

**Africa-Europe Regional Conference on International Cooperation in Investigations and Prosecutions of
TIP and SOM Cases**

18 to 20 September 2018

H.E the General Prosecutor of Egypt, Justice Nabeel Ahmed Sadek,

H.E Ambassador Naela Gabr, Head of the Egyptian Inter-Ministerial Committee and Chairperson of the National Coordinating Committee on Combating and preventing Illegal Migration and TIP,

H.E. President of the Africa Prosecutors Association and Attorney General of the Republic of Angola, Mr Helder Fernando Pitta Groz,

H.E. Head of the European Union Delegation to the Arab Republic of Egypt, Ambassador Ivan Surkos,

Mr. Fabrizio....

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, I have the immense pleasure to welcome you all in Sharm el Sheikh for this First Africa- Europe Prosecutors Conference on International Judicial Cooperation on investigation and prosecution of human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

I would like to start by expressing our immense thanks to the governmental and judicial authorities in Egypt for the ongoing and growing partnership with UNODC and for their clear commitment and ambition to end human trafficking and migrant smuggling in Egypt as well as together with its neighbours in the north and the south.

In particular, I would like to congratulate and thank both the Office of the Prosecutor General of Egypt and the National Coordinating Committee on Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons for their unwavering commitment and outstanding efforts in organizing this three days conference.

This conference is possible thanks to the Global Action to prevent and address Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, shortly called GLO.ACT.

GLO.ACT is a joint initiative by the European Union and UNODC implemented in partnership with IOM and UNICEF working in many countries around the world. In this conference, we have delegations of prosecutors from those countries in Africa where GLO.ACT is active, i.e Egypt, Mali, Morocco, Niger and South Africa. Also our UNODC staff working under GLO.ACT and in other Tip/SoM projects are joining us in the conference to support the ongoing and future work emanating from this Conference. Last not least,

let me also acknowledge the generous contribution by the Government of Italy for our TiP/SoM work, incl to this conference.

As we all witness every day, human trafficking and migrant smuggling are global problems affecting the lives of millions of people around the world robbing them of their rights and dignity.

In Africa, the combination of the lack of economic opportunities, of political instability, crisis and conflict and the lack of legal ways to migrate lead thousands of people to accept and rely on smugglers in their desperate hope for a better life abroad.

Taking advantage of their anguish and misery, smugglers trick them into organizing their travel to a promised place in exchange of significant amounts of money.

The UNODC Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants published this year found that at least 2.5 million migrants were smuggled worldwide in 2016, for the incredible economic return of USD 5.5 to 7 billion dollars. This amount corresponds approximately to the amount spent by the European Union or the United States of America on humanitarian aid in 2016.

Migrants do not only pay a lot of money during that journey. They often have to endure grave human rights violations and a significant number pays with their lives resulting from precarious, harsh and inhumane crossing conditions imposed by smugglers on land and sea.

According to the UN Secretary-General report to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 2380 (2017), as of 27 August 2018, 1,530 deaths have been recorded in the Mediterranean Sea in 2018, including 1,103 in the sole "Central Mediterranean route", despite fewer arrivals than in 2017. This corresponds to 1 death for every 19 arrivals in 2018, compared to 1 death for 41 arrivals in 2017.¹

Those who survive the perilous journey may end up in being trafficked resulting from their vulnerable condition as an irregular smuggled migrant. The unwavering hope combined with the continuous lack of money lures migrants to accept degrading working conditions and poor salaries, fall into bonded labor and exploitation being held in servitude-like conditions in return for the thin hope to be able to repay the debts they owe to the criminal trafficking and smuggling networks and to continue the cherished journey.

No nationality is immune to such criminal practices which concern and affect every country in the world. According to the preliminary data of the UNODC Global Report on trafficking in persons which will be published this year, forced labour is the most frequently detected form of trafficking in Persons in Africa and in the MENA region. In Sub Sahara Africa, about 50 percent of detected victims are children and in North Africa, they also constitute the majority of trafficking victims. In 2016, African victims of trafficking in persons represented about 15 to 18 percent of all victims of trafficking in persons worldwide and they were trafficked in large number to West Europe.

¹ Security Council, Implementation of resolution 2380 (2017), Report of the Secretary-

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The structure of trafficking and migrant smuggling networks, their *modi operandi* and financial transactions, originating from multiple countries, call for the need for close or closer cooperation between States of origin, transit and destination to the investigation and prosecution of these criminal networks. Together, countries in Africa and Europe can and must do more to facilitate the exchange of information, ensure confiscation of the proceeds of the crime, enable the extradition of the criminals involved, and ensure the safe return and the restitution of rights of trafficked victims and smuggled migrants in accordance with international frameworks.

As the guardian of the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementing Protocols against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, UNODC stands ready to facilitate such exchange between Member States. For example, UNODC has recently updated its earlier Mutual Legal Assistance Request Tool to facilitate the drafting of requests for international cooperation. This Tool is available to all member states and will be made available in all UN languages.

This three day ever-first Conference for Prosecutors can be the starting point of an enhanced exchange of experience and discussions between African and European countries on issues related to international cooperation, Trafficking in persons and Migrant Smuggling.

Looking at such diverse audience in front of me, it is very encouraging to see what can be possible: we are here together with prosecutors and representatives from 24 African countries and representatives of the African Union, 3 European countries and representatives of the European Union, more than 6 international organizations, and 3 international or regional Prosecutors associations.

I do hope and trust that we all will use the three days ahead of us to strengthen our cooperation in practical terms, to leverage our knowledge and experience and build concrete steps to enhance international cooperation to successfully investigate, prosecute and adjudicate trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling cases.

In doing so, we do not only bring perpetrators to justice, but also and equally if not even more importantly deliver justice to the victims and survivors in line with our collectively agreed goals, the Sustainable Development Goals under which we have committed to eliminate by 2030 violence against women and girls, including trafficking and sexual exploitation, to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking and to eliminate child labour, to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and violence and torture against children, as well as to combat organized crime and to facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people.

These our goals are ambitious, but I firmly believe change is possible, if we believe in and work together towards it.

Before closing, I wish to thank you all for your participation and engagement in this Conference and in particular the Government of Egypt, NCCPIM & TIP and the Office of the General Prosecutor for their leadership and dedication to our common goals of preventing and combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Thank you.