuggling laws with our support, and we deliver specialized training on investigating and prosecuting human trafficking or migrant smuggling crimes in many of the participating States from Africa, including in collaboration with stakeholders present here today, and through the generosity of the European Union.

Yet, these efforts are insufficient without addressing the inter-linkages with illicit financial flows, cybercrime, document fraud, terrorism and corruption. This is the approach outlined in UNODC's strategies on addressing migrant smuggling and human trafficking in the Mediterranean and in West and Central Africa.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our commitment to support and collaborate with all stakeholders here to address the priorities of the Joint Valetta Action Plan, including through the development of a holistic response to dismantle criminal networks involved in human trafficking and migrant smuggling, while fully assuring the protection of victims and vulnerable migrants.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share our views.